

STRUCTURE AND RULES IN AKHA MORPHOLOGY

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Morphology in the languages of Southeast Asia is not nearly so extensively dealt with as are problems of phonology and syntax. This is largely attributable to the propensity for monosyllabism of these languages, which consequently diminishes the probabilities of morphological development. Significant also is the lack of inflectional systems in these same languages. There are some scholars who would even suggest that morphology as such is not extant, reducing all structural principles to the level of syntactic rules. While in a generative sense this may be the way all morphologies will pass, in a structural sense there is probably a morphological level in most of the languages of the area - at least in the Tibeto-Burman ones - a distinguishable level between that of individual morphemes and syntactic constructions.

Initially, we might designate as morphology all constructions containing one or more bound morphemes. This will exclude noun and verb compounding and will also insure that we are at least discussing constructions of some nature. But this is overly broad because there are syntactic, bound morphemes - particles - which function only in syntactic rules. Particles are non-derivational for several reasons: 1) they are optional in any construction in which they occur; 2) their occurrence never changes the basic meaning of the expressions in which they occur; 3) the semantic contribution they make to any construction is consistent and always predictable; 4) they function as constituents only at the level of noun and verb phrases, and whole sentences.

The area of consideration can be narrowed by defining as a word in Akha all free morphemes and combinations of a free morpheme plus one or more bound, non-particle morphemes. The obligatory presence of the bound morpheme in a particular word is shown by the fact that to omit them would change the basic significance of the word. These bound morphemes

are further distinguishable from particles in that they are not constituents in phrases as the latter are. For instance, a noun phrase might consist of a noun such as /nyŋ/ 'house' plus a modifier like /yom/ 'good': /nyŋ yom/ 'good house'. Noun phrases might have noun particles, e.g. /nyŋ yom təʔə/ 'only a good house'. But morphological construction such as /bɔ/ 'water container' (/f-/ 'water' + /-bɔ/ 'container') cannot be syntactically expanded in a comparable fashion, i.e. the /f-/ being a bound derivational morpheme cannot be modified as in */f yom bɔ/ 'container for good water'.

There are two kinds of morphological processes, which I will call reduplication and derivation. Reduplication is the repetition of a syllable, or part of a syllable, to create a different word, usually semantically related to the original one but belonging to a different grammatical category. Derivation is the addition of semantically and phonologically unrelated morphemes for the same purpose of word formation. Almost one hundred per cent of all derivation occurs in noun formation, while the preponderance of reduplication results in verb constructions.

The most ubiquitous derivational morpheme is /a/ which occurs repeatedly as the initial syllable of words.

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| 1) /ächó/ | <i>breast, milk</i> |
| 2) /àjə/ | <i>what</i> |
| 3) /àkhf/ | <i>leg</i> |
| 4) /àkhɨ/ | <i>dog</i> |
| 5) /abyé?/ | <i>sprout</i> |
| 6) /áca?/ | <i>rope</i> |
| 7) /án+?/ | <i>seed</i> |
| 8) /ábò?bò?/ | <i>to embroider</i> |

This sound has its counterpart in the atonic initial /a/ in Burmese; /a/ and /o/ in Lahu; etc. If it is ever the case that /a/ can be identified as a morpheme in Akha, then it is probably identifiable as several, but it is very difficult in any case to pin-point a function or meaning for it. The most suggestive case is in the interrogatives:

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------|
| 9) /àjə/ | <i>what</i> |
| 10) /àgá/ | <i>where</i> |
| 11) /àsúyà/ | <i>who</i> |
| 12) /ámyq/ | <i>when</i> |
| 13) /àjo?/ | <i>how</i> |
| 14) /ámya?/ | <i>how much</i> |

The /a/ might be considered to be the interrogative morpheme (note the tone change).

There are numerous compounds formed by combination of full morphemes with some tonal variation on the theme of /a/, such as the following:

- 15) /áca?/ *rope*
 16) /àchó'/ *breast*
 17) /án+?/ *seed*

For compounds of this sort, their classifier for counting purposes is usually the last syllable, e.g. /áca? thí ca?/ 'one (rope of) rope'. To this extent, all the syllables of such compounds can be considered as free morphemes; but to the extent that the second syllables (the full morphemes) are restricted to this one usage, they actually are bound in some real sense. /chó'/ occurs nowhere else in the data; by contrast, /ca?/ and /n+?/ both occur extensively as classifiers, /ca?/ for rope-like objects - ropes, chains; and /n+?/ for seed-like objects - seeds, eyes, etc. But this classifier function appears to be the totality of their existence outside of morphological constructions, save in only a few instances. For morphemes like /chó'/, then, the rules for classifiers would have to account for them as some kind of reduplication or recopying of final syllables. With these facts in mind, it is hard to determine the precise relation or relations of /a/ to these other syllables. For some it seems to convert a classifier to a noun; for others like /àchó'/, there is no synchronic interpretation available. One might suspect /-chó'/ is the reflex of some earlier free morpheme.

One can surmise /a/ was once a structurally active element (perhaps still is) and part of a widespread morphological process; it is extremely frequent among the nouns, quite rare in the verbs.

There are quite a number of other bound morphemes that are isolable. I would like to provide some data, first, on just a few of them and then some discussion relevant to the data. For example:

- a) /-bḁ/ *container*
 18) /bḁ/ *water container (/í-/ water)*
 19) /sà?bḁ/ *rice steamer (/sà?/ to steam)*
 20) /khḁ/ *woman's legging (/khḁ-/ leg)*
- b) /phá-/ *cloth*
 21) /pháxḁ/ *shirt (/xḁ/ chest)*
 22) /pháthḁ/ *shoulder bag (/thḁ/ ?)*
 23) /pháyḁ/ *gunny sack (/yḁ/ ?)*
- c) /-xḁ/ *area*
 24) /dæxḁ/ *courting area in village (/dæ/ sexual)*
 25) /míxḁ/ *country (/mí-/ ground)*

- d) /-ma/ *large, important*
 26) /gáma/ *path (/gá/ place)*
 27) /là?ma/ *thumb (/là?-/ arm part)*
 28) /yà?ma/ *floor joist (/yà?/ pole)*
- e) /f-/ *water*
 29) /fçù?/ *water (/çù?-/ ?)*
 30) /fphu/ *water gourd (/phu/ ?)*
 31) /fðíðí/ *to swim (/ðí/ to strike)*
- f) /-ma/ *instrument*
 32) /yàma/ *saw (/yà/ to saw)*
 33) /tshàma/ *hoe (/tshà/ to hoe)*
- g) /-ma/ *female*
 34) /mah^h/ *first wife (/h^h/ big)*
 35) /òma/ *granddaughter (/ò/ second descending generation)*
 36) /àma/ *mother*
 37) /yaci?ma/ *hen (/yaci?/ chicken)*
- h) /mí-/ *land*
 38) /míkhà/ *boundary (/khà/ to separate)*
 39) /mítshà/ *ground (/tshà/ ?)*
 40) /míxà/ *country (/xà/ area)*
- i) /khf-/ *leg*
 41) /àkhf/ *leg*
 42) /khfbà/ *legging (/bà/ container)*
 43) /khfdu/ *lower leg (/du/ ?)*
 44) /khfphu/ *foot (/phu/ ?)*
 45) /khfnó/ *toe (/nó/ toe, finger)*
 46) /khfgqgq/ *to sit cross-legged (/gq/ ?)*
- j) /-ts+?/ *joint*
 47) /khftst+?/ *ankle (/khf-/ leg)*
 48) /là?ts+?/ *elbow (/là?-/ upper extremity)*
 49) /khðst+?/ *Adam's apple (/khð/ neck)*
 50) /ats+?/ *bamboo joint*
- k) /-nó/ *finger, toe*
 51) /là?nó/ *finger (/là?-/ upper extremity)*
 52) /khfnó/ *toe (/khf-/ lower extremity)*
 53) /chànó/ *ring finger (/chà-/ ?)*
- l) /-chá/ *little*
 54) /cháchá/ *little finger (/chá-/ ?)*