LOLO-BURMESE SUBORDINATORS FROM CASE POSTPOSITIONS: SEVERAL PARTIAL ETYMOLOGIES

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0.0 Introduction. In her study of the languages of the Bodic branch of Tibeto-Burman, Genetti (1986) demonstrated that the syncreticism of case postpositions and clausal subordinators followed relatively-consistent paths of grammaticalization. With an analysis based on the localistic theory of case found in Diehl (1975), she demonstrated that the developmental paths of various subordinators were an extension "of four basic cases to the semantic domains of spatial, temporal, and logical relations."

Genetti's study added not only to our general understanding of the historical paths involved in the development of these subordinators, but also to our understanding of the semantics involved. Genetti's study was based on data from Bodic languages, but the analyses are certainly not restricted to those languages. Examination of subordinators in Lolo-Burma languages demonstrates these analyses also provide insights into the etymologies of these subordinators.

1.0 Spatial > temporal > logical. This particular pattern of extensions is already familiar to us from Indo-European languages. The concrete, spatial reference is first extended to the temporal sphere, then to the logical. Examples of this abound in Lolo-Burmaese.
The evidence is found both in the variations in the range of meanings for various particles and in the paths of historical development.

In Written Burmese (*WB), the variation of spatial with temporal reference is evident in WB nōk 'space behind; past time'; the variation of temporal with logical reference is evident in the meaning variation of forms such as yāg 'when; if' and hīmā 'only when; only if'. In Lahu, the particle corresponding to a non-preglottalized version of WB nōk has both spatial and temporal dimensions: qhɔ̀-nō space behind, future time, after'. In both Sani and Nasu, these forms have temporal/sequential dimensions: Sani nō-qo 55-44, Nasu sō-nə 55-55 'afterward'.

In Akha, the range for the particle nā begins spatially in nā k'ah paw 'behind (in space)', moves to temporal in nā k'ah 'after', and is extended to logical in nā 'if'.

For Lisu, Fraser (1922:40) notes, "b̥tā̀, strictly meaning 'when'; is sometimes loosely used for 'if'. This is an example of originally temporal sequencing being extended to logical sequencing. In the case of the Lisu particle n̄ya,3 the whole range from locative to temporal to logical is exemplified. Bradley (846) has n̄ya3 listed as a locative particle. In his grammar, Fraser notes 'the phrase gaw414-nya3 'thereupon, is also used to indicate sequence, especially to connect sentences in continuous narration'; in this example, clearly it is the n̄ya3 which indicates temporal sequencing. And, elsewhere Bradley (840) and Fraser (1922:40) list n̄ya3 as 'if', an indicator of logical sequencing. Thus, the whole chain is completed.

2.0 Commutative > purpose. As Fraser notes (1922:32), "Purpose is expressed by the conjunctive particle (a)bya3'.

nu4 tā̀ maw4(a)bya3 la4 (a)law3 you ACC/DAT. see PURP come PART '(I) have come for the purpose of seeing you'

Interestingly, the tā̀ 'ACC/DAT' in the above example serves to mark either the accusative or the dative. Genetti reports the 'dative' as a frequent source of purpose conjunctions, but in this instance the dative does not appear to be the origin. Of the four Lisu examples given in Fraser, however, only two of them occur with tā̀. The form (a)bya3 is glossed as 'and'. It is significant that Fraser (1922:39) notes that it only conjoins noun phrases; as Fraser's designation "conjunctive particle" suggests, this is a conjunctive postposition. The sense of 'and' which I read into the postposition (a)bya3 is the commutative sense reflected in English pairs such as:

June and Mary went to Florida.
June went to Florida with Mary.

Thus, the Lisu example above glossed '(I) have come for the purpose of seeing you' is just as readily glossed as '(I) have come with the purpose of seeing you'.

3.0 Instrumental > 'because'. In several instances, subordinators meaning 'because' appear to have developed out of collocations featuring construction-final instrumental postpositions. Among the forms Bradley (1979) gives for 'because of that' are several of interest here: (816; < 854 + 843) Akha k'ê mî neh; heu mî neh; Lisu gaw413 n̄ya3.3 The Akha forms are charted below:

bâ da neh
k'ê mî neh ['that' + mî neh]
heu mî neh ['this' + mî neh]
teu mî neh ['this' + mî neh]
mî neh
mî [shortened form of mî neh]

(Note: mî-a [final particle] "used in declarative statements about oneself, and indicates a past or present reaction or state of emotion, or a fact. It is never used for the future, nor does it occur with the negative." (see Bradley 851ff.))

At the core of the Akha examples is mî neh, a phrase apparently consisting of the clause-final particle mî followed by neh, a form apparently related etymologically to the Lolo-Burmese Instrumental/commutative postposition.

The Lisu form gaw413 n̄ya3 consists of 'that' plus n̄ya3, a phrase apparently consisting of the clause-final particle n̄ya3 followed
by ny3, a form apparently related etymologically to the Lolo-Burmese instrumental/comitative postposition.

The PLB postposition *nay. Bradley's Proto-Loloish (1979) contains relevant data under two categories: the instrumental particle (850), and the accompaniment particle (849): INSTRUMENTAL WB nay', COMITATIVE (=ACCOMPANIMENT) WB nay'. Phunoi nē Bisu nē Akha nē. These forms may represent a single provenience reconstituable as PLB *nay 'instrumental/comitative', but the proto-tone is unclear, with all three of the PLB proto-tones being suggested by one or more of the Lolo-Burmese reflexes: WB nay' 'instrumental/comitative' (*accompanyment) Bisu nē 'comitative' <3; Akha nē 'comitative' <2; and, Phunoi nē 'comitative' <1. The related instrumental particles in both the Lisu and the Akha subordinators reflect a proto-tone 3 source.

4.0 Conclusion. It is not clear that any of this paper is original but in a real sense, it was not intended to be. What this represents is simply a preliminary attempt at seeing if the diachronic account of the origins of conjunctions found in Genetti (1986; based in part on Dienl 1975) provided insights into the origins of conjunctions in Lolo-Burmese languages. It did.

Bibliography


——. 1982. The Grammar of Lahu. 2nd printing. UCPL 75.


I shall be astonished if all my errors should prove minor and grateful to readers for their corrections. The only original 'contribution' of this paper must lie in personal idiosyncracies of organization and writing style. The attempt has been made to give full credit for the ideas through citations in the text, in the footnotes, and in the bibliography; however, at the same time the attempt has also been made to avoid turning this into an exercise in documentation.

In this paper, numbers in parentheses e.g., (816) refer to sets in Bradley's Proto-Loloish (1979), while numbers preceded by a number sign e.g., *155 refer to sets in Matisoff's The Loloish Tonal Split Revisited (1972). When the source cited is a dictionary, the reference given is the citation form of the item in question rather than a page number e.g., 'that' gaw allows one to find this form in the back of Fraser's Lisu grammar.

For Lewis's Akha the tone marks have been changed. Using the vowel a as an example, the changes are given: high tone [<$\text{A}$>, mild tone [unmarked], low tone [$\text{a}$], highstopped [$\text{A}$] and low-stopped [$\text{a}$] 25

2 See section 3.97 in Matisoff's The Grammar of Lahu.

3 While some of Bradley's examples have not been included here as irrelevant to the point under discussion, other examples have been added.

4 k'o 'that'

5 ne 'this'

6 teu 'that which is nearer you than me'