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## **Burmese in Mon syntax: external influence and internal development**

Jenny, Mathias

**Abstract:** Since the 11th century Mon has been in close political, cultural and linguistic contact with Burmese, which led to mutual influence on all levels of the language. Apart from lexical borrowings and calques, the influence of Burmese, though more difficult to demonstrate, can also be seen in Mon syntax. In many cases what looks like Burmese grammatical calques in Mon can also be explained as Mon internal development, or “enhancement of an already existing feature”, i.e. an existing (but maybe marginal) construction type in Mon which became prevalent because of its similarity to a corresponding construction in Burmese. In other cases assimilation to Burmese syntax with indigenous Mon material may have led to restructuring with an outcome rather different from both Old Mon and Burmese. Not much has been published in terms of syntactic convergence or “pattern” transfer to Mon from Burmese, including the modern language, and the aim of this paper, as part of a broader study of language contact phenomena in Burmese and neighbouring languages, is to at least partly fill this gap. This study looks at some constructions in Mon with possible Burmese influence as well as pre-existing structures in Mon which can be seen as their sources. The constructions to be discussed in detail are relative/attributive expressions, conditional and complement clauses, and word order in interrogatives.

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# Burmese in Mon Syntax – External Influence and Internal Development

Mathias Jenny  
University of Zurich

## 1. Introduction

Mon and Burmese<sup>21</sup> have been in close political and cultural contact for at least a thousand years, with changing balances of power and dominance. While a Mon kingdom centered at Thaton (probably part of the greater Dvāraṭī cultural area in central Thailand) seems to have been the dominating polity in what today is southern Burma from the second half of the first millennium up to the 11th century, when according to traditional Burmese and Mon history, a view largely followed by most Western historians, King Anawrahta of Pagán invaded Thaton and introduced, among others, Mon literacy to the Burmese empire (see e.g. Phayre 1883:34f, Taw Sein Ko 1892:49f). Though this history has recently been contested by some scholars (Aung Thwin 2005), we can gather from the Mon inscriptional corpus that Mon was one of the first and most important vernacular languages both in Thailand and Burma. While the number of Old Mon inscriptions found in Thailand is rather small, consisting mostly of short texts, we have a fair number of long narrative inscriptions from Pagán (see, among others, Coedès 1929, Duroiselle et al. 1919-1928). Mon was apparently used at the court of Pagán as superordinate literary language, probably never spoken by large segments of the population of Pagán, alongside with Pali and later Burmese.<sup>22</sup> Given this situation of Mon being used in a politico-culturally Burmese environment from an early period, we cannot *a priori* exclude Burmese influence already in these Old Mon texts. This influence can be excluded only in the Mon inscriptions of Dvāraṭī, but their shortness does not allow much in terms of conclusions about the pre-Pagán structure of Mon. With the beginning of Middle Mon around the 14th century, Burmese influence apparently increases in Mon, indicating that Burmese by that time has become politically and perhaps economically dominant. This increase of Burmese elements in all domains of Mon has continued into the modern period, at least in the Mon dialects spoken in Burma, and is still continuing with seemingly ever increasing speed. The dialects of the Mon populations that migrated to Thailand starting in the 16th century or earlier have been under ever increasing linguistic pressure and have consequently adapted more to the Thai model. The aim of this study is to examine a few examples of apparent Burmese influences in the structure of Mon, especially in the domain of syntax. Structural replication or “pattern loan” (Sakel 2007) in language contact is generally taken to be possible only in very close contact situations with large numbers of bilingual speakers in a society (see e.g. Matras 2009, Thomason and Kaufman 1988). The question to be answered concerns the status of the features under discussion as contact induced or rather independent, language internal developments in Mon. I will concentrate in this study on the following features, which strike as typological unusual in Mon at a first glance: Fronted interrogatives, clause final subordinators, and the loss of overt relative clause marking.

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<sup>21</sup> I use the traditional terminology for Burma and Burmese rather than the more recent Myanmar/Myanma for linguistic reasons.

<sup>22</sup> The oldest Pyu inscriptions found in Burma predate Mon in that county, but not much can be said about the political and social status of the Pyu language at the time relevant to the present study. It may very well have become a purely ceremonial language by the time of the Pagán kingdom.

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## 2. The structure of Mon and Burmese

Typologically, Mon and Burmese are very different in most respects, apart probably from semantic convergence that can be attributed to the close cultural contact and partly to the shared Theravāda Buddhist background. Many loans went in both directions at different times, and a large number of idiomatic expressions are parallel, each language using its own lexical material to build a larger semantic unit (calques). In many cases these features are also shared with other languages in the area, but to my knowledge no systematic study has been conducted or published yet in this field, including Tai, Karen and other languages in the Burma cultural-linguistic area.

### 2.1 Mon

As far as we can tell at the present state of comparative Austroasiatic syntax, Mon is in many respects a fairly typical member of the Mon-Khmer branch of the Austroasiatic family. It is non-tonal, but possesses two distinct phonemic registers, which probably arose relatively late in the language, according to Shorto's (1971) dictionary only after the Middle Mon period, after the devoicing of originally voiced stops. Like other Mon-Khmer languages, Mon has a rich inventory of vowels and diphthongs, further enriched by the register distinction, including the central vowel /ɤ/, the back unrounded /ɔ/ as distinct from rounded /ɔ̃/. Vowel length is not distinctive in Mon, and probably has not been so since Old Mon. Initial consonants include voiceless/aspirated nasals (except \*/hŋ/) and the lateral /hl/ (but not /hr/ and /hy/), the implosives /ɓ/ and /d̪/, as well as an opposition between palatal /c/ and palatalised /ky/ (the two latter sounds merge in some northern dialects in Burma). Initial clusters are restricted to stop+liquid, the old clusters stop+h being better analyzed as aspirated stops in Modern Mon. A restricted set of consonants occurs in final position, all unreleased, including the palatals /c/ and /ɲ/ as well as /ʔ/ and /h/. (see Jenny 2005:23-37 for a more complete account of Mon phonology).

Modern Mon has retained traces of Old Mon morphology, though not much of it is productive anymore. Old Mon morphology consisted mainly of derivative and a few inflectional pre- and infixes. The only affix still productive seems to be the universal prefix *hə-*, which forms any kind of derivative lexeme from a base verb and also tends to replace other prefixes (such as the causative *pə-*) in some dialects. The contrast base verb - causative verb is expressed consistently, but the forms involved are lexicalized, though the formation is still transparent in many cases. Modern Mon is for most practical purposes an isolating language.

Unlike its big neighbors, Mon does not make regular use of nominal classifiers, which are obligatory in both Burmese and Thai when counting or, in Thai, individualizing entities. Mon does make a difference between measure words, including units of weight, time, etc., and other nouns. The order in a numeral expression with the former is numeral - noun, as in *ba ηuə* 'two days', while with the latter it is noun - numeral, as in *rəə ba* 'two friends', lit. 'friend two'. The plural of nouns can be expressed by post-nominal *tɔʔ*, which resembles the Burmese post-nominal plural marker *tó* (cf. Bauer 2006:41).

Syntactically, Mon is predominantly SVO, with frequent fronting of topical or focal elements for contrast or emphasis. Known or contextually retrievable arguments are often omitted. In ditransitive expressions, the recipient precedes the theme. Modifiers generally follow the modified element, that is, attributive expressions (relative clauses, possessors, attributive verbs, demonstratives) follow the noun. Subordinate clauses usually follow the matrix clause, but this order can be inverted for pragmatic and sometimes semantic reasons. Markers of subordination occur in clause initial position in the subordinate clause. Interrogative elements generally occur *in situ*, that is in the position where they syntactically belong, but some are more or less regularly fronted (s. section 3.1). As other Southeast Asian languages, Mon exhibits a strong preference for topic - comment sentence structure. Verb serialization in Mon is mostly of the nuclear type, that is, verbs in a serial construction are adjacent with no intervening elements.

### 2.2 Burmese

Burmese is a typical Tibeto-Burman language in many respects, while it also shows typical Southeast Asian features. Burmese distinguishes 3 tones (4 according to some authors), which are realized in

a number of allotones each, depending on the context. The vowel inventory is of medium size, with four height distinctions and rounded back versus unrounded front vowels, except for the low vowel /a/, which is central. All vowels except /ɛ/ and /ɔ/ can occur nasalized. The diphthongs (ai, au, ei, ou) occur only in nasalized or glottalized syllables, spelled here with final /n/ and /ʔ/ respectively. Initial consonants can be voiced or voiceless, with phonemic aspiration distinction also in the nasals, /l ~ hl/ and /w ~ hw/. Initial clusters occur with /y/ or /w/ as second element only.

Burmese has some productive morphological processes, most importantly the deverbalizing prefix /ʔə-/ and what Okell and Allott (2001:273ff) call the “induced creaky tone”, marking, among other functions, some kind of dependence of the so marked word or phrase on the following unit (word, phrase or clause), i.e. it can be seen as attributive marker. The inherited Tibeto-Burman causativizing prefix \*s- is found in a number of verbs as aspiration of the initial consonant of the base verb. In a few rare cases it is retained as orthographic <s->, now pronounced /θ/, as in the pair *ʔeiʔ* ‘sleep’ and *θeiʔ* ‘put to bed’. These forms are regarded lexical today, though transparent in their formation, and new causative forms are built periphrastically.

Numeral classifiers are used obligatorily in Burmese whenever a noun is combined with a numeral, which in the case of *tiʔ* ‘one’, *hniʔ* ‘two’ and *behniʔ* ‘how many’ is cliticized to the classifier as *tə=*, *hnə=* and *behnə=* respectively. The word order is noun-number-classifier. No special classifier is used with measure words such as *né* ‘day’, *kilo* ‘kilogram’, *main* ‘mile’ etc..

The constituent order of Burmese is strictly SOV or OSV, with the post-verbal position available to anti-topics or afterthoughts, which are not strictly part of the clause and usually separated from it by an intonational pause. The order of preverbal elements (arguments and peripheral phrases) is determined by pragmatics, with the main focus position being the one immediately preceding the verb. Arguments are often omitted if present in the discourse context. Grammatical and semantic roles are marked by clitic postpositions, which, in the case of subject and object, also have pragmatic functions. Modifying elements can precede or follow the modified, but possessors, demonstratives, and relative clauses always precede the noun they modify. Subordinate clauses, marked with a clause final subordinator, precede the main clause. Only main clauses with verbal predicates are marked as finite by one of a small set of finite markers, expressing tense or status (future/irrealis, non-future/realis, changed state, negative). Interrogative elements usually occur in the immediately preverbal high-focus position, which omitted arguments, often becomes clause initial. For more complete descriptions of Burmese grammar, see e.g. Okell 1969 or Wheatley 2003.

### 2.3 Mon and Burmese compared

The following examples illustrate the similarities and differences between Mon and Burmese. The most obvious similarities are rooted in a long common cultural background shared by Mon and Burmese and can be seen in common semantics. Compare the following lexemes in Mon and Burmese with the closest corresponding words in Thai. It is not possible to tell with any certainty whether the common semantics reflect Burmese influence in Mon or the other way round, as the historical data are not conclusive. It is obvious, though, that Burmese and Mon are more close to each other in this respect than either of them is to Thai, which none the less shares a similar cultural background. Especially interesting from a historical-cultural perspective is the word for rice, the main staple food in Southeast Asian societies, for which Thai has only a single word *khāaw* (covering also other kinds of cereal crops). This generic term in Thai can be specified by a modifying element like ~ *sāan* ‘husked, uncooked rice’, ~ *sūay* ‘cooked rice’, etc.

## (1) Semantic similarities

Bumese	Mon	Gloss	Thai
<i>lɛʔ</i>	<i>tə</i>	‘arm’	<i>khǎen</i>
		‘hand’	<i>muu</i>
<i>tɛhe</i>	<i>cəŋ</i>	‘leg’	<i>khǎa</i>
		‘foot’	<i>tiin/tháaw</i>
<i>zəbà</i>	<i>səʔ</i>	‘rice (plant/grain)’	<i>kháaw</i>
<i>shan</i>	<i>haoʔ</i>	‘uncooked rice’	
<i>thəmìn</i>	<i>pɔŋ</i>	‘cooked rice’	
<i>θauʔ</i>	<i>sɔŋ</i>	‘smoke’	<i>sùup</i>
		‘drink’	<i>kin</i>
		‘take medicine’	
<i>sà</i>	<i>eiəʔ</i>	‘eat’	
<i>ɛí</i>	<i>nùm</i>	‘have’	<i>mii</i>
		‘be at’	<i>yùu</i>
<i>ne</i>	<i>məŋ</i>	‘stay, remain’	

The structural differences are numerous and the following examples are given here to illustrate some of the main points, with the Mon sentences given in (a) and the corresponding Burmese expressions in (b).

## (2) Possessive expression

- a. *həəʔ ʔuə*  
house 1s  
‘my house’
- b. *təənɔ ʔein*  
1m.ATTR house  
‘my house’

## (3) Conditional clause

- a. *yə.raʔ dəh ʔa ʔuə pək noŋ.*  
if 3 go 1s follow ASRT  
‘If he goes, I’ll go along.’
- b. *θu θwà yin təənɔ laiʔ mə.*  
3 go if 1m follow FUT  
‘If he goes, I’ll go along.’

## (4) Adnominal interrogative

- a. *pəh ket ləc ɪn rao.*  
2 take text which Q  
‘which book do you want (to take)?’
- b. *mìn bɛ sa.ʔouʔ yu mə=lè.*  
2 which book take FUT=Q  
‘which book do you want (to take)?’

## (5) Adverbial interrogative

- a. *dəh ʔa ʔəɪn rao.*  
3 go where Q  
‘Where is he going?’
- b. *θu bɛ θwà mə=lè.*  
3 where go FUT=Q  
‘Where is he going?’

## (6) Relative clause

- a. *mənɪh [(mə=)həm ʔəɪn]REL*  
person (REL=)speak language  
‘the person who speaks’
- b. *[səgà pyə tɛ]REL lu*  
language speak NFUT.ATTR person  
‘the person who is speaking’

## (7) Adposition/demonstrative

- |    |                              |             |             |           |    |                 |             |            |            |
|----|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-----------|----|-----------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| a. | <i>dɔə</i>                   | <i>(kɔ)</i> | <i>hɔə?</i> | <i>ɩ?</i> | b. | <i>ho</i>       | <i>ɣein</i> | <i>thè</i> | <i>hma</i> |
|    | LOC                          | OBL         | house       | DIST      |    | DIST            | house       | inside     | LOC        |
|    | ‘in that house (over there)’ |             |             |           |    | ‘in that house’ |             |            |            |

The differences illustrated in examples (2-7) are consistent with the overall typological structure of Mon as VO and Burmese as OV languages. The optional use of the oblique preposition *kɔ* in combination with the locative *dɔə* ‘in, at’ in (7a) may be seen as an attempt to replicate the complex postposition structure of Burmese *thè hma* ‘at the inside’ seen in (7b).<sup>23</sup>

### 3. Burmese looking patterns in Mon

In spite of the profound typological differences between Mon and Burmese, there are a number of structures in Mon that look strikingly similar to the corresponding Burmese patterns. Given the intimate contact in which the two languages stood for centuries, it seems reasonable to explain these constructions as the result of influence by one language over the other, that is as instances of structural borrowing or replication. As seen above (2.3), it is not always easy or possible to determine the direction of influence, especially where historical documents are missing or indecisive. In these cases we have to resort to either typological tendencies or to comparison with related languages of both sides involved, hoping to find hints as to the origin of a structure. While in the case of common semantics as seen above this does not lead to conclusive results, the undertaking might be more promising in the case of syntactic patterns.

Generally, intensive lexical replication is seen as prerequisite to structural replication. In the case of Mon and Burmese, it is difficult to establish lexical replication to a large extent for the Middle Mon period, where converging patterns become more common in inscriptions. Large numbers of Burmese lexemes are found in spoken Mon in Burma, much less in Mon varieties in Thailand. The latter separated from the bulk of Mon speakers at different periods, starting probably from the 16th century. The same is true for some of the structural similarities between Mon and Burmese, which are more prominent in Burma Mon than in Thailand Mon. As the main subject of this study is Burma Mon, reference to the Thailand varieties will be made only sporadically, as more research is needed in this respect.

#### 3.1 Interrogatives - fronted and in situ

As seen in examples (4) and (5) above, interrogatives in Mon and Burmese mostly occur *in situ*, that is in the position that is occupied by the questioned constituent in the answer. Possible answers to the above questions would be (4’) and (5’).

- |      |    |                               |            |            |            |            |    |                            |           |                |           |            |
|------|----|-------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|----|----------------------------|-----------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| (4’) | a. | <i>ɣuə</i>                    | <i>ket</i> | <i>lòc</i> | <i>nɔ?</i> | <i>ra?</i> | b. | <i>ɛəɔ</i>                 | <i>dɪ</i> | <i>sa.ɣou?</i> | <i>ɣu</i> | <i>mɛ.</i> |
|      |    | 1s                            | take       | text       | PROX       | FOC        |    | 1m                         | PROX      | book           | take      | FUT        |
|      |    | ‘I (want to) take this book.’ |            |            |            |            |    | ‘I (will) take this book.’ |           |                |           |            |
- 
- |      |    |                          |           |             |            |    |                          |             |            |            |
|------|----|--------------------------|-----------|-------------|------------|----|--------------------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| (5’) | a. | <i>dɛh</i>               | <i>ɣa</i> | <i>phèə</i> | <i>ra?</i> | b. | <i>θu</i>                | <i>ɛəun</i> | <i>θwà</i> | <i>mɛ.</i> |
|      |    | 3                        | go        | school      | FOC        |    | 3                        | school      | go         | FUT        |
|      |    | ‘He is going to school.’ |           |             |            |    | ‘He is going to school.’ |             |            |            |

There is a tendency in Mon, though, to front interrogatives, both on the phrase and clause levels. This can be seen already in Old Mon, as illustrated in example (8) from a Pagán period inscription.

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

<sup>23</sup> Shan, a Tai language in close contact with Burmese for centuries, also shows this tendency: *tì néu h́n* ‘in the house’, lit. ‘at in house’, versus standard Thai *nay b́an* ‘in the house’ or *thū b́an* ‘at home’ (cf. *\*thū nay b́an*).

In this sentence, the adnominal interrogative *mu* ‘what’ occurs in prenominal position. This is still the case in Spoken Mon, where the interrogative *mù?* usually precedes the noun it modifies, unlike the interrogative *lv*, which always follows the noun (see (4) above). The answer to *mu het* ‘what reason’ could be *het wo?* ‘this reason’, that is the position occupied by the interrogative is not the same as the demonstrative in the answer. The interrogative adverbial expression *mu het* ‘(for) what reason, why’ is itself fronted in a cleft construction, overtly marked by the relativizer *man*. Another conceivable interpretation of the Old Mon sentence is as elliptical clause, that is the copula *das* after the subject *mu* has been dropped. In this case, a literal translation would be ‘What (is) the reason that you laughed, lord?’. If this analysis is correct, we would have here an instance of reanalysis in the further development of Mon resulting in prenominal *mù?* also in contexts where an elliptical explanation is not possible, as in *mù? hwa?* ‘what food’, *mù? lòc* ‘what book’, etc. This pattern has been extended over other interrogatives, especially *ṇèh.kəh* ‘who’, as in *ṇèh.kəh kon* ‘whose child’, *ṇèh.kəh ka* ‘whose car’, etc., a type of expression not found in the Old Mon corpus. They find almost exact parallels in Burmese: *bəθú θà* ‘whose child’ and *bəθú kà* ‘whose car’. The only difference is that Burmese marks the attributive function of the interrogative pronoun overtly by the high tone (“induced creaky tone” according to Okell and Allott 2001:273), while Mon does not have any morphological device to mark a possessor. It is interesting to note that the possessor marking is much less frequent in southern Burmese dialects, which are in close contact with Mon, than in standard Burmese.<sup>24</sup>

Fronting of interrogatives occurs in Spoken Mon also on clause level, similar to Old Mon. The following examples illustrate fronted interrogatives functioning as object and adverbial.

- |        |   |         |  |
|--------|---|---------|--|
| (9) a. | <i>mù? pa? (rao).</i><br>what do (Q)<br>‘What are you doing?’ | (10) a. | <i>chəlɔ? cao (rao).</i><br>when return (Q)<br>‘When are you coming back?’ |
|--------|---|---------|--|

Here again Burmese has parallel constructions, as seen in (9b) and (10b).

- |        |  |         |   |
|--------|--|---------|---|
| (9) b. | <i>ba lou? lè.</i><br>what do Q<br>‘What are you doing?’ | (10) b. | <i>betɔ pyan mə=lè.</i><br>when return FUT=Q<br>‘When are you coming back?’ |
|--------|--|---------|---|

The parallelism is not perfect, though, as a closer look reveals. If there is an overt subject in sentences (9) and (10), it is placed after the interrogative in Mon, but before it in Burmese, with the inverse order being ungrammatical in both languages:

- |         |                                       |          |  |
|---------|---------------------------------------|----------|--|
| (9') a. | <i>mù? pèh pa?.</i><br>what 2 do      | (10') a. | <i>chəlɔ? pèh cao.</i><br>when 2 return            |
| (9') b. | <i>mìn ba lou? lè.</i><br>2 what do Q | (10') b. | <i>mìn betɔ pyan mə=lè.</i><br>2 when return FUT=Q |

In sentence (9'), the interrogative pronoun can be repeated, either as reduplication of the fronted interrogative or *in situ*, giving *mù? mù? pèh pa? rao* or *mù? pèh pa? mù? rao*. In the latter case, the sentence final question particle is usually not omitted. This repetition of the interrogative element is common only with the monosyllabic *mù*, though some other forms may be repeated as well. Some speakers of Mon add the otherwise all but obsolete relativizer in immediately before the verb, marking the clause as cleft as in Old Mon.

- |       |  |        |  |
|-------|--|--------|--|
| (9'') | <i>mù? mù? pèh mə=pa?.</i><br>what what 2 REL=do | (10'') | <i>chəlɔ? pèh mə=cao.</i><br>when 2 REL=return |
|-------|--|--------|--|

With the gradual loss of the relativizer, the cleft construction can be reanalysed as fronted interrogative. See section 3.3 for details of the loss of the relativizer OM *mun/man/ma* > Literary Mon *mè?*, Spoken Mon *mə=*.

<sup>24</sup> While the process is productive in standard Burmese, it seems to be restricted to a few conventionalized forms, especially pronouns and some kinship terms, in southern Burmese varieties spoken in Mon and Karen States.

In Mon, *jèh.kəh* ‘who’ occurs in phrase initial position as adnominal interrogative and in clause initial position as subject, never as object, while *mù?* ‘what’ occurs as a prenominal interrogative in phrase initial position or as subject or object in clause initial position. This is markedly different from the situation in Burmese, where all interrogatives occur in prenominal or preverbal position, the grammatical relations being marked by postpositional markers where deemed necessary. Compare the expressions in examples (11) and (12).

- |         |   |         |  |
|---------|---|---------|--|
| (11) a. | <i>chan jèh.kəh.</i><br>love who<br>‘Who do (you) love?’                | (12) a. | <i>jèh.kəh chan.</i><br>who love<br>‘Who loves (you)?’               |
| (11) b. | <i>bəθú ko tɛhi? lè.</i><br>who.ATTR OBJ love Q<br>‘Who do (you) love?’ | (12) b. | <i>bəθu (ká) tɛhi? lè.</i><br>who (SBJ) love Q<br>‘Who loves (you)?’ |

While the similarities between the Mon and Burmese are striking at a first glance, they are rather superficial when the details are taken into account. In Mon, there is interrogative fronting arising from original cleft sentences, while in Burmese interrogative elements occur in the high-focus preverbal position. The question arises therefore whether the fronting of interrogatives is due to Burmese influence, or rather an independent development in Mon. Unfortunately, comparative work on Mon-Khmer syntax is still a big desideratum in areal studies of Southeast Asia. We therefore have to content ourselves with a rather random look at some more or less closely related languages within the Mon-Khmer family for which adequate descriptive material is available. Similar constructions are indeed found in a number of Mon-Khmer languages, such as Chrau (Thomas 1971:195ff):

- |         |  |    |   |    |  |
|---------|--|----|---|----|--|
| (12) a. | <i>mǒq ənh óp.</i><br>what 1s do<br>‘What can I do?’ | b. | <i>pǎch.n’hya mai óp.</i><br>what 2 do<br>‘What are you doing?’ | c. | <i>pǎch daq</i><br>what water<br>‘What water.’ |
|---------|--|----|---|----|--|

These constructions appear parallel to the Mon constructions seen above, both on the clause and phrase levels. Also the Aslian languages spoken in Malaysia exhibit similar constructions, such as Jahai (Burenhult 2005:89f):

- |         |   |    |   |    |  |
|---------|---|----|---|----|--|
| (13) a. | <i>maken hajɛ?</i><br>who house<br>‘whose house?’ | b. | <i>mamej paj dɔ-de?</i><br>what 2s.DIS IMPF-do<br>‘What are you doing?’ | c. | <i>mamej mɔh jim</i><br>what 2s.FAM cry<br>‘Why do you cry?’ |
|---------|---|----|---|----|--|

Semelai interrogative expressions more closely resemble Old Mon cleft constructions, sometimes containing an overt relativizer. The following examples are taken from Kruspe (2004:330).

- |         |  |    |  |
|---------|--|----|--|
| (14) a. | <i>hmɔh mə=ma=lən.</i><br>what REL=IRR=want<br>‘What (is it) that (you) want?’                                     | b. | <i>kadeh mə=ga=yɛ=jon.</i><br>who REL=IMM=1A=give<br>‘To whom (is it) that I am going to give (it)?’ |
| c.      | <i>dɔ kadeh, nɔ-gɔ? naɔ-hɛ?</i><br>OF who NML-fell.tree DEM-LOC:above<br>‘Whose (is that) tree-felling up there?’  |    |  |
| d.      | <i>təm ha? hɔn, ns-dɔs ji neɲ.</i><br>SRC LOC where NML-arrive 2 before<br>‘From where (was) your arrival before?’ |    |  |

The possibility to front interrogatives and other focal elements in cleft sentences is not restricted to Mon-Khmer languages, of course, though it is rare in other Southeast Asian languages such as Thai. The Burmese influence seems to be an indirect one, reinforcing a pre-existing minor pattern and triggering or facilitating subsequent reanalysis, at least in the case of prenominal interrogatives. There is thus a convergence on the surface of Mon towards Burmese, but with very different underlying structures. The



parallelism does not include all interrogatives, and it is not extended to non-interrogative nominal modifiers such as possessors or demonstratives.

### 3.2 Clause final subordinators

Subordinators in Old Mon regularly occur in clause initial position, as is expected in a VO language with subordinate clauses after the matrix clause. Fronting is possible for pragmatic reasons in the case of adverbial and complement clauses. In this and the following section we will look at the development of conditional and complement clauses, which seem to have switched to pre-matrix position with clause final subordinators, at least superficially.

#### 3.2.1 Conditional clauses

In Old Mon, conditional clauses are introduced by the subordinator *yal* ‘when, if’, which in Spoken Mon becomes *yə* or *yə.raʔ*, the latter form being a lexicalized phrase Middle Mon *yar dah* ‘if (it) is (the case that)’. Conditional clauses normally occur before the matrix clause, consistent with the iconic structure of Mon syntax. The following Old Mon example is from the 12th century Kubyaukgyi inscription at Pagán (Luce, G. H. and Bohmu Ba Shin 1961).

- (15) *yal kcit sak ñah ma yām.*  
 if die not.exist person REL weep  
 ‘If they die, there is no one to weep for them.’

In Middle Mon, conditional clauses are introduced by *yar/yal/yaw/yow* and frequently end in *ma gaḥ* ‘which is said, speaking of which’, or *mā*, as in (16) and (17). As both forms can function as topic markers, their occurrence in conditional clauses is consistent with the close functional relationship between conditional clauses and topics (cf. Haiman 1978). The first marker, *ma gaḥ* has close parallels in Burmese *sho ta* ‘the said, saying’, *sho yin* ‘if (you) say’ and *sho* ‘say’. The second is given in Shorto 1971 (291) as “particle marking introduction of new subj. of discourse” and is connected to the Burmese topic marker *hma* ‘as regards’, with the direction of borrowing not entirely clear.<sup>25</sup>

- (16) *yar tdek ma gaḥ ...*  
 if wet REL say  
 ‘if it is wetted ...’
- (17) *pḍay paṭisandhi ey kəp.tlāgah kwon truh mway ey goʔ mā ...*  
 LOC confinement 1s first that child male one 1s get if  
 ‘If in my first confinement I get a son, ...’

In Literary and Spoken Mon, the original conditional subordinator can be omitted, with the clause final topic marker being enough to get the conditional reading, as the development illustrated in (18) shows. The two varieties differ only in the choice of the clause final topic marker, *məkèh* in Literary Mon and *teh* in Spoken Mon. The origin of the latter, which does not appear in texts until very recently, is unknown. Its phonetic shape suggests an indigenous origin, though it is not attested in any period of the language before the modern Spoken Mon. A connection with the Old Burmese emphatic particle *teh* would make sense functionally, but the latter form is found only in very formal styles of Modern Burmese as *dī*. It is not readily conceivable how the literary Burmese form could have entered colloquial Mon, though this is not *a priori* impossible, of course, as we do not have any colloquial documents of Mon and Burmese of pre-modern periods. This particle in Mon also occurs as topic marker on the phrase level, as in *hvəʔ ʔuə teh* ‘as for my house’.

<sup>25</sup> Based on the presence of the form in the Old Mon but not Old Burmese data, Bauer (2006:42) suggests a Mon origin of this word, which was borrowed into Middle Burmese. Given the limited corpus we have of Old Mon and Old Burmese, non-occurrence of a form in the corpus cannot necessarily be taken as proof of non-existence in the language.

- (18) *yə.raʔ dɛh hùʔ klɔŋ ...*  
 if 3 NEG come  
 >  
*yə.raʔ dɛh hùʔ klɔŋ məkèh/teh ...*  
 if 3 NEG come TOP  
 >  
*dɛh hùʔ klɔŋ məkèh/teh ...*  
 3 NEG come (TOP>) COND

‘if he isn’t coming ...’

Similar constructions with topic markers or topic-comment linkers (TCL) between protasis and apodosis exists in other Southeast Asian languages, as illustrated in the following examples.

- (19) Thai  
*(thâa) fõn tòk raw kɔ̌ khâw pay khâaŋ nay.*  
 if rain fall 1p TCL enter go side in  
 ‘if it rains, we will go inside.’
- (20) Khmer (Jacob 1968:100)  
*lò:k ʔaoy khnom mərə:y riəl kɔ̌: khnom mì:ən prak do:(r) cù:n lò:k.*  
 2 give 1 hundred riel TCL 1 have money change offer 2  
 ‘If you give me a hundred riels, I have change for you.’
- (21) Nyahkur (Payau 1979:251)  
*chur dɛ: he:w po:ŋ wəj san kul po:ŋ kul dɛ: ca:ʔ.*  
 dog it hungryrice I thus give rice give it eat  
 ‘The dog is hungry, thus I give it rice.’ or ‘If the dog is hungry, I give it rice.’

Note that in Thai and Nyahkur the linker *kɔ̌/san* occurs after the subject of the apodosis. Alternative constructions are usually available with a clause initial conditional marker in the protasis, like *thâa* in Thai, *baə* in Khmer, and *khan* in Nyahkur, the latter being a loan from Thai/Lao *khraan* ‘when’. The relation between the two clauses is not overtly marked, the conditional reading being purely inferential, based on the semantics of the two clauses. If there is no conditional match, the same construction yields concessive or sequential readings. The topic-comment linker is therefore clearly not a conditional marker, nor a subordinator of some kind, but rather an indicator of a logical link between two parts of an utterance. In Mon on the other hand, the topicalizer *teh* is restricted to conditional contexts.<sup>26</sup> Also after phrasal elements, *teh* seems to be mostly used as a specialized (contrastive) topic marker with a conditional connotation along the lines of ‘if it comes to X’. There is thus a marked difference between Mon and other Southeast Asian languages, that could be due to Burmese influence. Conditional clauses in Burmese are normally placed before the apodosis and end in *hlyin* or *yin*, the former being the literary, the latter the colloquial form. Apart from being a conditional marker, *hlyin/yin* is in Literary Burmese also used as distributive and emphatic marker. In the latter function this marker has been borrowed into Middle Mon as *heñ*, Literary Mon *hiəŋ* (Shorto 1971:403). Examples (22) - (23) illustrate the different uses of Burmese *hlyin/yin* (from Okell and Allott 2001:228f).

- (22) *mə=ʔaun yin thaʔ phye yá ʔòun hma pɔ́.*  
 NEG=succeed COND pile.up answer get again FUT.NML INSIST  
 ‘If you don’t pass (the exam), you will have to take it again of course.’

<sup>26</sup> The particle *teh* is listed in Sakomoto’s Mon-Japanese dictionary of Thailand Mon under the form *tih* with various functions, some paralleling Thai *kɔ̌* rather than Burmese *hlyin/yin* ‘if’ (Sakomoto 1994:361f).

- (23) *lu?la?ye?    ?athèin. ?ahma?    ko    tə=hni?    hlyin    tə=təein    təin.pá    θi.*  
 freedom    memorial    OBJ    one=year    DISTR    one=time    celebrate    NFUT  
 ‘Independence celebrations are held once a year.’

These Burmese structures can be expressed in Mon in exactly parallel constructions using the (topic turned) conditional marker *teh*:

- (22') *hù?    ?əŋ    teh    tēh    thəp    səh    noŋ.*  
 NEG    succeed    COND    TOUCH    PILE.UP    answer    ASRT
- (23') *mùə    hnam    teh    kə?    pa?    puə    thaŋ.sa?    lòt.lət.yey    mùə    wèə    ra?.*  
 one    year    COND    get    do    festival    celebrate    independence    one    time    FOC

The Mon constructions as closely as possible imitate the corresponding Burmese expressions using matter and patterns already available in Mon. As in the case of fronted interrogatives, Burmese influence seems to have enhanced pre-existing possibilities in Mon, resulting in similar surface structures, without replicating Burmese constructions exactly or borrowing phonetic/lexical material from Burmese. The resulting parallelism between Mon and Burmese is closer than with Thai and other Southeast Asian languages, a state of affairs that has already been observed above in section 2.3 in the case of shared semantics. The parallelism between Mon and Burmese allows also idiomatic expressions to be calqued directly, like the frequent Burmese *da sho* (*yin*) ‘in this case’, literally ‘(if) you say this’, which is rendered in Mon as *həm kəh teh* with the same literal meaning.

### 3.2.2 Complement clauses

Complement clauses function as object arguments of verbs of speaking (‘say, ask, answer’) or mental activities (‘think, dream, know’), including verbs of perception like seeing and hearing, or as subject arguments of sentences.<sup>27</sup> A common pattern in Southeast Asian languages is to link the complement clause to a preceding matrix clause by a grammaticalized verb meaning ‘to say’. This is found in Mon-Khmer languages such as Chrau *panh* (Thomas 1971:73ff), Khmer *tha*: (Jacob 1968:115ff) as well as Tai and other language families. The following examples illustrate the use of the complementizer in Khmer (24) and Thai (25).

- (24) *khnom    mùn    ba:n    dŋ    tha:    kət    kəmpùŋ.tae    səse:(r)    səmbət(r).*  
 1s    NEG    get    know    SAY    3    hum    CONT    write    letter  
 ‘I didn’t know he was in the middle of writing a letter.’ (Jacob 1968:115)
- (25) *mêe    mây    ríu    wâa    lúuk    pay    rooŋ.rían    léew.*  
 mother    NEG    know    say    son    go    school    NSIT  
 ‘The mother didn’t know that her son had already gone to school.’

A similar construction is found in Literary Mon, using the obsolete verb *kəh* ‘say’ (from Old Mon/Middle Mon <gaḥ>, cf. 3.2.1 above) in complement clause initial position, as seen in (26), taken from a contemporary publication (*The legend of Kyaikhtiyo* by Pālita Thera).

- (26) *thiəŋ    kəh    dēh    kəliəŋ    cao    ?a    phyh    ra?.*  
 think    say    3    return    return    go    still    FOC  
 ‘I thought that he would still come back home.’

Other languages prefer paratactic constructions, with the complement clause preceding or following the matrix clause, as in example (27) from Nyahkur (Payau 1979:266) and (28) from Katu (Costello and Sulavan 1993:373).

<sup>27</sup> There are other functions of complement clauses, for example as complements of nominal expressions, but these are beyond the present discussion.

- (27) *jɪn kasɔː kul ʔaŋah jɪn bɔk cɔw doːŋ.*  
 he tell to who he want return home  
 ‘Whom did he tell that he wanted to return home?’
- (28) *móón mabô dáâng ravaai.*  
 speak priestess bring soul  
 ‘They say the priestess brings back the person’s soul.’

This construction is also available in Spoken Mon, usually with the complement clause preceding the matrix clause, as in (29).

- (29) *dɛh hùʔ klɪŋ raʔ, dɛh hvm.*  
 3 NEG come FOC 3 speak  
 ‘He said he wasn’t coming any more.’

Burmese prefers nominalized complement clauses, though a clause final subordinator *ló* (*hú* in Literary Burmese) can also be used in some cases, depending on the semantics of the matrix verb. Example (30) illustrates the use of a nominalized complement clause. In colloquial Burmese, paratactic constructions are common, with the complement clause usually preceding the matrix, as seen in (31). Nominalization of a complete clause in Burmese is achieved by changing the sentence final predicate markers *tɛ* and *mɛ* into the nominal forms *ta* and *hma* (from *té ha nad mé ha*, originally attributive forms with the semantically empty nominal head *ha* ‘thing’), or by adding *sho ta* (lit. ‘the saying’) to a finite clause. Verb phrases are nominalized by adding one of a number of postposed nominal heads such as *tɛhìn*, *hmú*, *yè*. Optionally the specific, topical (referential) object marker *ko* can be added to these forms if the complement clause functions as object of the matrix verb. Literary Burmese adds the object marker *ko* to a finite object complement clause with no overt nominalizer, as seen in (32).

- (30) *θu la ta tɛnɔ θi tɛ.*  
 3 come NFUT.NML 1m know NFUT  
 ‘I know that he came.’
- (31) *mìn betɔ la mɔ=lɛ θu mɛ tɛ.*  
 2 when come FUT=Q 3 ask NFUT  
 ‘He asked when you are coming.’
- (32) *θu la θi ko tɛnɔuʔ θi θi.*  
 3 come NFUT OBJ 1 know NFUT  
 ‘I know that he came.’

Apart from the complement clause structures seen above, there is in Mon a frequent pattern used in cases where the complement clause is presupposed. In this case the complement precedes the matrix and is marked as non-predicative, topical or referential by the medial demonstrative *kəh* (see Jenny 2009 for a detailed discussion). A relevant example taken from a Mon novel (*The emaciated bitch* by Cantimācāra) is given in (33). Sentence (34) immediately precedes the sentence given above in (26).

- (33) *ɲèh hùʔ kv məkèh hùʔ kɔʔ ɛiəʔ kəh, ʔuə tem mɔŋ raʔ.*  
 personNEG give COND NEG get eat TOP 1s know stay FOC  
 ‘I know that I cannot eat anything if they don’t give me [food].’
- (34) *ʔəlv dɛh ʔa kəh ʔuə hùʔ tem, ʔuə hùʔ paʔ cvt.*  
 where 3 go TOP 1s NEG know 1s NEG do heart  
 ‘I don’t know where he went, I didn’t care.’

Unlike Burmese CLAUSE *ko*, Mon CLAUSE *kəh* is also used to mark subject complement clauses, as in (35a). In this case Burmese uses the nominalized form, with or without a subject marker, as seen in sentence (35b).

- (35) a. *təm ket yəð kəh təh wì kəʔ kəwək.*  
 know take sick TOP be cure get half
- b. *yəga ko θi-tehìn θi tə=wεʔ kú.θá-tehìn phyiʔ θi.*  
 illness OBJ know-NML SBJ one=half cure-NML be NFUT  
 ‘To know the disease is half the cure.’ (Ketumati 1965:193)

Mon *kəh* and Burmese *ko*, though clearly different in meaning and origin, do nevertheless show some overlap in function. Both are used to mark topical elements, in Burmese most frequently (but not exclusively) object NPs. The phonetic similarity has probably enhanced the use of Mon *kəh* in some of the functions of Burmese *ko*, a case of “lookalike” as described in Aikhenvald and Dixon (2006:33). Functionally, Mon *kəh* corresponds more closely to nominalization in Burmese in that it renders an expression non-predicative. This is not to say that *kəh* is a nominalizer (*pace* Bauer 1982:331), though, but rather that it covers some functions of a nominalizing device.

### 3.3 Loss of relativizer

Old Mon possessed a relativizer *mun*, *min*, *man*, *ma* which was formally and functionally distinct from the morphological attributive form of verbs. The relativized NP can have any grammatical function in the relative clause introduced with the relativizer, including peripheral. The following examples from the Old Mon inscriptional corpus illustrate the different usages (taken from Shorto 1971:281f, 297). In (36) the relativized function is that of subject, *ʔan* being used as a transitive verb ‘have few’. In (37), the relativized function is that of object, with the subject in the relative clause omitted. In (38) again the relativized function is that of object, this time with an overt subject in the relative clause. In the first part of sentence (39), *ma* introduces a relativized subject, in the second part *mun* introduces a relativized object. In (40), the relativized function introduced by *min* is oblique (‘the manner in which ...’). In all these cases the relativizer occurs between the head noun and the relative clause.

- (36) *ñah ma ʔan dīk*  
 person REL few slave  
 ‘those who have few slaves’
- (37) *dek mun jun ta kyāk*  
 servant REL make.over BEN sacred  
 ‘the servants which he made over to the shrine’
- (38) *pun dān ma smiñ pa*  
 merit donation REL king do  
 ‘the acts of merit and charity which the king performed’
- (39) *dey sthān ma kaḥ sak kṣīw mun tarley gawampatither croḥ.ptāw ci*  
 LOC place REL NEG NEG shake REL lord.1sThera.Gavampati maintain EMPH  
 ‘in a place which cannot be shaken, which the lord Thera Gavampati maintains’
- (40) *row min kyek buddha tirley byādes goḥ*  
 manner REL sacred Buddha lord.1s foretell that  
 ‘as the Lord Buddha had foretold’

While the normal structure in Old Mon is HEAD - REL - CLAUSE, as seen in the preceding examples, the relativizer is “rarely following [the] subject of [the] relative clause” (Shorto 1971:281), as in sentence (41).

- (41) *smiñ daddharāja dewatāw gumloñ ma siw*  
 king Daddharaja god ATTR.many REL attend  
 ‘King Daddharaja whom the gods attend’

The semantic (or pragmatic?) difference between the two construction types is not clear. There is no discernible difference between sentences (38) and (41), though they use different patterns. With the beginning of Middle Mon, the less frequent pattern with the relativizer occurring after the subject within the relative clause, becomes more common. In Shorto's (1971:282) words: "When antecedent noun denotes goal or locus of action, *ma* usually follows subject of relative clause." The changing pattern is evident in pleonastic constructions with the relativizer occurring both in clause initial position in its full form, and after the subject of the relative clause in its weak form, as seen in (42) from the 15th century Shwedagon inscription.

- (42) *ceṭī dhāt swok kyāk tray min tapussa bhallika ma thāpanā lar*  
 stupa relic hair sacred holy REL Tapussa Bhallika REL enshrine deposit  
 'the stupa of the hair relics of the Buddha which tapussa and Bhallika built'

More frequent is the occurrence of the relativizer only in the preverbal position of the relative clause, as in (43) and (44). In this case, it is always the short form *ma* that is used, presumably pronounced as proclitic *mə* already in Middle Mon, and encroaching on the functions of the attributive marker *ma*.

- (43) *galān dewatau ma həm<sup>28</sup>*  
 word god REL speak  
 'the words that the gods spoke'
- (44) *piṇḍapāt ṇaḥ ma kəw dān*  
 almsfood person REL give donation  
 'the almsfood which the people had given'

The regular pattern of Old Mon is still used, but appears to be receding. In sentence (45) the relativized function is that of object, while in (46) it is oblique (locative).

- (45) *dhar ma ey go? graṇ ket wo?*  
 doctrine REL I<sub>s</sub> get understand take this  
 'the doctrine which I came to understand'
- (46) *pḍay kalyāṇīgaṇ ma kyāk tray laḃoh jaku*  
 LOC Kalyani.river REL sacred holy sprinkle body  
 'on the Kalyani river, where the Buddha bathed'

In Literary Mon, the situation remains largely unchanged from Middle Mon. While usually the relativizer is adjacent to the verb of the relative clause, it can occur in clause initial position. The pronunciation is regularly *mə*. This phonetic weakening of the marker has gone even further in Spoken Mon, where in most cases it disappears altogether. For some speakers there is still a felt trace of *mə-* or *m-*, phonetically prefixed to the verb, in some contexts, though this is barely audible at best. There is no clause initial relativizer in Spoken Mon. Relevant examples are given in (47) and (48).

- (47) *mù? dēh mə=həm. (m<sup>ə</sup>=, m=) \*mù? mə dēh həm.*  
 what 3 REL=speak  
 'What did he say?'
- 48) *hənày pèh mə=?a (m<sup>ə</sup>=, m=) \*hənày mə pèh ?a.*  
 place 2 REL=go  
 'the place you are going'

More common are constructions without any overt relative marking, usually with the topic marker *kəh* added to the expression to mark it as non-predicative and referential (see 3.2.2 above). The following examples illustrate the relative clauses in colloquial Spoken Mon.

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<sup>28</sup> I use the symbol *ə* to transliterate the graphic complex <ui~iu> in Mon and Burmese. For argumentation on this issue see Dempsey 2001:210-211.

- (49) *ʔə̀rè pèh hɔ̀m (kòh)*  
 language 2 speak (TOP)  
 ‘the things you said’
- (50) *kỳʔ tèh bēʔ kon ηèə həkaoʔklàʔ kòh.*  
 get tough REF child frog body seek TOP  
 ‘He got the little frog he was looking for.’

The development from Old Mon to Spoken Mon can be summarized as follows (italics = minor use patterns):

Old Mon	HEAD - <b>REL</b> - CLAUSE <sub>REL</sub> ~ HEAD - [S - <b>REL</b> - V] <sub>REL</sub>
Middle Mon	HEAD - [S - <b>REL</b> - V] <sub>REL</sub> ~ HEAD - <b>REL</b> - CLAUSE <sub>REL</sub>
Literary Mon	HEAD - [S - <b>REL</b> - V] <sub>REL</sub> ~ (HEAD - <b>REL</b> - CLAUSE <sub>REL</sub> )
Spoken Mon	HEAD - CLAUSE <sub>REL</sub> ( <i>kòh</i> ) ~ (HEAD - [S - <b>REL</b> - V] <sub>REL</sub> )

There is a gradual move from clause initial to preverbal position from Old Mon via Middle Mon to Literary Mon, and a subsequent marginalization and finally drop of the relative marker in Spoken Mon. In a related process, the attributive form, originally distinct from the relative, has become non-productive in Middle and Literary Mon. In Old Mon, there is some overlap in use of attributive and relative forms, such as *ma gloñ - gumlon* ‘(which are) many’, *ma yās - yimās* ‘(which is) shining’, and *ma nom - lmom* ‘(who is) having’. Attributive forms are restricted to subject function, that is *kamlon* is the person ‘who works’ (*klon*), never the work ‘done’, similarly *lmom* is the person ‘who has’, not the thing ‘had’. Morphological attributive forms became lexicalized, while new attributives were built periphrastically. The word *kəmpvəh* which is part of *pə̀rɔ̀c kəmpvəh* ‘pepper’ (lit. ‘good chilli’, compare Burmese *ηəyɔuʔ kàun*), for example, is derived from Old Mon *khis* ‘good’, Spoken Mon *khvəh*. The original attributive form, spelt <khmih> in modern Mon, is used only in this combination, the present attributive being unmarked or the periphrastic *mə=khah*. With the loss of the productivity of the attributive infix *-m-*, the relative marker *ma* took over its function and was attached to the verb as proclitic *mə=*. This led to a formal merger of the attributivizer and the relativizer, which at some point obviously became more attributivizer-like and inseparable from the verb, while it still covered the whole range of functions of the clause initial relativizer. From the data it is evident that this process had already begun to some degree in Old Mon, but was accelerated in Middle Mon. That the relativizer as such was lost early in the spoken language is further evidenced by the corresponding constructions in Nyahkur, the closest relative of Mon. Nyahkur makes use of two relativizers, both loans from Thai, namely *ʔan* and *thi:* (Payau 1979:154ff), as seen in examples (51) and (52).

- (51) *phanih(ʔan) ju:n ʔəl tɛʔ the mu: wəj.*  
 person(REL) stand keep that be friend I  
 ‘the person standing there is my friend.’
- (52) *hmiəw thi: pəh kul wəj kacət ʔə:j.*  
 cat REL you give I die already  
 ‘The cat which you gave me has already died.’

Interestingly, Nyahkur also allows zero marked relative clauses with relativized functions other than subject. This is clearly different from Thai, which allows only relativized subjects to occur in unmarked relative clauses. Example (53) illustrates this usage, with a gap between the head noun and the relative clause.

- (53) *hmiəw ba:r tuh Ø pəh khamaj khɔ:η wəj.*  
 cat two CL (REL) you see of I  
 ‘The two cats (which) you see are mine.’

This construction is similar to Mon, as seen in (53’) and different from Thai, as seen in (53’).

(53') *həkəə ba Ø pèh chr kòh hmək ʔuə raʔ.*  
 cat two (REL) 2 see TOP POSS 1s FOC

(53'') *mæw sǎŋ tuə \*(thü) khun hěn pen khǎŋ phóm.*  
 cat two CL \*(REL) 2 see be POSS 1m

While Nyahkur clearly borrowed its overt relative markers from Thai (or Lao), it is obvious that the relativization strategy with a gap cannot be due to Thai influence and is likely to be inherited from Old Mon. There has been no proven contact between Nyahkur and Mon since the break up of Dvāravatī around the 10th or 11th century, which suggests that the loss of the relative marker or at least the beginning of this process dates back to that early time.

The position change and subsequent merger with the attributive marker of the relativizer in Mon temporally coincides with the period of increasing Burmese influence in Mon, especially in terms of pattern replication. It is therefore sensible to ask whether Burmese influence played a part in the development in Mon.

In Burmese, relative clauses always precede their heads and are marked with the high tone (“induced creaky tone”) on the finite marker *te* ‘non-future/realis’ or *me* ‘future/irrealis’. The induced creaky tone is used to indicate some kind of dependence of the element following it to the element thus marked (see 3.1 above). In the case of verbal expressions this can be interpreted as attributive or relative. In other words, Burmese does not make a distinction between attributive and relative expressions. As the verb is in clause final position, followed only by the finite marker in its attributive form, the visible marker of the relative clause is always adjacent to the verb (as well as to the head noun). This is similar to the attributive form in Old Mon with the infix *-um-* on the verb or the alternative proclitic *ma=*. The following sentences illustrate the structure of relative clauses in (colloquial) Burmese.

(54) *la té lu twe*  
 come NFUT.ATTR person PL  
 ‘the people who came’

(55) *teəno θú ko pè té sa.ʔouʔ*  
 1m 3.ATTR OBJ give NFUT.ATTR book  
 ‘the book which I gave him’

(56) *θu əa ne té phà-khəlè ko pyan twé tɛ.*  
 3 seek stay NFUT.ATTR frog-DIM OBJ return find NFUT  
 ‘He found the little frog he had been looking for.’

It seems plausible that convergence with the Burmese structure led to a reanalysis of the attributive marker in Mon, so that it came to take over the functions of the relativizer, in other words relative clauses came to be marked by the periphrastic attributive form of the verb. The Burmese relative construction [S - V+ATTR]<sub>REL</sub> - HEAD was replicated in Mon as HEAD - [S - ATTR+V]<sub>REL</sub>. This replication did not come out of nothing, but was rather a strengthening or enhancement of a pre-existing minor use pattern in Old Mon (cf. Heine and Kuteva 2005:44ff) with subsequent extension to new syntactic contexts. Later the weakened attributive marker further lost phonetic material (*mə=* > *mʔ=* > *m=*) in close phonetic juncture with the following verb and was finally dropped, leaving Spoken Mon with no overt relativizer. While in Middle Mon the proclitic negation marker *ha* intervenes between the relative/attributive clitic as seen in (57), this is not possible in Spoken Mon, showing the passage from clitic to affix.<sup>29</sup> In these contexts the relative/attributive marker is regularly omitted.

<sup>29</sup> It should be noted that the negation marker in Spoken Mon, going back to a strengthened form *hüʔ* from Middle Mon *ha*, is itself in close juncture with the verb and in some cases realized as affix (pre-aspiration and labialization of the initial consonant, see Jenny 2003). The presence of *hüʔ* precludes the occurrence of the relative marker in Spoken Mon.



- (57) *pḍay thān ma dah cniḥ kəm lar, thān ma ha seṇ ...*  
 LOC place REL be pier also ADD place REL NEG be.so ...  
 ‘whether in a place which is a bathing place or one which is not ...’

The development from a free word *ma* to a phonetically reduced clitic to a prefix and finally loss is an example of secondary grammaticalization (Norde 2009:), that can be observed in the development of Mon. The corresponding Burmese form is a morphologically marked clitic (induced creaky tone) always adjacent to a verb (or the final element in a verb phrase), thus having some affix-like properties (choice of host).

	free marker		clitic		(? affix)		loss	
Mon	<i>ma</i>	+ CLAUSE	>	<i>ma=</i> / <i>mə=</i>	>	<i>mə-V</i> / <i>m<sup>ə</sup>-V</i>	>	∅
Burmese						<i>V=té/=mé</i>		

This development is not only due to convergence with Burmese structure, but also to the fact that the productivity and functionality of the original attributive forms was drastically reduced since Middle Mon, often leading to lexicalized forms with often idiomatic meanings. The new periphrastic construction was not used obligatorily, so that there was no systemic gap in Mon with the loss of the relativizer. The discourse topic marker *kəh*, which marks non-predicative expressions, became frequently used after relative expressions, partly taking over the function of the old relativizer. This function is not fully grammaticalized, though, and rather implicational. Nyahkur probably initially saw a similar development with the loss of the inherited relativizer, which under heavy Thai/Lao influence led to a felt gap in the system, which was filled by borrowed markers.

#### 4. Conclusions

Besides a seemingly ever increasing number of Burmese lexemes in Mon, there are a number superficially similar constructions in Mon and Burmese. In many cases, a more detailed study reveals important differences in the syntax of these constructions, though. This fact suggests that the Burmese influence was rather indirect, often as strengthening of preexisting usage patterns in Mon itself. Due to areal convergence towards Burmese, for a few centuries the politically and often economically dominant language, Mon has undergone some degree of remodeling and come to be typologically closer to Burmese in some respects. This restructuring of Mon syntax has stopped at a rather superficial level of syntax and did not affect the structure of Mon as such, i.e. there is no sign of metatypy, as can for example be seen in many instances in Nyahkur, which has become very Thai-like in its syntactic structure.

As been pointed out in this paper, much more work has to be done, especially in terms of comparative Austroasiatic (and other language families) morphosyntax in order to gain better insights into the structure of these languages, which, together with a thorough study of the development of Mon as documented in the inscriptions and other texts, should put us in a better position to single out instances of contact induced changes and achieve broader understanding of the Southeast Asian linguistic area.

The examples given in this paper are not meant to be exhaustive in any way, but are rather seen as starting point for further investigation in the field of areal convergence in Southeast Asia, including potential instances of Mon influence in Burmese, as well as mutual influence among other languages in the area.

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