

When is an affix not a morpheme? Minor syllables in Kayah Li

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The Kayah Li* phonological word is the structure of those lexical items which are neither analyzeable compounds; truly polysyllabic morphemes like hōsophō 'airplane', nínè 'real'; nor suspect polysyllabic morphemes like donē 'recount legends' (where the first syllable may or may not recur in dōdē 'hold out, offer in the hand' and domé 'show'). This structure may be abbreviated as:

1) t T t
 | | |
 c v C C V v

Upper-case elements are required, and lower-case are optional; lower-case elements stand for subsets of the possible realizations of their upper-case counterparts. CCV is main syllable; post-main syllable v is a suffix. T= /á/ high, /ā/ mid, /a/ (unmarked) low-level, /à/ low-falling. This paper will consider the pre-main syllable element symbolized cv above, which I will call presyllable (another possibility would have been the term 'minor syllable' used in much Mon-Khmer linguistic literature). We will ignore suffixes, which are quite rare. Presyllables are common, and fall into two types:

a. ?i- may have only high or low-level tones (not mid or low-falling). The underlying tone of the presyllable undergoes dissimilation

before main syllables having high, low-level or low-falling tones (i.e., any but mid). Examples with dissimilation are: ʔíbe 'speak', ʔithá 'a plow'; with underlying tone not dissimilated: ʔínē 'to fart', ʔilū 'the Kayah New Year festival'.

b. Cə- has low-level tone exclusively. C = p t k. The presyllable's vowel copies that of the following main syllable at slower tempos and tends towards true [ə] at faster tempos.

Thus presyllables are phonologically dependent on their associated main syllables, not only in being unable to occur alone, but also in having their phonological realization partially determined by features of the main syllable: tonal features in the first type, vocalic features in the second.

At least one presyllable is an independent morpheme: tə- 'one', like the other numerals, combines with any Classifier. E.g. təpɿɔ 'one (seed, eye, button etc.)', təbō 'one (neck, ladder, rope etc.)', təphre 'one (person)'.

The next best cases of morphemically autonomous presyllables are kə- and pə- when prefixed to certain verbs with directional meaning. The following examples illustrate using the verb thɛ 'ascend' and its prefixed derivatives as directional complements to preceding head verbs phjá 'take' and jò 'extend'.

base verb: ʔa phjá the 's/he picks it up'

Sbj moves: ʔa phjá kəthe 's/he takes it and goes up'

orientational: ʔa jò pəthe 's/he raises it/holds it raised'

The following paradigm may be constructed, including all items that fit the syntactic/semantic categories even when they do not include the 'right' prefixes.

2)

<u>gloss</u>	<u>base verb</u>	<u>Sbj moves</u>	<u>Orientalional</u>
go up	the	kəthe	pəthe
go down	lɛ	kəlɛ	tālɛ
fall	tā	ʔ	tālɛ
go out	the	kəthe	pəthe
go in	nō	kənō	pənō
go nearby	thō	kəthō	-
go across	rē	kərē	pərē
arrive	tò	-	-
go curving	təka	-	-
move from home	hē	-	pəhē 'ahead'
[no verb]	-	-	kəkhjā 'backwards'
move towards	ka	-	-
home			
go	cwá	-	-

Main syllable khjā in kəkhjā 'backwards' corresponds to no verb, but occurs in the Localizer khjā ~ békjhā 'in back of, behind' (most Localizers are noun-related), and the Verb Particle khjāsé 'back again, in response'.

As for the type ?i-, the following word pairs suggest a true derivational function, the pattern being N+?i+V with a general meaning 'N for the purpose of V':

ché 'sew'; sé ?iché 'sewing machine' (sé 'large machine')

klē 'chop keeping contact'; jò ?iklē~jò klē 'chopping block' (jò 'at the base of')

phō 'chop, pound'; kũ chu ?iphō 'foot-operated tilt hammer for pounding rice' (kũ chu 'mortar')

sē 'split with a wedge'; tǎthá ?isē 'a wedge'

dé 'dip up (water)'; thāl ?idé kũ 'water hole' (thāl 'water', kũ 'hole')

A second group has only ?i- + verb, forming names of tools; as if words originally belonging to the preceding group had omitted the initial noun.

mũ 'to hammer, strike'; ?imũ 'a stick (for beating)'

thá 'to plow'; ?ithá 'a plow'

ci 'cut with scissors'; ?íci 'scissors'

pɔ 'thresh'; ?ípɔ 'a hammer'

dū 'sweep'; ?idū 'broom'

And possibly ?íkwa 'stick, switch', if related to kékwa 'be in half', təkwa 'one half' (via '(half>) piece of branch, stick').

Note that not all tool names are formed in this way (e.g. lwá 'saw', bú 'to saw', tənè 'hoe', təcē 'sickle'). There is also one noun/verb pair