ON THE SO-CALLED NOMINALIZER *NAAK* IN LAI (HAKHA) CHIN, WITH REMARKS UPON ITS OTHER FUNCTIONS IN CHIN LANGUAGES AND ETYMOLOGY

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1 Introduction, the Standard Treatment of *naak* in Lai

In the grammatical literature on Lai Chin up till now, the suffix *naak* has been considered as a nominalizing suffix on verbs. For example, in much Christian literature, such as Bible translation, where the function of *abstract* nominalization seems to be a relatively recent extension of its more basic and traditional use. Thus,

1. ṭhut *naak* ka-duh lo
    sit   1sg want neg
    I don't want to sit/sitting.

In fact, however, when *naak* is suffixed, as in ṭhut-<u>naak</u>, the sense is more ordinarily a locative or instrumental or other 'argumentative' nominalization. The abstract nominalization function appears then to be an extension of this other nominalization function, and we need to consider the question how it came about. Note that the Stem of a verb to which *naak* is suffixed is already Stem II. For example, *dawt<u>naak</u>*, 'love' (cf. *daw* 'to love'). Stem II, (see Lehman 1996 and *to appear*) we have shown to be the perfective stem, i.e., already, in itself, 'nominal', more precisely gerundive~infinitival.

2 Daai and Cho (Southern) Chin Cognates of Lai *naak*

How did this extension of function arise? To see the answer, we need to start by examining the results of an interesting paper by Helga Hartmann (2000) on its cognate in the Southern Chin language, Daai (and in the closely related Cho, on which one of us, Lehman, has also worked). In Daai the cognate is itself a verb, with the usual Chin system of stem alternation (*na~naak*). It can be suffixed to nouns or verbs with what turns out to be an applicative sense, for example, with the noun 'wife' *kkhyu.*

2. kah-ning   kkhyu-*naak*   vai ni
    1sg-2sg   wife-take   must !
    I must take you to wife.

Or, consider the adjectival verb 'pleasant', *phyah/phya*. It can be 'transitivized' by prefixing the root with *k-*, which is then obligatorily suffixed by *naak*, giving the sense of 'love'.

3.   kah-kphya-*naak* ni
        1sg pleasant-   !
        I love her indeed!

We do not propose to go in to all the material on Daai from Hartmann's paper, but notice that this same function also gives nouns from verbs, as when the verb *ngthei*, 'to learn' is suffixed, giving *ngtheinaak*, 'lesson'. Moreover, it is also the case here that the nominalization often, as in Lai, has a more particular sense rather than purely abstract nominalization,   as when the noun *anghmüpnaak,* means 'a place of darkness' (from *anghmüp,* 'dark'). Note that if, for instance, such an expression is in a participial subordinate clause, *naak* takes the stem alternation form *na*, as in

4.   nu   noh   pyen   *na*   lü   ah-ngsuh   püi
        mother   Erg   scold   part   3sg   quarrel   part.
        Mother having scolded [her], quarreled with her.
        Mother scolded her and quarreled with her.

And this is the evidence for the claim that in this language *naak* is indeed a full verb.

Now, for various reasons, it seems that the Daai/Cho *naak* has to be treated as an 'applicative' verb, i.e., a verb which takes as its argument a verb or noun and produces a derived sense that 'applies' the argument to the base. So (2) amounts to 'to take someone to wife'; (3) amounts to 'to find her pleasing', and *anghmüpnaak* amounts to 'applying darkness to some place or other. Moreover, the essentially applicative nature of *naak* is clearly seen in its use with nouns such as 'heart', *mlung*, where *mlungnaak* means precisely 'take to heart'.

3 Lai and Central Chin *nak/na* as a Verb Suffix and as a Complementizer

Now, from this vantage point of comparison we can look again at the Lai use of *naak*.

Central~Northern Chin: takes either stem of Proto-Chin *naa(k)* into a stem-invariant transitive applicative; Mizo takes I, Lai takes II. As we know, for any transitive verb in these languages the 'primary' stem is ambiguous. On the one hand, the etymological stem is II, and arguments from clauses relativizing an object show that semantically the underlying stem is I, which serves as a stative adjectival verb. But it is II that is on the surface the primary stem, the stem used for ordinary, default declarative finite clauses.

3.1 In Lai

(a) *naak* is easily seen to be an applicative element serving to mark a dependency between a clause and a pro (implicit?) nominal argument or adjunct thereof, and thus essentially serves as a Complementizer, C of CP (cf. *de* of Chinese and *i.* in Burmese relative constructions). C in languages of all sorts often use other parts of speech—prepositions like *for*, Chinese *de* ('of', 's) or the *i.* of Burmese; *that* in English (demonstrative), and so on.[1] Of course, it is no great leap from applicative verb, which is an application of a verb to an adjunct or argument DP of its clause, i.e., making the clause a dependent of the head DP, to a more general, grammaticalized affix of dependency.

(b) In Lai *naak* serves also as a valence-changing applicative verbal suffix proper, and unlike the Daai/Cho (co)verb, it cannot attach to nouns, only to verbs. This no doubt

was its first grammaticalization in the development in Lai and other Central Chin languages from the situation still represented in Southern Chin. Thus,

5.   mah   mawṭaw   kha   Chicago-ah   ka   kalnaak   cang
     that   car   that   to   1sg.go   perf
     I have taken that car to go to Chicago.

6.   mah   fung   kha<u>n</u>   ar   ka-thah
     that   stick   that-<u>obl</u>   chicken   1sg.kill
     I killed the chicken with that stick.

6'. mah fung kha ar ka-thah<u>naak</u>
     I 'took and killed' the chicken with the stick.
     (I took the stick to kill the chicken.)

Note here that in (6) fung (stick) is an adjunct, as seen by the oblique inflection of the demonstrative; in (6') it is an argument, which is what we mean by saying that the co-verb *naak* changes the valence of even the transitive verb *thah* (to kill). Note also that *naak* is invariant as to the verb stem it attaches to, regardless of valence-changing, even though, in general, changing the argument structure of a verb (especially a transitive verb) results in a change from Stem I to Stem II.

7.   mah fung kha ar ka thahnaak tik-ah
     when I take and kill a chicken ...

Note also that the place where *naak* in Lai has previously been treated as just a 'nominalizer', it is indeed a variety of dependency marker/complimentizer, and that in such cases in fact the affixation even to an intransitive verb does not actually change its valence or argument structure. Thus, consider

8.   a kal-naak
     1sg go –

Depending upon discourse context this can mean, for instance,

8'. the 'time' of his going

(essentially application of the act of going to a particular time/event–a pseudo event-nominalization, perhaps; or, more usually

8". his goal-object of going

     We generalize this as follows, keeping in mind that this language is a Free Empty Category language in the sense of Yan Huang (2000), namely, that the default, non-focus/non-contrastive form of a pronoun (see now Ceu Hlun, this volume) is zero-form or *pro*, and that 'one/it' is almost never focused, even in English.

9.   [a- [[kal]$_{IP}$ naak]$_{CP}$] *pro*]$_{DP}$

where *proi* is to be understood or imagined with the verb,, in this case with *kal*, 'to go'. Hence it means, in generalized form, 'his "one" <u>of</u> going'.

So much for *naak* being a 'nominalizing particle', and we easily see that the first element, clitic *a-* (third person singular agreement form) is not the subject agreement here at all, in as much as it need not be used here at all. For, *kal-naak* all alone can mean 'going' in the sense of anyone's 'time /goal/*event* of going' (see now Bedell, this volume for the proper syntax of such clitic prefixes, which serve sometimes to mark argument agreement on finite verbs, sometimes as possessives (as in this instance).

4 Conclusions and Further Considerations

A number of remarks, observations, and questions remain. First of all it is clear that the road to the Lai use of *naak* has involved successive grammaticalization from a stage represented by the Daai/Cho *na/naak*. The earlier stage has to have been the conversion of this originally independent verb into a 'particle', an invariant form verbal applicative suffix that is essentially an argument valence changing particle. The second stage has been more recent and seems to have been its further conversion into a genitive-dependency particle (a 'relativizer') in Complementizer position, Lai showing both results today. In the latter function, note that there is no overt adjunct to refer to, and in particular this is so for the more recent use as a purely abstract nominalizer, applying to only the *event* referred to by the verb, whilst in the former function it applies the verb to a specifiable argument of that verb.

Demonstrating this direction of development is easy. It is the fact that, of the Daai/Chin verb's two Stem forms, Central Chin languages have chosen, perhaps arbitrarily, one or the other for its invariant particle function: *naak* in Lai, *na* in Mizo and Laizo.

Note now that in its two functions in Lai, *naak* takes two distinct syntactic positions, and this is shown by the fact that the verb, in the first function, where *naak* seems directly suffixed to it, takes Stem I invariantly, appropriately to its being used the verb of a declarative clause, whereas, when *naak* is a complementizer, the verb is a gerund and hence, appropriately, is in Stem II.

Then, it has to be pointed out that the category of 'relativizer' is of course not a true category of syntax. It is a species of complementizer. That some complementizers relate a clause/verb/predicate to a *clausal* head whilst others relate it to a nominal head is uncontroversial. And that complementizers with different such relational functions may employ elements from different 'parts of speech' is well attested. For instance, in English the *that* complementizer is clearly derived from the demonstrative 'that', and it relates a subordinate clause directly to a higher clause, though also relating a finite clause to a nominal head (I said that.../The fact that…). With non-finite complement clauses one uses *for* clearly a preposition by origin ('waiting *for* him to go...'); the preposition *of* is used if the head to which the clause is a complement is itself a nominal (the fact of his going).

So, that in Lai, that in the first instance a verbal derivational suffix goes on later to appear in Comp need not be surprising. Nor need one be surprised to find that in Lai different complementizers are used for, respectively, propositional complement clauses (*tih*—a kal *tih* an ti 'They say that he is going') and for non-gerundive relative clauses (mi 'one', otherwise a pronominal form—a-kal *mi* tlangvaal 'the young man that goes').

Finally, some nominal applications for *naak* seem to be fixed, lexicalized even. Thus take *kal-naak* (*kal* = 'go). Speakers disagree upon whether or not it can mean the time of going, but all agree it can, usually has to, mean the place-to-which one goes. And *ihnaak* (*ih* = 'sleep') is fully lexicalized as simply the word for 'bed'. So, in as much as object entities are, as it were, nearer to being true arguments (as against adjuncts) of such predicates—one's sleeping more directly invokes the place than the time of the sleeping, since every event necessarily has a time in any case—this may well represent yet a further stage of grammaticalization towards full abstract nominalization, directed more to the clause/predicate as an event/state *type* than to just the verb proper as a specific predication; for, *ihnaak* is not a place where any given person sleeps at any given moment, but is rather simply a place where one sleeps in the abstract. This, however, requires much more thought and work to be made firm or even clear.

Notes

1. I am aware that recently there have been arguments made that, for instance, the structure of Chinese rela6ive constructions does not involve clausal complementation (see Aoun and Li MS, * Chapters 4 and 5), but I shall try to show elsewhere that, after all, the structure of relative clause constructions seems to involve complementation universally.

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