



Universität Zürich  
Seminar für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft



# Serial Verbs Constructions and Secondary Verbs in Mon

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## Types of SERIAL VERB CONSTRUCTIONS:

– **ROOT SERIALISATION:** Verbs in serial construction are adjacent

- (1) *mì?*      *ràn pəciə?*      *kon*      *kwəŋ.*  
mother    buy caus.eat    child    sweets  
‘The mother bought sweets for her child to eat.’

– **CORE SERIALISATION:** Verbs in serial construction may be separated by objects or adverbial expressions

- (2) *dəh tɔ?*    *rəp*      *klɔ*    *hù?*    *kɣ?*  
3      PL    catch    dog    NEG    get  
‘They (try to) catch the dog without getting it.’

## Syntactic change in contact situations (and elsewhere?)

(1a) *mìʔ ràn kwaj pəciəʔ kon.*  
mother buy sweets CAUS.eat child

(1b) *mìʔ ràn kwaj kɒ kon ciəʔ.*  
mother buy sweets give child eat

### cf. Thai (core serialisation)

(1c) *mêɛ sǐuu khənǒm líəŋ lûuk.*  
mother buy sweets feed child

(1d) *mêɛ sǐuu khənǒm hây lûuk kin.*  
mother buy sweets give child eat

### cf. Burmese (biclausal)

(1e) *ʔəme θà ko tɕwè phó mǔu wɛ tɛ.*  
mother son OBJ feed PURP sweets buy NFUT

## Verb concatenation and grammatical functions in Old Mon

(3) Old Mon (Myinkaba Kubyauk-gyi)

*bodhisat tit uyyān ñāc ñaḥ pju? cow tun.*

Bodhisatta go.out garden see man old return again

‘The Bodhisatta goes to the garden, sees the old man, and returns.’

- ▶ **Series of sequential events => not serialisation, but rather event/clause chaining**

(4) Old Mon (Shwezigon)

*mahājan gumloṅ ci ey s-ʔor maṅ sīl.*

people ATTR.many EMPH 1SG PROSP-order watch precept

‘All the people I will have keep the precepts.’

- ▶ ***maṅ sīl* = complement of *sʔor* => not serialisation**

- (4) Old Mon (Ananda)  
*ḥas kil sacchu.*  
pluck give fruit  
‘He plucks fruit and gives it to them/for them.’

▶ **One or two events, possibly root serialisation**

- (5) Old Mon (Shwezigon)  
*kum byāpār kel ut ku kāl.*  
2SG render.service GIVE all OBL time  
‘You shall assist him at all times.’

▶ ***kel* ‘give’ metaphorically extended, occurs with intransitive predicate; single event => root serialisation**

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**Definition of verb serialisation in Mon not clear-cut because:**

**Distinction between event chaining and single event not always obvious**

**Dialectal/individual variation in judgement/use of constructions**

**Different relationships between adjacent verbs possible**

**Same construction may denote different types of juncture**

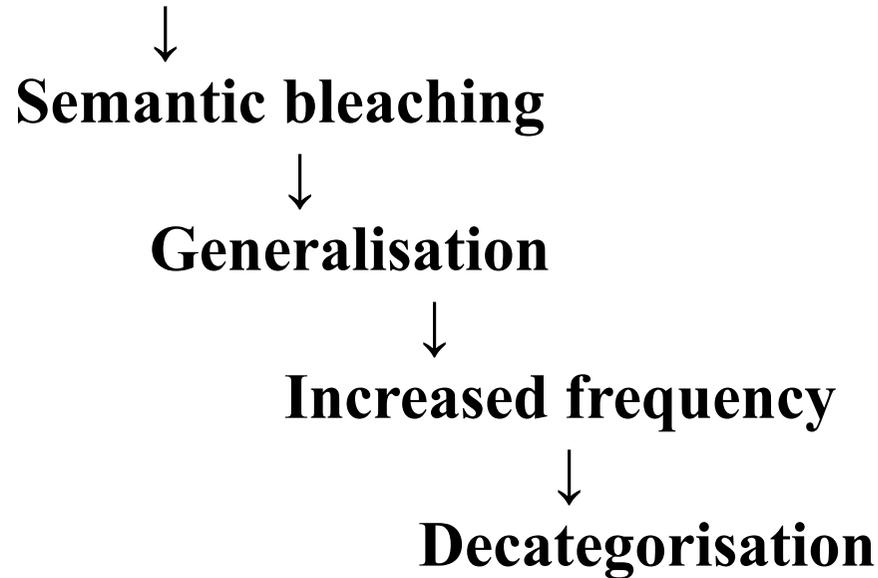
**The same verb can express various grammatical functions**

**Different secondary verbs may have different syntactic origins**

**Different syntactic behaviour of secondary verbs reflects origin**

# Full verbs can acquire grammatical function through

→ **Metaphoric extension**



*Phonetic attrition*  
*(loss of stress >*  
*loss of phonetic*  
*material)*

- ▶ **Not all steps apply to all verbs with grammatical function, i.e. the process can stop at any point.**
- ▶ **Verbs with grammatical functions (SECONDARY VERBS, V2s), either free or bound forms**

## Types and functions of SECONDARY VERBS:

- **RESULTATIVE VERBS:** Indicate the result of the (attempted) activity expressed by the primary verb; may be negated independently  
(free)  
*ʔɔt* ‘all, used up’, *hlon* ‘fall asleep’
- **MANNER:** Indicate the manner in which the situation expressed by the primary verb develops  
(free)  
*sac-sac* ‘slowly’, *prɔh* ‘quickly’
- **VALENCE:** Periphrastic causative (PERMISSIVE, JUSSIVE): the verb *kv* ‘give’ in preverbal position  
(free)  
Quasi ‘passive’: preclausal *tɛh* ‘touch, come into contact with, be affected by’ [promotion of undergoer, not necessarily with demotion of agent]

- **MODALITY:**  
**(bound/free)** Epistemic and deontic modality; modal secondary verbs in preverbal (bound) or postverbal (free) position  
*kɔʔ* ‘get > can’, *tɛh* ‘come in contact > must’
  
- **ASPECT:**  
**(bound/free)** Preverbal (bound/free) or postverbal (bound, adjacent to main verb) secondary verbs indicating aspectual values, often with emotional/manner connotations  
*mɔŋ* ‘stay, remain’ > IMPERFECTIVE, *chɛk* ‘join, connect’ > CONTINUATIVE, *lɔ* ‘deposit > RELINQUITIVE’

- **DIRECTIONALS:**  
**(bound)** Indicating direction and/or orientation of action; may have spatial, temporal, or emotional reading, depending on semantics of primary verb; not separately negatable  
*ʔa* ‘go > away from origo’, *klɣŋ* ‘come > towards origo’
  
- **OTHERS**  
**(bound)** V2s expressing various notions, including benefactive, subject-centeredness, and other, ill-defined functions.  
*kv* ‘give > BENEFACTIVE’, *ket* ‘take > self’, *ɛiəʔ* ‘eat > HABITUAL?, SELF INTEREST?’, *thvʔ* (> *hvʔ*) ‘discard, throw > spontaneously, completely, irreversibly’
  
- ▶ **Much overlapping among the different types (e.g. *thvʔ*, *l̥*, etc.)**

## Development of secondary verbs: *tèh* ‘hit’, *ko* ‘give’, *kxʔ* ‘get’

### I. *tèh* ‘come in contact, hit, touch’ as full verb: AFFECTEE VERB OBJECT

- ▶ *tèh* denotes a NON-VOLITIONAL act, not controlled by the affectee

(18) *dɛh tèh pɔ̀ŋ khypt.*  
3 hit bomb die  
‘He was hit by a bomb and died.’

With OBJECT = CLAUSE → Subject is (negatively) affected by event

(19) *ŋuə.yèh txʔ pèh tèh [ʔəpa tɛk] raʔ.*  
tomorrow DIST 2 hit father beat FOC  
‘Tomorrow you’ll be beaten up by the father.’

- ▶ *tèh* is full verb, not grammaticalised

## Metaphoric extension of preclausal *tèh*:

Subject has no CONTROL over act > OBLIGATION > NECESSITY > DEDUCTION

► *tèh* as modal verb always occurs with main verb

### DEONTIC:

(20) *mù? tèh klon mòη nem?*  
what HIT do stay still  
'What else do I have to do?'

(21) *kla hù? tèh ʔɔp kəh dɛh priəη lə senat.*  
before NEG HIT hand.over TOP 3 prepare DEPOSIT gun  
'Before they had to hand over the weapons they prepared the guns.'

### > EPISTEMIC:

(22) *pɹ̩ bɛŋ.kya həya? tèh tao ...*  
watch aeroplane think HIT burn ...  
'As we watched the aeroplane, we thought that it must catch fire ...'

## As V2 in verb concatenation (root serialisation)

- (20) *khep* *ɛiəʔ* *sət* *khep* *təh* *təə*.  
cut eat areca cut hit hand  
'When she cut areca nuts (for herself to eat) she cut her finger.'

## Metaphorical extension: No contact with object → NON-VOLITIONAL act

- (21) *dəh* *chʌ* *təh* *prep* *ɛiəʔ* *pəraŋ*.  
3 find HIT squirrel eat marian.plum  
'He saw a squirrel eating a plum.'

- (22) *həyaʔ* *təh* *kənaŋ* *chuʔ*.  
think HIT branch wood  
'He (wrongly) thought that it was a branch of a tree.'

► *təh* as NON-VOLITIONAL marker always occurs with a main verb

As V2 in RESULTATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS (root > core serialisation)  
'hit the mark, goal' > 'V correctly' > 'know how to V'

(23a) *dɛh pən tɛh həcem.*  
3 shoot hit bird  
'He shot (and hit) the bird.'

(23b) *dɛh pən həcem tɛh.*  
3 shoot bird hit  
'He shot the bird and hit it.'

(24) *poy cao hɔəʔ hùʔ tɛh raʔ.*  
1PL return house NEG HIT FOC  
'We didn't know the way back home any more.'

(25) *kɔ.ʔəŋ.san kla tɔʔ pəh lòc cəpan tɛh mənə hə-ʔət.*  
Ko.Aung.San before DIST read text Japan HIT STAY ADV-all  
'Back then Ko Aung San could read (everything in) Japanese.'

## Patterns of *tèh*

***A tèh X***

**=> A is affected by X (NP or clause)  
A has no control over event  
affectedness is implicitly negative**

- > preclausal *tèh* [bound] = obligation**
- > necessity**
- > deduction (epistemic)**

***A V tèh***

**=> A performs V, result = ‘hit the mark’  
A has no control over result**

- > resultative (V with success, correctly)  
[core serialisation, free form]**
- > A performs V without control/volition  
[root serialisation, bound form]**

## II. *kn* ‘give’ as ditransitive predicate: ACTOR VERB RECIPIENT THEME

- (6) *dɛh kn ʔuə hloə ba kləm həke.*  
3 give 1sg money two hundred Kyat  
‘He gave me two hundred Kyat.’

## In extended ditransitive predicate: ACTOR V1 V2 RECIPIENT THEME

- (7) *dɛh pəlɔŋ kn ʔuə hloə ba ŋim həke.*  
3 send give 1s money two thousand Kyat  
‘He sent me two thousand Kyat.’

## Metaphoric extension 1: no actual transfer of possession

→ *kn* as marker of AFFECTEDNESS/BENEFACTIVE

(8) *dɛh ləə kn ʔuə.*  
3 tell GIVE 1SG  
'He told me.'

(9) *ka dɛh hù? hətɻ? kn (poy).*  
car 3 NEG CAUS.stop GIVE (1PL)  
'They wouldn't stop their car for us.'

▶ **Affectee/beneficiary not necessarily overtly expressed**

⇒ *kn* as verbal marker

## Metaphoric extension 2: transfer of CONTROL rather than POSSESSION

- (10) *mìʔ kɒ kon ɛiəʔ.*  
mother GIVE child eat  
'The mother lets the child eat.'

### Already in Old Mon:

- (11) *or coñ pnāñ cɔw sak kul plit.*  
order burn candle lamp NEG GIVE be.extinguished  
'He orders them to light candles and not let them go out.'

### *kɒ* as main verb, following predicate is embedded (complement)

- Extension from permissive to jussive/obligative contexts
- Further extension: use as marker of different subject ('dummy causative')

### III. *kx̣ʔ* ‘get’ as full verb: RECIPIENT VERB THEME

- (12) *ʔuə kx̣ʔ lòc kəmpəʔ mùə.*  
1SG get text new one  
‘I got/received a new book.’

#### In RESULTATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS: root and core serialisation

- (13) *ʔa rəp̄ kx̣ʔ ʔeŋkəlòc.*  
go catch get English  
‘They went and caught some Englishmen.’

- (14) *dəh təʔ rəp̄ klə hùʔ kx̣ʔ.*  
3 PL catch dog NEG get  
‘They (try to) catch the dog without getting it.’

## Metaphoric extension 1: *kx̣ʔ* expresses SUCCESS > POSSIBILITY

### Root > core serialisation, free form

(15) *poy svʔ kx̣ʔ prət mùə noŋ kx̣ʔ hloə mùə ɲim.*  
1PL sell GET banana one bunch get money one thousand  
'We could sell bananas for one thousand a bunch.'

(16) *poy ɕiəʔ pɣŋ hùʔ kx̣ʔ nɛm.*  
1PL eat cooked.rice NEG GET yet  
'We cannot eat yet.'

## Metaphoric extension 2: THEME IS CONTROL OVER PREDICATE, not NP

### Preverbal, bound form

(17) *dɛh kx̣ʔ hv̄m ʔərə̀ mùʔ.ciʔ nəd̄i.*  
3 GET speak language how.much hour  
'How many hours was he allowed to speak?'



**A *kn* U X**

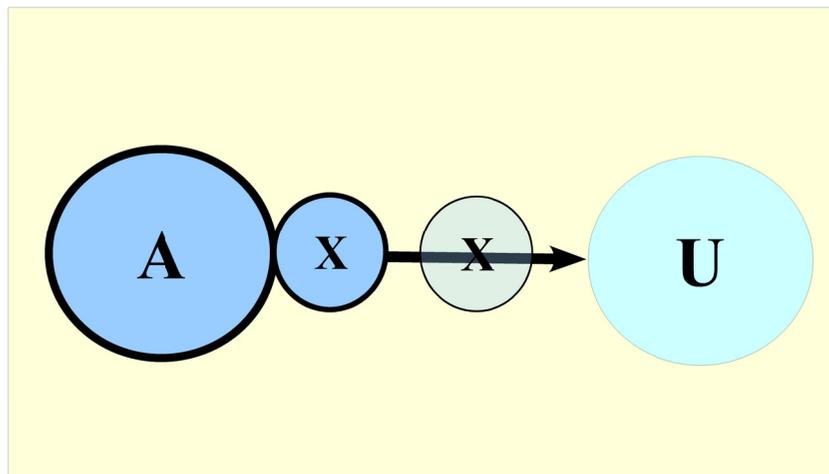
→

**U *kx̂?* X**

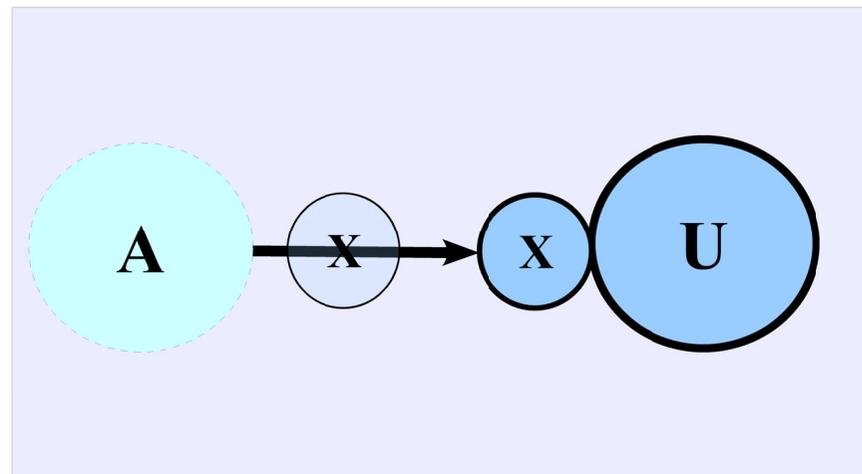
**A = ACTOR = GIVER**

**U = UNDERGOER = RECIPIENT**

**X = THEME = PHYSICAL OBJECT *or* CONTROL OVER V**



→



**Perspective 1: *kn***

**A = Trajector**

**U = Landmark**

**Perspective 2: *kx̂?***

**U = Trajector**

**(A = Landmark)**

## Conclusion

- There is no clear division between serial verb constructions and other types of verb concatenation in Mon
- There is no clear evidence of a development from more lexical to more grammatical in the recorded history of Mon in most cases
- The lexical vs. grammatical status of secondary verbs is not a binary distinction, but rather gradual
- The same verbs can occur on different spots on the lexical - grammatical continuum
- The grammatical functions of most secondary verbs are synchronically transparent => interference between semantics and grammatical function

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