NOMINAL AUXILIARIES IN LAI[1]

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This discussion is concerned primarily with the Lai word *awk* as in (1) to (4) below. In particular, we want to determine the lexical category to which it belongs and the syntactic structure(s) in which it appears. The conclusion will be that it is a noun which functions as an auxiliary predicate.

(1) *Ka kal awk a si.*
(2) *Kal awk ka si.*
     'I should go.'

In (1) and (2), *awk* carries the meaning of obligation, corresponding to English 'should', 'must' or 'have to'. The preceding *ka kal* 'I go' or *kal* 'go' appear to be a sentential or verbal complement. The following *a si* 'it is' or *ka si* 'I am' are apparently the Lai copula. The verb particles *ka* and *a* mark agreement of a finite verb with its subject, respectively first and third person singular.[2] The construction in (1) is impersonal, with the complement marked for subject agreement, while that in (2) is personal, with the copula marked for subject agreement. There is a difference in meaning, whereby the subject is contrasted or emphasized in (2).

We take the structure of (1) to be as in (i).

(i)
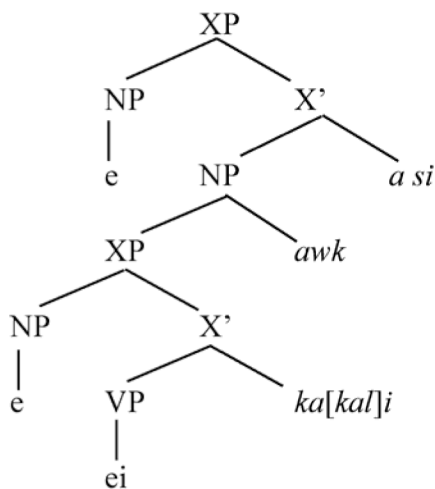
In (i), *awk* is the head noun of a predicate noun phrase which also contains a sentential complement. Like other nouns, *awk* cannot be marked for tense/aspect or agreement and such markers appear on the copula *si*.

Similarly, we take the structure of (2) to be as in (ii).

(ii)
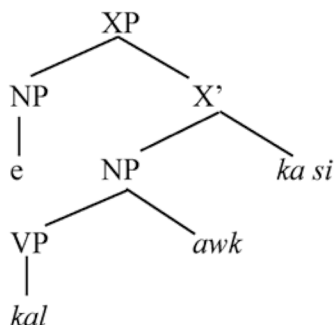
The difference between (i) and (ii) is that in the latter, the complement of *awk* is a VP rather than an XP. The semantic subject of *kal* in (ii) must be interpreted to be the subject of *awk*; this presumably characterizes the VP complement structure.[3] In (i), where *kal* has its own independent subject, the subject of *awk* must be interpreted as non-referential.

Awk appears in a distinct construction, illustrated by (3) and (4), where it seems to lack the meaning of obligation.[4]

(3)   *Kal awkah ka trih.*
(4)   *Kal awk ka trih.*
        'I am afraid to go.'

In these sentences, the main predicate is the verb *trih* 'be afraid' and the noun phrase headed by *awk* is a complement to it. (3) differs from (4) in the presence of the postposition *ah*, which cannot be used when *awk* is the main predicate.[5] Thus (5) and (6) are ungrammatical as compared with (1) and (2).

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[3] Sentences like (2) represent a case of the clitic climbing construction as discussed in Bedell 1996a.

[4] Some may wish to say on semantic grounds that the *awk* in (1) and (2) is a different word from the *awk* in (3) and (4). Our position is that they are the same word, interpreted differently according to the syntactic context. The situation may be compared to English sentences like the following.
   (a)   John is to go.
   (b)   John is afraid to go.
   In (a) there is a meaning associated with the infinitive which is not present in (b). English has no counterpart of Lai *awk* here, but we think it undesirable to identify the meaning in question with the copula *be* or the infinitive marker *to*. Whether *awk* is one word or two has little bearing on the issues raised here.

[5] The postposition *ah* is written as a suffix to certain words, including *awk* in our examples. It is however separable (see for example sentence (76) below) and syntactically a postposition.
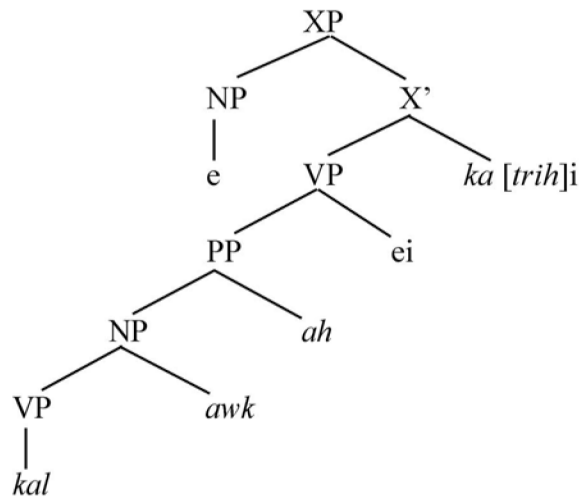
(5)   *Ka kal awkah a si.*
(6)   *Kal awkah ka si.*

The possibility of *ah* provides additional evidence for the nominal nature of *awk*, since the complement of a postposition is typically a noun phrase.

We take the structure of (3) to be as in (iii).

(iii)

The noun phrase *kal awk* in (iii) is syntactically identical to that in (ii); since *awk* is not a predicate in (iii) it has no subject associated with it, and its subject is interpreted to be the subject of the main verb *trih*. The structure of (4) is the same as (iii), except that no postpositional phrase (and therefore no postposition *ah*) is present; here the complement of *trih* is a noun phrase.

The construction in (3) and (4) differs from (1) and (2) in a second respect: there is no impersonal variant. Sentences (7) and (8) are grammatical, but interpreted as having two distinct referential subjects, one for *kal* and one for *trih*.

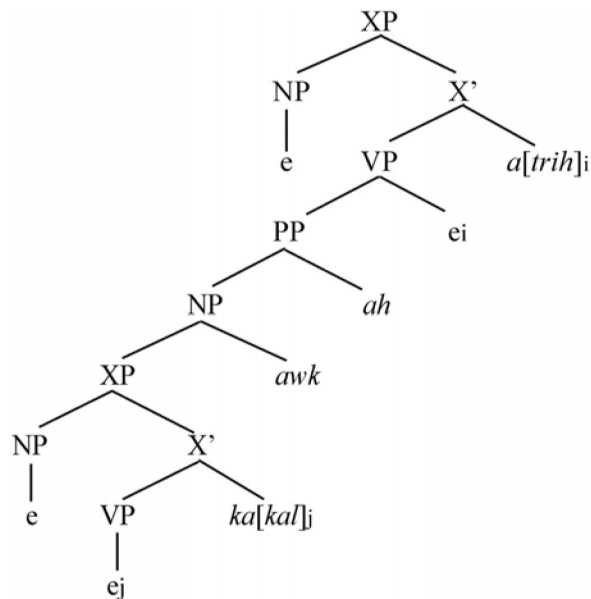(7)   *Ka kal awkah a trih.*
(8)   *Ka kal awk a trih.*
         'He/she is afraid I will go.'

This is clearly necessary, since unlike the copula *si*, *trih* is an independent predicate and must have a referential subject.

We take the structure of (7) to be as in (vii).

(vii)

In (vii), the noun phrase *ka kal awk* is syntactically identical to that in (i); as with (4), the structure of (8) differs from (vii) in the absence of PP over it.

In sentences (1) through (8), the verb *kal* of the complement is intransitive. But transitive verbs may equally appear in this position, as illustrated in (9) to (16) for *awk* as a predicate.

(9)   *Kan chawnh awk a si.*
(10)   *In chawnh awk ka si.*
(11)   *Ka chawnh awk na si.*
(12)   *Chawnh awk kan si.*
        'I must speak to you.'

(13)   *Na ka bawmh awk a si.*
(14)   **Ka bawmh awk na si.*
(15)   *Na bawmh awk ka si.*
(16)   *Bawmh awk na ka si.*
        'You must help me.'

(9) through (16) are parallel to (1) and (2) except that the verbs *chawnh* 'speak' and *bawmh* 'help' take an object in addition to a subject.

(9) and (13) are impersonal, with the complement verb marked for both subject and object agreement. *Kan* marks a first person singular subject simultaneously with a second person singular object. *Na* marks a second person singular subject and *ka* a first person singular object; in this case the two arguments are marked independently.[6] As shown by (10), (11) and (15) either the subject or object may appear as the subject of the copula in the personal construction. As in the case of (1) versus (2), these choices signal differences in contrast or emphasis. The ungrammaticality of (14) follows from the interpretation of *ka*

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6 See footnote 2.

as a subject agreement marker unless accompanied by a preceding subject marker. It is grammatical (parallel to (11)) with the meaning 'I must help you'.[7] It is also possible, as illustrated in (12) and (16), to have a personal construction in which both subject and object agreement appear on the copula. Such complex copula agreement is found only with nominal auxiliaries. To accommodate such sentences, we need to 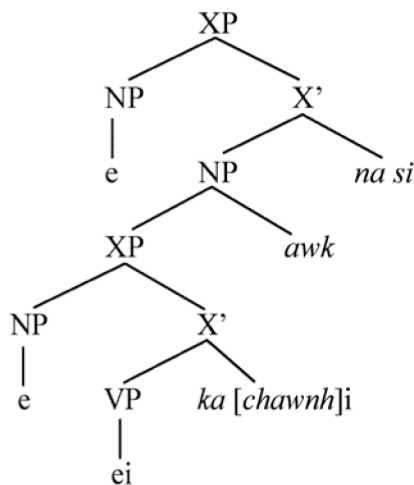allow *awk* to take complements consisting of an object agreement phrase (YP) as well as to allow the missing object of a transitive verb to be interpreted as the subject of a higher clause.

Thus we take the structures of (10), (11) and (12) to be as in (x), (xi) and (xii).

(x)
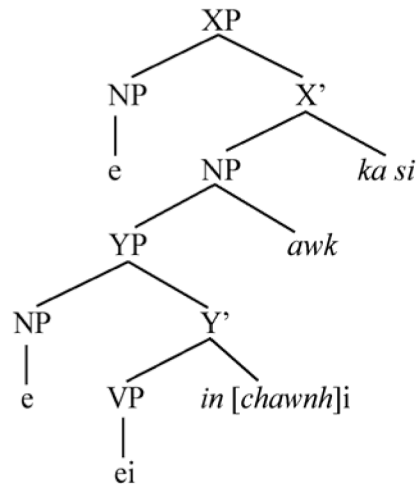
(xi)

Corresponding examples of *awk* as the head noun of a complement are (17) to (22).

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[7] Albert Ceuhlun reports (personal communication) that in his Lai, sentences like (14) are grammatical with *ka* interpreted as object agreement. For him, both (11) and (14) are ambiguous. He interprets the meanings in which *ka* represents the subject of *chawnh* or *bawmh* as possessives with nominalized *chawnh-awk* 'someone to speak to' or *bawmh-awk* 'someone to help'. Thus (11) may be glossed 'you are my someone to speak to' and (14) as 'you are my someone to help'. (10) and (15) are not similarly ambiguous due to the distinction between *na* and *in*.

(17)   *Kan ton awkah ka ra lai.*
(18)   *In ton awkah ka ra lai.*
(19)   *(Nangmah) ton awkah ka ra lai.*
          'I will come to meet you.'

(20)   *Kan ton awk ka ra lai.*
(21)   *In ton awk ka ra lai.*
(22)   *(Nangmah) ton awk ka ra lai.*
          'I will come to meet you.'

Like *trih* in (3) and (4) or (7) and (8), *ra* 'come' has a fixed argument structure, and cannot occur in the impersonal form. Agreement on the head verb of the *awk* complement is possible, but not required just as in the earlier examples. If subject agreement is absent, the subject of that verb, here *ton* 'meet', is interpreted as the subject of *ra*. If object agreement is absent, the interpretation will be that the object is third person singular, unless an overt pronoun such as *nangmah* 'you' appears, as in (19) or (22).

We take the structure of (17) to be as in (xvii).[8] The structures of (18) to (22) may be derived from (xvii) by omitting the lower XP, the YP (whose head is the object agreement marker *in* or *n*) or the PP (whose head is *ah*). Examples like (18) or (21) show that *awk* may take a YP complement.

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[8]   Albert Ceuhlun reports (personal communication) that in his Lai, sentences like (17) to (19) are ungrammatical. He rejects (23) below, and interprets (24) as containing a possessive *ka* with nominalized *kal-awk* as in footnote 8.

(xvii)

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                              XP
                        ┌──────┴──────┐
                       NP             X'
                        │        ┌─────┴─────┐
                        e       ZP          ka[ [ra]ⱼ lai]ᵢ
                           ┌─────┴─────┐
                          VP          eᵢ
                     ┌─────┴─────┐
                    PP          eⱼ
               ┌─────┴─────┐
              NP          ah
          ┌────┴────┐
         XP        awk
     ┌────┴────┐
    NP        X'
     │    ┌────┴────┐
     e   YP        ka[n [ton]ₗ ]ₖ
     ┌────┴────┐
    NP        Y'
     │    ┌────┴────┐
     e   VP        ek
     ┌────┴────┐
    NP        el
     │
     e
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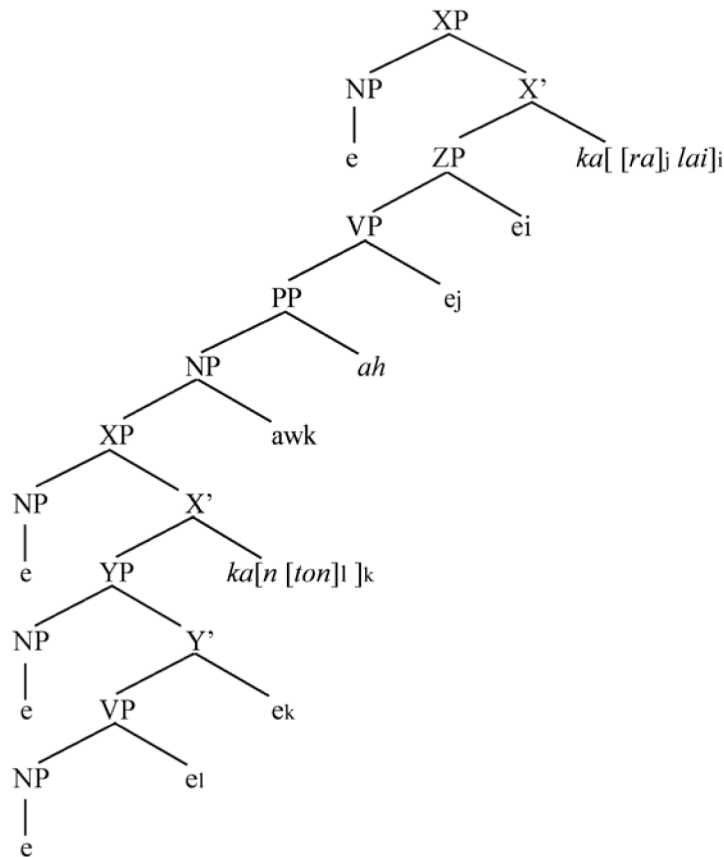
The structure and meaning also depend on the particular main verb. Notice first that it is quite possible with *ra* to repeat the subject agreement on the complement verb, as in (17) and (20). It is possible to do this also with *trih*, as in (23) or (24).

(23) *Ka kal awkah ka trih.*
(24) *Ka kal awk ka trih.*
      'I am afraid to go.'

With *ra* the meaning of the *awk* clause in (17) to (22) is similar if not identical to a purpose clause as in (25) to (27).[9]

(25) *Kan ton awk caah ka ra lai.*
(26) *In ton awk caah ka ra lai.*
(27) *(Nangmah) ton awk caah ka ra lai.*
      'I will come in order to meet you.'

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9 The purpose meaning in (17) to (22) is similar to the meaning of obligation discussed in footnote 4. There an English parallel in this case as well:
   (c) John came to see me.
   (d) John came in order to see me.
   We would not attribute the purpose meaning either to *awk* or to derivation by deletion from paraphrases like (25) to (27). But this matter also has little bearing on the issues here.

These differ in the appearance of an additional noun *ca* following *awk*. With *trih* the purpose meaning is absent, and there is no paraphrase as in (28).

(28)   *Kal awk caah ka trih.*
           '*I am afraid in order to go.'

          Awk clauses may appear with a variety of main verbs; two additional examples are *fial* 'order' and *tlak* 'deserve, be worthy'. *Fial* is transitive as in (29) to (32), and *tlak* (usually) reflexive as in (33) to (36).

(29)   *Na kal awkah kan fial.*
(30)   *Kal awkah kan fial.*
(31)   *Na kal awk kan fial.*
(32)   *Kal awk kan fial.*
           'I order you to go.'

(33)   *Ka kal awkah kaa tlak lo.*
(34)   *Kal awkah kaa tlak lo.*
(35)   *Ka kal awk kaa tlak lo.*
(36)   *Kal awk kaa tlak lo.*
           'I don't deserve to go.'

The reflexive *tlak* behaves like intransitive *trih* or ra, but with *fial*, the subject of the complement verb *kal* is understood to be the object rather than the subject.
          We take the structure of (29) to be as in (xxix). As with (xvii), structures for (30) to (32) correspond to omitting either the lower XP or the PP.

(xxix)
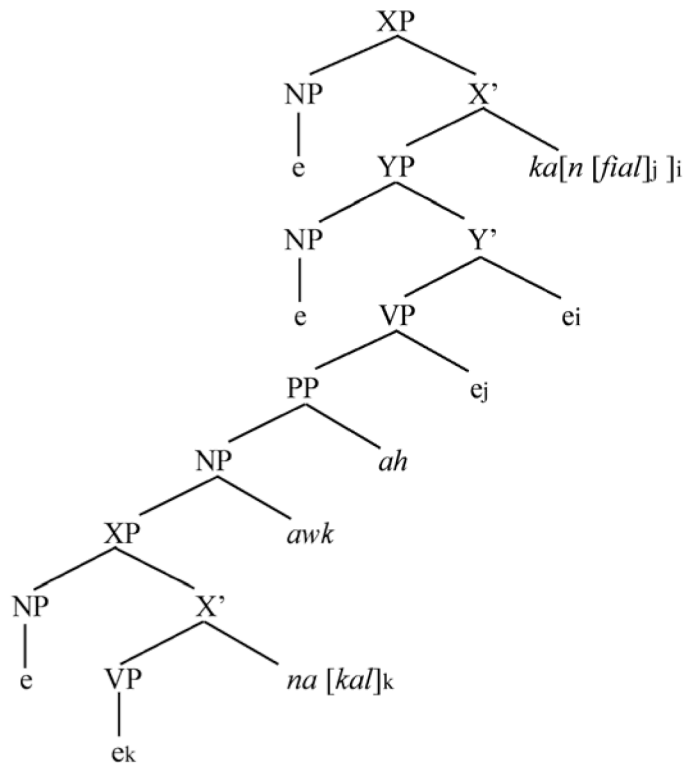
Lai verbs may have more than two arguments, as illustrated in (37) to (44). The verb *pek* 'give' takes an indirect object in addition to a subject and direct object.

(37)   *Tangka kan pek awk a si.*
(38)   *Tangka in pek awk ka si.*
(39)   *Tangka ka pek awk na si.*
(40)   *Tangka pek awk kan si.*
        'I must give you some money.'

The verb *trialpiak* 'write for' is a benefactive, and takes a beneficiary in addition to the subject and object of *trial* 'write'.[10]

(41)   *Cakuat na ka trialpiak awk a si.*
(42)   **Cakuat ka trialpiak awk na si.*
(43)   *Cakuat na trialpiak awk ka si.*
(44)   *Cakuat trialpiak awk na ka si.*
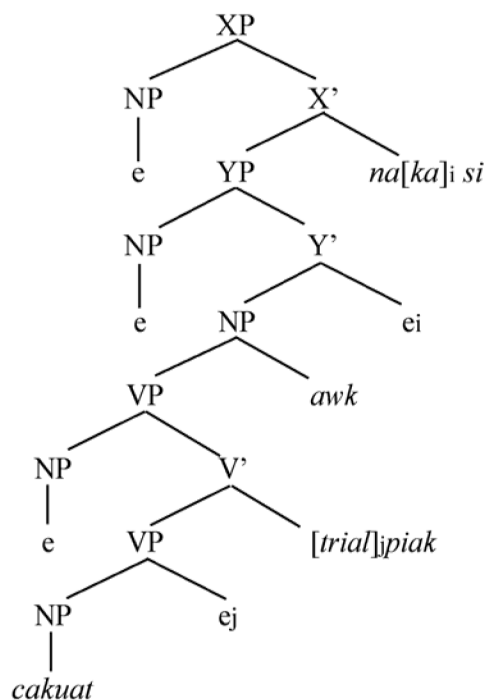   'You must write a letter for me.'

But Lai verbs may agree with no more than two arguments, and verbs like these introduce nothing new.[11]
        We take the structure of (44) to be as in (xliv).

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[10] For discussion of benefactive sentences in Lai, see Bedell 1997.
[11] Albert Ceuhlun interprets sentences like (38), (39), (41) and (42) in the same way as the examples in footnote 8.

(xliv)

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                        XP
                   ╱         ╲
                 NP            X'
                 │          ╱     ╲
                 e        YP        na[ka]ᵢ si
                      ╱       ╲
                    NP          Y'
                    │        ╱     ╲
                    e       NP       ei
                         ╱     ╲
                       VP        awk
                    ╱     ╲
                  NP        V'
                  │       ╱    ╲
                  e      VP      [trial]ⱼpiak
                      ╱    ╲
                    NP       ej
                    │
                  cakuat
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Sentences (45) through (60) illustrate the occurrence of transitive verbs in *awk* complements to transitive and reflexive verbs. The patterns are parallel to those illustrated in (17) to (22) and (29) through (44). (46) and (50) are ungrammatical in the intended meaning for the same reason as (14) and (42). However, given the semantics of the main verb *fial*, no grammatical interpretation is available in this case. Just as in (19) or (22), if object agreement is absent in the complement clause, the relevant object will be understood as third person unless an overt pronoun appears.

(45)   *Tangka na ka pek awkah kan fial.*
(46)   **Tangka ka pek awkah kan fial.*
(47)   *(Keimah) tangka na pek awkah kan fial.*
(48)   *(Keimah) tangka pek awkah kan fial.*
(49)   *Tangka na ka pek awk kan fial.*
(50)   **Tangka ka pek awk kan fial.*
(51)   *(Keimah) tangka na pek awk kan fial.*
(52)   *(Keimah) tangka pek awk kan fial.*
        'I order you to give me some money.'

(53)   *Cakuat kan trialpiak awkah na ka fial maw?*
(54)   *Cakuat in trialpiak awkah na ka fial maw?*
(55)   *(Nangmah) cakuat ka trialpiak awkah na ka fial maw?*
(56)   *(Nangmah) cakuat trialpiak awkah na ka fial maw?*
(57)   *Cakuat kan trialpiak awk na ka fial maw?*
(58)   *Cakuat in trialpiak awk na ka fial maw?*
(59)   *(Nangmah) cakuat ka trialpiak awk na ka fial maw?*

(60)   *(Nangmah) cakuat trialpiak awk na ka fial maw?*
        'Do you order me to write a letter for you?'

In addition to *awk*, there is at least one other Lai word which may be regarded as a nominal auxiliary, at least in some of its uses. Sentences like (61) to (64) are variants of (1) to (4); the meaning of *ding* here is very close to that of *awk* in the former examples.

(61)   *Ka kal ding a si.*
(62)   *Kal ding ka si.*
        'I should go.'
(63)   *Kal dingah ka trih.*
(64)   *Kal ding ka trih.*
        'I am afraid to go.'

However, *ding* also appears as an adverbial particle within the Lai verb complex, as in examples like (65).

(65)   *Ka kal ding.*
        'I will certainly go.'

Since the copula *a si* may be used to emphasize any predication, a sentence like (61) will be ambiguous, interpretable also as (65). But (62) to (64) cannot be so understood. In any case, *awk* is not used as a parallel adverbial particle.[12]

(66)   **Ka kal awk.*

Some examples follow of the constructions discussed, taken from the 1978 translation of the Bible. (67) to (69) are impersonal sentences with the predicate *awk*, parallel to sentence (1). The agreement particles are underlined (the verb *thlacam* 'pray' is intransitive, while *thrit* 'marry' is transitive). (69) shows a copula sentence as complement to the predicate *awk*. No examples have been found illustrating the remaining possibilities in examples like (9) to (16).

(67)   *Hi bantuk hin thla cu <u>nan</u> cam awk a si.* (Mt. 6: 9)
        'You should pray like this.'

(68)   *Herodias cu <u>na</u> thrit awk a si lo.* (Mt. 14: 4)
        'You must not marry Herodias.'

(69)   *Ahohmanh pakhatnak si a duhmi cu nan sal <u>a</u> si awk a si* (Mt. 20: 27)
        'Whoever wants to be first must be your slave.'[13]

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[12] There are varieties of Lai in which *awk* is used as an adverbial particle, and sentences like (66) are grammatical.

[13] In structures like (i), (ii), (x), (xi), (xii) and (xliv), we treated the copula *si* as an element of X which appears only when agreement must be specified for a nominal auxiliary. But as shown by sentences like (69) and (75) below, this is not the case in general. The copula may appear

(70) and (71) by contrast are personal sentences with the agreement markers (again underlined) appearing with the copula *si*, parallel to sentence (2).

(70)　　*Pathian nih tuah awk a̱ si a timi paoh cu* (Mt. 3: 15)
　　　　　'all the things which God says must be done'

(71)　　*Mi nih zeitindah kan cungah an tuah lai ti kha phan awk <u>kan</u> si fawn.* (Mt. 21: 26)
　　　　　'We should fear what people will do to us.'

Sentences (72) and (73) are examples of *awk* heading complement clauses with and without the postposition *ah*, parallel to sentences (3) and (4).[14]

(72)　　*Cuka i va <u>um</u> awk cu a trih.* (Mt. 2: 22)
　　　　　'He was afraid to go and stay there.'

(73)　　*Mari hi na nupi ca i <u>lak</u> awkah trih hlah.* (Mt. 1: 20)
　　　　　'Do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife.'

Sentences (74) to (77) are similar examples with a variety of different verbs which may take *awk* complements. In all these cases the verb directly under *awk* (underlined) is without agreement.

(74)　　*Herod nih hin ngakchia hi <u>thah</u> awkah a kawl lai.* (Mt. 2: 13)
　　　　　'Herod will order the child to be killed.'

(75)　　*Ka zul u law, mi tlaitu <u>si</u> awk kan cawnpiak hna lai.* (Mt. 4: 19)
　　　　　'Follow me, and I will teach you to be fishers of men.'

(76)　　*An cawnpiaknak kha <u>tlinter</u> awk tu ah ka ra.* (Mt. 5: 17)
　　　　　'I come to fulfill their teaching.'

(77)　　*Hel mei chung i <u>tlak</u> awkah aa tlakmi nan si lai.* (Mt. 5: 22)
　　　　　'You will deserve to fall into Hell.'

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without agreement in infinitive constructions under *duh* 'want' or *awk* itself. Presumably these instances of *si* must be verbs rather than dummy Xs.

[14] Sentences like (72) and (73) provide a further argument in favor of the nominal nature of *awk*. The phrases *cuka i* and *ca i* are variants of *cuka ah* and *caah*, respectively. Presumably the variation affects the postposition *ah* (see also footnote 5 above), which changes to *i* when the PP it heads modifies a noun rather than a verb. Compare (c) and (d).
(e)　*Cuka ah a um.*
　　　He was there.
(f)　*Mari hi a nupi caah a lak.*
　　　He took Mary for his wife.
The variation is apparently triggered by *awk* in (72) and (73), but is not really accounted for by our analysis (in which *um* and *lak* retain their verbal nature). An additional example is (77) below.

Examples with *ding* are (78) to (82). (78) is an impersonal sentence parallel to (61): *ding* here could be either the nominal auxiliary or the adverbial particle (though in context the meaning seems to fit better with the former analysis).

(78)   *kannih cu na kan chuah ding a si ahcun* (Mt. 8: 31)
         'if you have to expel us'
         'if you will definitely expel us'

(79) is parallel to (62); that is a personal sentence in which *ding* must be analyzed as a nominal auxiliary because the verb below it (*pek* 'give') lacks agreement.

(79)   *Tangka cu misifak hna kha pek khawh ding a si trung.* (Mt. 26: 9)
         'the money should be able to be given to the poor'

In (80), the nominalized clause *chim ding* 'what you should say' lacks agreement entirely, but the meaning is consistent with a nominal auxiliary analysis.[15]

(80)   *A can a phak tikah chim ding cu pek nan si te ko lai.* (Mt. 10: 19)
         'When the time comes, what you should say will be given to you.'

(81) is parallel to (63), with the presence of the postposition *ah* inconsistent with an adverbial particle analysis.

(81)   *Nang ka inn i rat dingah hin kaa tlak lo.* (Mt. 8: 8)
         'I do not deserve for you to come to my house.'

Sentences like (82), on the other hand, are inconsistent with a nominal auxiliary analysis.

(82)   *Hi nawlbia cu ka zulh ding cang hna.* (Mt. 19: 20)
         'I definitely have followed these laws.'

Hay-Neave (1948) mentions *awk* in two places. It is listed under 'Auxiliary Verb Particles' (p. 21) as meaning 'obligation', with the example (83).

(83)   *A hngal lo sihmansehlaw hngalh awk a si.*
         'He doesn't know but he ought to.'

It is also listed as a suffix under 'Nouns Formed from Verbs' (p. 38) as meaning 'something to' or 'something for', with the examples (84) to (86).

(84)   *trih-awk*   something to fear, i. e. a dread
(85)   *ei-awk*   something to eat, i. e. an eatable
(86)   *din-awk*   something to drink, i. e. a drink

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[15] The main verb of (80) is passive, as signalled by the presence of the copula. See Bedell 1996b for discussion of Lai passives.

Clearly these correspond to the two uses of *awk* distinguished in our examples (1) and (2) as a predicate versus (3) and (4) as a complement head. Though Hay-Neave does not raise the question of whether they are the same word or not, he assigns them different grammatical status and different meanings, and so seems not to identify them. No example has been found of a clearly lexicalized noun parallel to (84) to (86).[16] Hay-Neave may have had in mind cases like (87) or (88).

(87)   *Nanmah nih ei awk zeilo pe hna u.* (Mt. 14: 16)
         'You give them something to eat.'

(88)   *atu cu rawl ei awk an ngeih ti lo caah* (Mt. 15: 32)
         'because now they have no food to eat'

In these sentences, *ei awk* is a kind of nominalized clause parallel to *chim ding* in (80) and not a derived noun. That is, it has the same analysis in sentences like (89) or (90), to which Hay-Neave's analysis cannot apply.

(89)   *Khuazei in dah ka ei awk ka rawl cu ka hmuh lai?* (Mt. 6: 31)
         'Where will I find my food that I should eat?'

(90)   *Rawl ei awkah khan an thru.* (Mt. 26: 20)
         'They sat down to eat.'

Hay-Neave does not mention *ding* at all in his grammatical discussion.

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[16] In this connection, see the interpretations of Albert Ceuhlun discussed in footnotes 8 and 11. His Lai seems to contain such nominalizations.