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# BURMESE INFLUENCE IN MON SYNTAX - OR INDEPENDENT DEVELOPMENT?

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## **Basic syntactic features of Mon**

**S V O / O S V (\* S O V)**

**MODIFIED - MODIFIER (POSSESSUM - POSSESSOR, NOUN - REL. CLAUSE)**

**(MATRIX CLAUSE) - SUBORDINATOR - SUBORDINATE CLAUSE - (MATRIX CLAUSE)**

**INTERROGATIVES *IN SITU***

## **Basic syntactic features of Burmese**

**S O V / O S V (order of preverbal constituents pragmatical)**

**MODIFIER - MODIFIED (POSSESSOR - POSSESSUM, REL. CLAUSE - NOUN)**

**SUBORDINATE CLAUSE - SUBORDINATOR - MATRIX CLAUSE**

**INTERROGATIVES FRONTED**

## Mon

*hpəʔ ʔuə* 'my house'  
house 1s

*yə.raʔ dɛh ʔa ʔuə pək noŋ.* 'If he goes, I'll go along.'  
if 3 go 1s follow ASRT

## Burmese

*tɕənɔ̄ ʔein* 'my house'  
1m.ATTR house

*θu θwà yin tɕənɔ̄ laiʔ mɛ.* 'If he goes, I'll go along.'  
3 go if 1m follow FUT

**SOME UNEXPECTED CONSTRUCTIONS IN MON:**

**Subordinators in clause final position (CONDITIONAL, COMPLEMENT)**

**Interrogative words in clause initial position**

**UNEXPECTED HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT:**

**Loss of relative marker (Old Mon *ma*, *min/mun*) in SM**

## Development of SUBORDINATORS in Mon - CONDITIONAL clauses

(OM)

*yal kcit sak ñah ma yām.*  
if die not.exist person REL weep  
'If they die, there is no one to weep for them.'

(MM)

*yar tdek ma gaḥ ...*  
if wet REL say  
'if it is wetted ...'

*yow dah mā ...*  
if be TOP  
'if it should be the case that ...'

(LM)

(ỳ.ra?) nèh      ʔa      **məkèh**      ʔuə      pèk      roŋ.  
(if)      person      go      if      1s      follow      ASRT

(SM)

(ỳ.ra?) dèh      ʔa      **teh**      ʔuə      pèk      noŋ.  
(if)      3      go      if      1s      follow      ASRT

‘If he goes, I’ll go along.’

LM *məkèh* <ma gaḥ, mgaḥ> lit. ‘which is said, speaking of’ (= TOPIC)

cf. Burmese *sho yin*, *sho tó* ‘if one says’

SM *teh* of unknown origin, also TOPIC marker

Conditional clauses optionally marked with topic marker since MM

→ TOPIC MARKER > CONDITIONAL MARKER

## COMPLEMENT clauses

*ɲèh hù? kɔ məkèh hù? kɣ? ɛiə? kəh, ʔuə tɛm mən̩ ra?*  
person NEG give if NEG GET eat TOP 1s know STAY FOC

‘I know that I cannot eat anything if they don’t give me [food].’

Complement clause marked as NON-PREDICATIVE, TOPICAL by *kəh*

cf. formal Burmese

*θu la θi ko tɛənou? θi θi.*  
3 come NFUT OBJ 1 know NFUT

‘I know that he didn’t come.’



Burmese *ko*: marker of SPECIFIC, TOPICAL OBJECTS

## Interrogative fronting in Mon

*nèh.kə̀h*    *kon*    (*rao*)            ‘whose child’  
who            child    (Q)

*mù?*    *pa?*    (*rao*).            ‘What are you doing?’  
what    do    (Q)

*chələ?*    *cao*    (*rao*).            ‘When are you coming back?’  
when    return    (Q)

### Burmese:

*bəθú*    *θà*    *lè.*            *ba*    *lou?*    *lè.*            *bətó*    *pyan*    *mə=lè.*  
who.ATTR    son    Q            what do    Q            when    return    FUT=Q

## Already in OM cleft constructions and fronting of attributive ‘what’:

*mu*    *het*    *man*    *tirla?*    *gruñ*    *yo.*  
what    reason    REL    lord    laugh    Q  
‘Why did you laugh, lord?’

## Fronting in modern Mon with

- Attributive interrogative (‘whose house, what language’)
- *mù?* ‘what’ as OBJECT
- Adverbial interrogative (‘when, why’)

## No fronting with *nèh.kòh* ‘who’ as OBJECT:

<i>chan nèh.kòh.</i>	≠	<i>nèh.kòh chan.</i>
love who		who love
‘Who do you love?’		‘Who loves you?’

cf. **Burmese** *bəθú ko tchi? lè.*    vs.    *bəθu tchi? lè.*

## Burmese influence or Mon-Khmer heritage?

### Interrogative fronting in other Mon-Khmer languages

#### Chrau (Thomas 1971:195ff)

*mǒq ănh ôp.*

what 1 do

‘What can I do?’

*păch.n’hya mai ôp.*

what 2 do

‘What are you doing?’

*păch daq*

what water

‘what water?’

#### Jahai (Burenhult 2005:89f)

*maken hajẽ?*

who house

‘whose house’

*mamej paj dʔ-deʔ.*

what 2S.DIS IMPF-do

‘What are you doing?’

*mamej mɔh jim.*

what 2S.FAM cry

‘Why do you cry?’

**Semelai** (Kruspe 2004:330)

*hmɔh mə=ma=lən.*

what REL=IRR=want

‘What (is it) that (you) want?’

*kadeh mə=ga=yɛ=jon.*

who REL=IMM=1A=give

‘To whom (is it) that I am going to give (it)?’

*dɔ kadeh, nʔ-gɔʔ naʔ-hɛʔ.*

OF who NML-fell.tree DEM-LOC:above

‘Whose (is that) tree-felling up there?’

*tɔm haʔ hɔ̃n, ns-dɔs ji neŋ.*

SRC LOC where NML-arrive 2 before

‘From where (was) your arrival before?’

## Cleft constructions with interrogative fronting already present in OM (and probably earlier stages of Mon-Khmer):

### INTERROGATIVE + RELATIVE CLAUSE in SM

*mùʔ-mùʔ dɛh (mə) hɔm.*  
what-RDPL 3 (REL) speak  
‘What did he say?’ (‘What is it that he said?’)

*chəlɔʔ dɛh (mə) ʔa.*  
when 3 (REL) go  
‘When will he go?’ (‘When is it that he will go?’)

Loss of RELATIVE marker → CLAUSE INITIAL (ADVERBIAL) INTERROGATIVE

 **PROBABLE EXPLANATION:**

**Mon internal development, enhanced by similar constructions in Burmese.**

## Development and loss of RELATIVE marker

(OM)

*dek mun jun ta kyāk*  
slave REL make.OVER BEN sacred

‘the slaves which he made over to the shrine’

*row min kyek buddha tirley byādes goḥ*  
manner REL sacred Buddha lord.1s foretell that  
‘as the Lord Buddha had foretold’

*pun dān ma smiñ pa*  
merit donation REL king do  
‘the acts of merit and charity which the king performed’

**“rarely following subject of relative clause” (Shorto 1971:281)**

*smin daddharāja dewatāw gumloṅ ma siw*  
king Daddharaja god ATTR.many REL attend  
‘King Daddharaja whom the gods attend’

**COMMON PATTERN IN OM:**

**HEAD REL [S V]**

**LESS COMMON:**

**HEAD [S REL V]**

(MM)

*cetī dhāt swok kyāk tray min tapussa bhallika ma thāpanā lar*  
stupa relic hair sacred holy REL Tapussa Bhallika ATTR enshrine DEPOSIT  
‘the stupa of the hair relics of the Buddha which tapussa and Bhallika built’

**“When antecedent noun denotes goal or locus of action, *ma* usually follows subject of relative clause.” (Shorto 1971:282)**

*galān dewatau ma həm*  
word god REL speak  
‘the words that the gods spoke’

**also**

*dhar ma ey go? grañ ket wo?*  
doctrine REL 1S GET understand TAKE this  
‘the doctrine which I came to understand’

## COMMON PATTERN IN MM:

**HEAD [S REL V]**

## LESS COMMON:

**HEAD REL [S V]**

Some degree of interchangeability between RELATIVE and ATTRIBUTIVE forms (historically connected); originally perhaps with **relativised function = S**:

<i>ma gloñ</i>	-	<i>gumloñ</i>	‘many’
<i>ma yās</i>	-	<i>yimās</i>	‘shining’
<i>ma nom</i>	-	<i>lmom</i>	‘having’
<i>ma tīm</i>	-	<i>ma-tīm</i>	‘knowing’

(SM)

*hənàỳ pèh mə ʔa*  
place 2 REL go  
'the place you are going'

**More common:**

*ʔərə̀ pèh hɔm (kə̀h)*  
language 2 speak (TOP)  
'the things you said'

*kə̀ʔ tɛ̀h ʔɛ̀ʔ kon ɲə̀ə həkəoʔ klàỳ kə̀h.*  
get HIT REF child frog body seek TOP  
'He got the little frog he was looking for.'

**COMMON PATTERN IN SM:**

**HEAD [S V] *kòh***

**LESS COMMON (MOSTLY LM):**

**HEAD [S REL V], HEAD REL [S V]**



**No overt RELATIVE marker in SM**

## Other Mon-Khmer languages

### Nyahkur (Payau 1979:154ff)

*phanih (ʔan) ju:n ʔəl tɛʔ the mu: wəj.*  
person (REL) stand KEEP that be friend I  
'the person standing there is my friend.'

*hmiəw thi: pheh kul wəj kacɛt ʔə:j.*  
cat REL you give I die already  
'The cat which you gave me has already died.'

*hmiəw ba:r tuh Ø pheh khamaj khə:ŋ wəj.*  
cat two CL (REL) you see of I  
'The two cats (which) you see are mine.'

**Nyahkur: HEAD (REL) [S V]**

## Jahai (Burenhult 2005:138f)

*mnraʔ k=cip ba=hip*  
people REL=go GOAL=forest  
'the people who went to the forest'

*slaj k=wih rh-rɔh*  
swidden REL=3D IPFV-clear  
'the swidden that they were clearing'

## Semelai (Kruspe 2004:340ff)

*jkɔs mə=ki=jəl la=cɔ paloh.*  
porcupine REL=3A=bark A=dog flee  
'The porcupine that the dog barked at fled.'

*ma=ʔye=ʂɔn, smaʔ mə=kdeʔ haʔ nɔʔ.*  
IRR=see=SC person REL=live AT here  
'They would have seen it, the people who lived here.'

**Jahai: HEAD [k-S V]      Semelai: HEAD [mə-PREFIX-V S]**

## Where does Burmese come in?

### Relative constructions in Burmese:

[S V.ATTR] HEAD

*la té lu*  
come NFUT.ATTR person  
'the person who came'

*mìn tɛənõ ko pè té sa.ʔou?*  
2 1m.ATTR OBJ give NFUT.ATTR book  
'the book that you gave me'

*θu ne té ne-ya*  
3 stay NFUT.ATTR stay-NML  
'the place where he lives'

**RELATIVE marker (= ATTRIBUTIVE form of FINITE VERB MARKER) always adjacent to HEAD, similar to attributive form in Mon**

- Enhancement (and expansion) of use of ATTRIBUTIVE *ma-* in MM
- Merging of RELATIVE and ATTRIBUTIVE forms
- Extension of attributive form from REL. FUNCTION = S to OBJ and OBL
- LOSS of ATTRIBUTIVE/RELATIVE form: *mə-* > Ø
  - NON-PRED/TOPIC marker *kəh* takes over function of RELATIVE marker (Probably discourse pragmatic function, not grammaticalised)

## **Conclusion:**

**There are cases of Burmese influence in Mon as ‘pattern loan’ or ‘structural replication’.**

**The replica constructions are found also in older stages of Mon and in other Mon-Khmer languages, maybe as ‘minor use patterns’.**

**Burmese influence in Mon syntax can account for the enhancement of pre-existing patterns and constructions (or activation of internal ‘drift’).**

**The replication is not complete (interrogative fronting, conditional/complement clauses) or leads to results differing from the matrix language (relative clauses).**

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