LEXICAL STRUCTURES CONCERNING MOVEMENT AND SPACE IN SOME ASIAN LANGUAGES

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The main thesis of this paper is that Thai belongs to a class of languages which lexicalize the path of a movement in a monomorphemic verb, e.g. verbs like long 'to move down', k'ûn 'to move up' in long bandai 'to go down the staircase' or k'ûn bandai 'to go up the staircase' express a path with regard to the staircase. Such languages are rather common in East and in South East Asia. In earlier papers I have mainly dealt with Japanese and Korean as path languages. In the present paper I will concentrate on Thai, but I will do so in a typological perspective. I also want to show that Thai movement verbs incorporating a path carry important functions in the language. Typological facts of lexicalization, thus, are tied to other structural properties. The type as I said is rather common in South East Asia, although there is no survey of the languages concerned. E.g. also in Malay/Indonesian there is a fair amount of path incorporation in movement verbs. As the type can be found in languages of different genetic background and with different typological affiliations in other domains, one can study the interaction of lexicalization type in movement verbs with other typological features, such as presence/absence of morphological marked cases or presence/absence of prepositions or postpositions. One thing that all languages of the path type in East or South East Asia share is relational nouns with local interpretation like Thai nâa 'area in front', tâi 'area below'. At least in East Asia and South East Asia path incorporation in movement verbs seem to be in structural interaction with relational nouns.

In Thai we find sentences like
(1) welaa fǒn tòk said' aen ṣjọk
'time' 'rain' 'fall' 'earthworm' 'move out'
càak din
'separate' 'soil'
'When rain falls, earthworms (will) come out of the soil'

(2) c'awpramọŋ naam ṣmę ṣjọk t'ålee
'fisherman' 'take' 'boat' 'move out' 'lake'
'Fishermen take the boat out of the lake'

In (1) ṣjọk corresponds to something which can be rendered by a verb in English whereas in (2) ṣjọk seems more readily translatable by a preposition. There are many similar cases. Consider

(3) rōtfay că t'ũŋg krun’téep prun'nií c'áaw
'train' 'will' 'arrive' 'Bangkok' 'tomorrow' 'morning'
The train will arrive in Bangkok tomorrow morning

(4) t'áńhãan k'ãas wę k t'yọ y t'ũŋg k'eeetd'eem
'soldier' 'enemy' 'retreat' 'arrive' 'frontier'
The enemy's soldiers retreated to the border

(5) k'aw căak pay naan lęw
'he/she' 'move away' 'go' 'long (of time)' 'already'
'He left (=passed away) a long time ago'

(6) k'aw pay căak thiíníi naan lęw
'he/she' 'go' 'move away' 'place' 'this' 'long' 'already'
'He left here a long time ago'

t'ũŋg and căak in (3) and (5) behave very much the way a verb is expected to behave in English whereas the very same t'ũŋg and căak in (4) and (6) rather seem to behave like English prepositions.

Another usage of a movement verb in two different functions may be observed in the following cases: First, consider the uses of lęw in (7) and (8).

(7) p' BOTTOM lęw pay k'áanglàang suú nąŋsúmp'im
'I' 'move down' 'go' 'area at the 'buy' 'newspaper'
'I go downstairs to buy a newspaper'
(8) p'óm kràdòot log (nay) mèènáam
'I' 'jump' 'move down' 'in' 'river'
'I jump (down) into the river'

log can be used as an independent verb and as such means
'move downwards' 'move towards a position lower than the
position before the movement starts'. As such it may be
used in a simple utterance like p'óm log 'I go down' or
p'óm cè log 'I will go down'. This is the use we also
encounter in (7), pay in (7) is used the same way as
càak in (6) which we said resembled the use of an
English preposition. Note that pay might be left out in
(7) and we would still have a grammatical, albeit less
idiomatic sentence.

(7a) p'óm log k'ânlàñg sùw nànsùw p'im
'I go down to buy a newspaper'

In (8) we see log joined to the verb kràdòot 'jump'.
Here log may be likened to the English use of a verbal
particle as in go down, jump down, run down and so on.
In (8) log cannot be dropped.

(8a) *p'óm kràdòot nay mèènáam

would be ungrammatical whereas English I jump into the
river is perfectly acceptable. Similar uses can be
observed in the following pairs of sentences with the
path verbs k'ùn 'move up', k'àw 'move into' and k'âam
'move across'.

(9) k'àw k'ùn k'rùñg bin
'(s)he' 'move upwards' 'airplane'
'She/he goes aboard an airplane'

(10) nüu loyj k'ùn tàṁmāy
'snake' 'crawl' 'move upwards' 'tree'
'A snake crawls up a tree'

(11) k'âw k'àw baan
'(s)he' 'move into' 'house'
'He/she enters/goes into the house'

(12) nòk bin k'âw maa nay hɔŋɔ
'bird' 'fly' 'move into' 'come' 'in' 'room'
'A bird flies into the room' (where the person
observing the event is located, hence the use of
maa 'come').
(13) p'óm k'áam sap'aan
'I' 'move across' 'bridge'
'I crossed a bridge'

(14) rótyon lëEn k'áam sap'aan
'car' 'drive' 'move across' 'bridge'
'A car drove across the bridge'

Also きれい 'move out' which we observed in sentences (1)
and (2) can be used conjoined to another verb as in

(15) karunaa ʔaw nāŋskum きれい maa
'please' 'take/bring' 'book' 'move out' 'come'
'Please bring the book' (taking it out of the thing
in which it is contained when the sentence is being
uttered).

just as k'áam 'move across' may be used in ways
resembling an English preposition similar to sentences
(2), (4) and (6) as in

(16) k'on t'ay cá saaŋ sap'aan
'human being' 'Thai' 'will' 'build' 'bridge'

k'áam mëEn k'óŋ
'more across' 'Mekong'

'The Thai people will build a bridge across the
river Mekong'.

This multiple use of verbs is not restricted to movement
verbs expressing a path with regard to an object. It is
found also with pay 'go', for instance:

(17) p'óm c'sāp pay dām nay pàa
'I' 'like' 'go' 'walk' 'in' 'forest'
'I like going for a walk in the forest'

(18) rótyay pay kruŋt'eep śō k weelaa hòk
'train' 'go' 'Bangkok' 'move out' 'time' 'six'

mooŋ c'áaw
'hour' 'morning'

'The train for Bangkok will leave at six o'clock in
the morning'

and with yet other verbs, e.g. pen 'be' (in the sense of
expressing being a member of a class):