In her recent comparative study on questions in Hmong Marybeth Clark (1985) quoted me correctly in saying that "[...] it is possible to have a V-NEG-V question in the Mon language spoken in Thailand but not that spoken in Burma (1985.60)."

In our correspondence, sometime in 1983, I mentioned the idea (which I seem to remember discussing with Shorto in class in the late 1970s) that it might be a calque of, or a case of Analogiebildung to, Burma Mon V-lè-V, as in the following (1):

**Burma Mon** | **Thai Mon** | **English**
---|---|---
klæŋ lè klæŋ | klæŋ hù? klæŋ | if you want to come, do # are you coming?
døŋ hù? døŋ | | are you tired, or not?

Having done more work with Mons in Burma in the meantime, I have to admit that my original claim is no longer true; younger Mons from Burma are using constructions involving an auxiliary, both in spoken and literary Mon, such as

1 klæŋ k̐ə? hù? k̐ə? | | may I come, or not?
**come/AUX/NEG/AUX**

However, my own intuition is still uneasy about it, and I maintain that it is a calque or Analogiebildung due to contact with lè being a Mon-Burmese contact-word, attested since MM when extensive borrowing from Burmese occurred, lè meaning *if [conditional-consequent*ial] in colloquial, as distinct from formal, speech; in the latter case it is yo? ra?-[CLAUSE]-mækə. lè may also be a nominal clitic, co-occurring frequently with clause-final kom or with clause-initial bən even *if, even though, though*. Apart from absence of any epigraphic evidence the main reason for my assumption is that a variant of absolute questions (Yes/No questions) with
a 'rhetorical' implication anticipating an affirmative reply exists already in modern Mon:

2  ᵇᵉʰ ᵏˡᵃⁿ ⁿᵘ  ᵃⁿ ᵇᵃⁿ ᵇᵃⁿ ʰᵘ?  sᵉᵃⁿ ʰᵃ  hᵉ's ᶠʳᵒᵐ  kᵃʷᵇᵉⁱⁿ,  iˢⁿᵗ  hᵉ?
   pʳⁿ/COME/p/VILLAGE/N/N/NEG/NEG BE/Q

3  ᵃⁿ ᵇᵃ ᵃⁿ ᵇᵃ ᵇᵃⁿ ʰᵘ?  sᵉᵃⁿ ʰᵃ  once  yᵒᵘ'vᵉ  fᵘˡˡʸ  rᵉｃᵒCOVERY,  yᵒᵘ'lˡ  gᵒ  hᵒᵐᵉ,  wᵒⁿ't  yᵒᵘ?
   iˡ❧ᵉⁿᵉˢṣ/RELEASE/p/RETURN/NEG BE/Q

Disjunctive co-ordination in Mon, corresponding to the English translation-equivalent of 'or', other than at clause level either ... or, is not overtly marked. Yet, disjunctive constructions are attested since MM:

4  MM  ᵇᵈᵃʸ  tʰᵃⁿ  mᵃ  dᵃⁿ  cⁿⁱⁿʰ  kᵘⁱᵐ  lᵃʳ ;  tʰᵃⁿ  mᵃ  hᵃ  sᵉⁿ  (2)
    wᵉᵗʰᵉʳ  iⁿ  a  p❧ᵃᶜᵉ  wｈⁱᶜʰ  iˢ  a  lᵃⁿᵈⁱⁿᵍ  p❧ᵃᶜᵉ  oʳ  iⁿ  oⁿᵉ  w𝕙ⁱᶜʰ  iˢ  nᵒt
    LOC/PLACE/REL/BE/GHAT/p/p/PLACE/REL/NEG/NEG BE

5  LＭ  kᵃ'  kᵘⁱʷ  tᵏᵃ'  'ᵃʳᵉʷ  wᵒʰᵃ  mᵃⁿ  bᵃ  wʷᵃ'  'ᵃᵈʰⁱᵖᵖᵃʸ  ᵇᵉ'  tᵘᵖ  hᵃ  hʷᵃ'  tᵘᵖ  hᵃ  (3)
    kᵃ'  aⁿᵈ  tᵏᵃ',  dᵒ  tʰᵉˢᵉ  tʷᵒ  wᵒʳᵈˢ  hᵃᵛᵉ  thte  sᵃⁿᵉ  mᵉᵃⁿⁱｎᵍ,  oʳ  nᵒt?
    NECK/p/ISLAND/SPEECH/WORD/MON/2/CL/MEANING/PRN/SIMILAR/Q/NEG/SIMILAR/Q

6  SＭ  nᵃⁱ  cʰᵃᵒ  kᵒⁿ  kˡᵃⁿ  hᵃ  hᵘ?  kˡᵃⁿ  hᵃ
    iˢ  Nᵃⁱ  Cʰᵃᵒ  cᵒᵐⁱⁿᵍ,  oʳ  nᵒt?
    Nᵃⁱ/Cʰᵃᵒ/CL/COME/Q/NEG/COME/Q

These constructions pose a number of problems which can be linked to another suggestion made in the same article (Clark 1985.63) that the absolute question-marker in Thai and Lao may be related to the preverbal negative particle; this may have some implications for Mon.

In the above-mentioned sentences (2) to (4) the verb MM sᵉⁿ SM sᵉᵃⁿ, pleonastically occurring with the preverbal negative particle MM hᵃ Lⁿ hᵃ, hʷᵃ', hᵘ SM hᵘ?, is the negative equivalent of the verb of existence to be which cannot be negated unless it occurs in a serial construction following the head-verb; it also negates attributive clauses. The non-negated form in (3) is confined to questions. The absolute question-marker LM hᵃ SM hᵃ occurs
always in sentence-final position and can turn any declarative sentence into a question without necessitating a change in word-order.

Sentences (5) and (6) illustrate disjunctive questions. My own 'acquired' intuition about Mon, combined with the historical evidence, however scant, leaves no doubt as to the unusual character of such constructions.

As for the second suggestion about the relationship between question-markers and preverbal negative particles, spoken Mon ḥū? cannot be related to the absolute question-marker SM ha (probably corresponding to an OM clitic -a/); however, the relative question-marker SM rao LM ro is homophonous with a negative emphatic particle SM rao LM ro. The following examples from SM will illustrate this:

7 ǝkhoiŋ ɭ̂ɔ ɭɔ pɔ̀ŋ ɗɛŋ hʊ? ɭɛm ɭɛm  he doesn't know yet when he'll be coming
   time/CL/arrive/CL/prN/NEG/know/yet

8 ǝkhoiŋ ɭ̂ɔ ɭɔ pɔ̀ŋ ɗɛŋ ɭɛm ɭa  does he know when he will come?
   time/CL/arrive/CL/prN/know/Q

9 kɛ? aŋk mɔ? cŋ? rao  how old are you?
   get/age/what/Q-CL/Q

10 ɓɔŋ rao hʊ? ɓɔŋ kətaŋ rao hʊ? kətaŋ  he is neither cold nor hot [= he
   has not developed a temperature]
   cold/-/-/NEG/cold/hot/-/-/NEG/hot

11 ɓɔŋ rao ɓɔŋ hʊ? lɛp chʉŋ rao chʉŋ hʊ? lɛp(4)  he can neither read nor write
   read/-/-/read/NEG/able/write/-/-/write/
   NEG/able

The earlier reflexes of LM ro, OM yo and MM ro, functioned both as relative question-marker and assertive/positive (!) emphatic S-final particle:

12 OM mu kal ma ɗɛŋ síc ɗaš yo(5) when will he come down and be born?
   what/time/REL/prN/descend/BE/-/-

13 OM smiŋ dəwataŋ rɔw goŋyo(6) thus it is, king of gods
   king/god/manner/CL/-/-
Three conclusions can be drawn from the above sentences (9) to (13):
SM rao is not a negative emphatic marker as stated in Shorto DSM (1962)\(^{(7)}\)
since it occurs only in contexts which are already negated by SM hû?; from
this follows that it has retained the semantic scope of its earlier reflex,
namely (i) marking relative questions and (ii) being an emphatic clause-
marker even though the word-order of the latter has changed. The only
discernable difference between its use in OM and SM is that it is not attested
in negated contexts in OM and does not occur in affirmative contexts in SM,
that is always co-occurs with SM hû? as preverbal (and pre-auxiliary)
negative particle. Finally, one can identify only indirect diffusion,
possibly from Tai, that seems to have confined SM rao to its negated con-
texts.

Noteworthy, however, is that in some dialects in Thailand the preverbal
negative particle is SM ?ao ~ ?ao? spelt LM 'o which Shorto noted during the
early 1950s as assertive. The question now is: Can it be related to SM
rao (< OM yo) or is it a variant of SM hû? LM hwa'? It should be noted
that SM hû? shows unnatural register and ought to correspond to SM **hao?
or SM **hû?; the possibility of the first is strengthened by contemporary
spellings in both countries of SM hû? ~ ?ao ~ ?ao? as LM hu.\(^{(8)}\)

NOTES

(1) Burma Mon and Thailand Mon (or Thai Mon) are strictly areal terms
and do not imply dialect divisions. Mons in Thailand use a slightly more
archaic variety of Mon script; the lexicon of each variety shows a
greater proportion of Thai loans and Burmese loans respectively. Burma
Mon sustains the tendency toward verb-finality and disyllabic word-
structures whereas Thai Mon favors monosyllabic reductions even of
grammatical markers and particles.

Interlinear glosses are, I hope, self-explanatory. CL are clitics, Q
are question-markers, p particles and prN pronouns. My transcription of
SM is identical with Shorto's DSM 1962, ignoring, for the sake of
standardization, dialect differences which are considerable. LM, MM, OM
forms are transliterated according to Blagden-Duroiselle, as explained by
Shorto in DMI 1971.
(2) XII.C.6 Dated by Shorto c. AD 1480.


(4) Shorto 1962 DSM.

(5) III.C.9

(6) I.F.3

(7) Shorto actually speaks of a "negative reinforcing particle". But it cannot occur by itself unless it is S-final, and then it functions as a Q-marker for relative questions.

(8) It should be noted, however, that Shorto's particle may be of a different etymology altogether since it is spelt LM 'au. It is still used in LM in both countries to mark deferential statements (S-final); it also marks the end of titles of traditional palm-leaf MSS.

Apart from the overtly marked absolute questions in Mon (S-ha) - a Mon-Karen contact-word - we can summarize the distributional properties of so-called 'disjunctive questions' as follows:

```
  V1  AUX2-  NEG  V1-  AUX2-
  Q    Q
```


Nakhorn Pathom
30 September 1985