Kinship Classifiers in Tibeto-Burman Languages of the Yi Branch

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1.   INTRODUCTION

In a number of quite closely-related Tibeto-Burman languages of southwestern China and adjacent Southeast Asia, there are specific collective numeral classifiers for family groups (FGCs). These are morphosyntactically distinct from other classifiers: they mostly have two syllables comprising two morphemes, while all other classifiers are monomorphemic, and nearly all others are monosyllabic. All classifiers (Clf) in these languages, as in many other Tibeto-Burman languages, occur obligatorily immediately after a number (Num); the head noun being counted, if any, precedes the Num + Clf. Examples are given from various languages including Akha and Hani, which are from the Southern Yi sub-branch of the Yi Branch of Burmic; from Nasu and Nosu, representing the Northern Yi sub-branch; and from Lalo, Lipo and Lisu, which are in the Central Yi sub-branch. More detail is provided on one language from each genetic subgroup: Akha, Nasu and Lisu.

All but one Nosu and some Nasu FGCs are monosyllabic, and some Nasu FGCs vary between one and two syllable forms. Central Yi Lahu and some other languages of the Yi Branch lack them completely. In languages which have them, their use is quite frequent, especially within the family. The fullest and most grammaticalised paradigms are in the Central Yi languages; the most transparently compounded forms are in the Southern Yi languages. The Northern Yi languages show some reduction back to monosyllabic forms, but retaining similar collective meanings.

The two-syllable FGCs are syntactically anomalous and absent from surrounding languages and the languages of outside linguists working on them. Thus no previous description of any such language has noted their existence, even though some FGCs do appear in better dictionaries of Yi Branch languages such as Hani, Lewis and Bai (1996). Where examples occur in the linguistic literature, they are analyzed as Clf plus something else, such as a collective marker in Lalo (Björverud 1998: 120); but in fact they are compounds.

Below in (1) are some examples; to the left 'three people' in the various languages cited, with the more usual one-syllable Clfs, in this case those used with human referents; and to the right containing FGCs with the meaning 'father and two sons', in which a nominal form is usually unnecessary as the FGC indicates who is included. In particular, in most Southern and Central Yi sub-branch languages, a preceding kin term is not possible. The striking structural difference can be seen clearly in all these languages.[2]

[2]   Tones are indicated in the usual 1 to 5 scale, with 1 representing the lowest pitch in the system and 5 the highest. Creaky voice is indicated by an underline beneath a vowel; for some tones in some languages this is followed by a final glottal stop. There are various tone sandhi processes affecting numbers, notably 'three' in Akha/Hani which has a low tone in most environments but changes to high tone before a low tone classifier. In Lisu a higher-mid tone /44/ in 'four' and 'nine' becomes a high tone when the following classifier has a higher-mid tone; in 'three' the higher-mid tone becomes a low or low creaky tone before a classifier with a higher-mid tone. In Lisu this process is variable before the general classifier /ma44/ but mainly regular elsewhere, such as before the human classifier /z̞o44/. In Nasu and Nosu there is tone sandhi affecting the tone of the classifier rather than that of the number, such as Nosu [44] which is a frequent sandhi alternative for /33/ adjacent to

(1)							
a	Akha	tsɔ55 ha21	sm55	ɣa21		sm21	da33 za21
b	Hani	tsɔ55	sɔ55	ɣa21		sɔ21	pa21 za21
c	Nasu	tshɔ21	sɔ33	lə33		sɔ33	pho55 zo21
d	Nosu	tsho33	so33	jɔ33		so33	pɔ44
e	Lalo	tshu55	sa33	ma55		sa33	pa21 la̱21
f	Lipo	tshɑ33	so33	jo33		so33	po55 lo21
g	Lisu	la21 tsho33	sa21	ʐo44		sa44	pa55 la̱21
		person	three	Clf/human		three	FGC/father
		'three people'				'a father and two sons'	

The kin groups which may be represented by a disyllabic FGC always include a father plus children and a mother plus children, with a further FGC for grandparent plus grandchildren, or two separate FGCs for grandfather plus grandchildren versus grandmother plus grandchildren. In some languages there are additional disyllabic FGC forms for siblings, for spouses, for certain categories of cousins, and for wider kin groups, further generalising the FGC pattern. Other languages use monosyllabic FGCs for the latter, or have no specific FGC. In some Northern Yi languages there is an alternative monosyllabic form for some disyllabic FGCs which omits one syllable: sometimes the first, more often the second. This brings them back into syntactic conformity with other monosyllabic Clfs, as seen in the pattern for 'three people' above.

In most languages the FGCs have the core meaning as specified above and a range of extended meanings. People from the requisite generations and a relative from the highest generation of the gender specified by the FGC must be included; the sole exception is Nasu, where the 'mother and children' FGC must be used for a father and children including one or more daughters, as the 'father and children' FGC there must include only males. In addition, relatives of the other gender from the senior generation, and for the grandparent FGCs, people of the parent generation, may be included. In some languages affines may also be counted in.

It is of course logically impossible for the FGCs to occur after the Num 'one'. In some languages it begins to be semantically anomalous when the Num before the FGC is large, but other languages do not have this restriction. Like other Num + Clf constructions, the Num + FGC is often used pronominally, alone without a head noun. When there is a head noun preceding a Num + FGC, it is usually a pronoun; other lexical head nouns are infrequent, presumably because the FGC already indicates various semantic properties of the referents intended and because these languages tolerate a great deal of zero anaphora.

One brief note on the psychology of counting kin: when we are asked how many brothers or sisters we have, we do not include ourselves in the answer; but speakers of these languages do; and of course the Nums with their FGCs also do so. This is also true of other related and unrelated languages in the area.

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another /33/ and sometimes for /21/ tones in certain syntactic environments. The Nosu sandhi rules are complex; in (1d), the tone of the FGC is affected after 'three' but not the tone of the human classifier (for numbers from 'three' upwards).

2. DEGREES OF TRANSPARENCY
2.1. Southern Yi compounding
2.1.1 Akha

Akha is spoken by about 600,000 people, mainly in the extreme southwest of Yunnan in China and in northeastern Burma, and also in Thailand and Laos. In China the Akha are classified as part of the Hani nationality, and the distinct Hani language, spoken by about 750,000 more people, is found in south central Yunnan and adjacent areas of Vietnam. Several other groups are also included within the Hani nationality in China, and all speak languages of the Southern Yi sub-branch.

In these languages, the second syllable of the FGC is usually homophonous with the noun 'son'/'child' and the first syllable is also transparently derived from a +1 or +2 generation term, 'father', 'mother', 'grandfather', or 'grandmother'. The following forms in Akha illustrate this pattern.

Table 1: FGCs and related kin terms in Akha

da33 za21	father plus children	a21 da33	father[3]
ma33 za21	mother plus children	a21 ma33	mother
bɔ55 za21	grandfather plus grandchildren	a21 bɔ55	grandfather
pi21 za21	grandmother plus grandchildren	a21 pi21	grandmother
		za21	child
		ø21 pa21	grandson
		ø21 ma33	granddaughter

The semantic generalization is that a person of the highest generation and appropriate gender and at least one of the lowest generation and either gender must be included. Others of any included generation of either gender may be included, as shown in (2) below. Those included must all be from the same lineal family, and are usually from one nuclear family plus patrilineal or matrilineal grandparents; no affines can be included. Note the semantic anomaly in the FGCs covering three generations: the second syllable is the 'child' term /za21/, not the 'grandchild' term /ø21/.

(2)a sm21 ma33 za21   mother and two children (or mother, father and one child)
      3   FGC/mother

b   ø21   pi21 za21   grandmother and three grandchildren
      4   FGC/grandmother
                            (or grandmother, grandfather and two grandchildren)
                            (or grandmother, daughter and two grandchildren)
                            (or grandmother, grandfather, daughter and one grandchild)
                            (or grandmother, grandfather, son and one grandchild)
                            (or grandmother, son and two grandchildren)
                            (or grandmother, son, son's wife and one grandchild)
                            (or grandmother, son's wife and two grandchildren)
                            (or grandmother, daughter's husband and two grandchildren)
                            (or grandmother, daughter, daughter's husband and one grandchild), etc.

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[3]   The /a21/ is a formative prefix; the core kin terms in Akha and most other Yi Branch languages are bound nouns which require either this prefix or a pronominal or other possessor preceding them.

Akha has an additional FGC /mɛ55 nm55/ identical to the collective noun for siblings, but which does not co-occur with it, as shown in (3c). This may be partly because of redundancy, but also because these languages favor two and four syllable phrases and compounds, tolerate three syllables, but disfavor five syllables.

(3)a   mɛ55 nm55   sm55   ɣa21
       sibling   three   Clf/human
       'three siblings'

b   sm21   mɛ55 nm55
      three   FGC/siblings
      'three siblings'

c   *mɛ55 nm55   sm21   mɛ55 nm55
      sibling   three   FGC/siblings

2.1.2 Hani
Hani is very similar to Akha, but uses the 'male' suffix /pa21/ instead of 'father' in its FGC. The Hani usage pattern of the four core FGCs is otherwise exactly parallel to that in Akha.

Table 2: FGCs and related kin terms in Hani

pa21 za21	father plus children	a21 da33	father
ma33 za21	mother plus children	a21 ma33	mother
bo55 za21	grandfather plus grandchildren	a21 bo55	grandfather
pi21 za21	grandmother plus grandchildren	a21 pi21	grandmother
dʑi55 za21	spouses	za21	child
da̠21 za21	group of young people	ø21 pa21	grandson
tsa33 za21	ethnic group	ø21 ma33	granddaughter
bɯ21 za21	group of people of the same patriclan		

All these Hani FGCs have /za21/ 'child' as the second syllable. Three of the first four have a first syllable identical to the relevant bound kin term. Of the additional four, in the first two cases the first syllable of the FGC also occurs as a bound second syllable in a related nominal form: /dʑi55/ as a bound second syllable in /xu55 dʑi55/ 'husband' and /da̠21/ as a bound second syllable in the taboo form /tso55 da̠21/ 'young man'. Note that the nominal forms refer to males only, but the corresponding FGCs also include females. Hani also has a cognate of Akha /mɛ55 nm55/, Hani /me55 nɔ55/ used in exactly the same way. It also has a four-syllable collective noun (4) combining the two core FGCs.

(4)   pa21 za21 ma33 za21 close blood relatives

One possible reason why Southern Yi languages such as Akha and Hani use the /za21/ 'child' form in grandparent/grandchild FGC combinations is the accidental fact that the 'grandchild' term has undergone a radical sound change from *li (as seen in most other languages cited below) to /ø21/; the innovative Akha/Hani form would risk ambiguity with the phonetically similar nominal postposition /ə21/ marking possessive.

2.2. Northern Yi lexicalization
In the Northern Yi subgroup, the languages are characterized by relatively elaborate kinship systems and a somewhat larger inventory of disyllabic FGC forms for sets of kin. The main example language used here is Nasu, known in Chinese as Hei Yi ('Black Yi'), and spoken by several hundred thousand members of the Yi nationality in north central Yunnan, China,

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especially in Luquan and Wuding counties and also in surrounding areas. Other more or less closely related languages are spoken by several million members of the Yi nationality in western Guizhou, southern Sichuan and elsewhere in northeastern Yunnan.

2.2.1 Nasu

In this language the second syllables of forms for FGCs with a two-generation difference are homophonous with the noun 'grandchild'.

(5)a   pho55 zo33   father plus sons (only males are included)

b   mo̠21 zo33   mother plus one or more children

c   phi55 ɬi33   grandparent(s) plus grandchildren

The FGCs including a parent, (5a) and (5b), contain the 'male' and 'female' suffixes first, then 'child/son' /zo33/; they are unrelated to the kin terms /a55 de33/ 'father' and /a55 me33/ 'mother'. The grandparent FGC (5c) starts with the stem of the 'grandmother' term /a55 phi33/ and adds the stem of the 'grandchild' term /ɬi21 bə33/, but with a different tone.[4] Unlike most other related languages, Nasu does not require marking of gender for grandchildren. However, like Central Yi languages discussed below, Nasu has no FGC related to the 'grandfather' term /a55 phu33/.

Note the interesting semantic difference here: the 'father and son' FGC cannot include daughters, unlike the corresponding forms in other languages. This means that the 'mother and child' FGC takes over more semantic space, can even be used for a father plus his children including at least one daughter but not including a mother, and thus generalizes into a collective for the two-generation nuclear family. Indeed there is also a one-syllable FGC /mo̠21/ without the second syllable as in (6a), parallel to the Nosu forms given in (10)-(11) below. This differs from the usual Nasu Clf used for adult humans, /lə55/ as in (6b) and the occasionally used alternative general Clf which is /mo33/ as in (6c).[5]

(6)a   ŋo33   mo̠21

      five   FGC/mother

      'a group of five nuclear family members, usually including a mother and her children'

b   ŋo33   lə55

      five   Clf/human and large animal

      'five adult humans or fully-grown large animals'

c   ŋo33   mo33

      five   Clf/general

      'five' (five of what unspecified, but in context could mean five children or sometimes five people)

Of course (6a) can also mean 'father and children including some daughters', but the meaning given above is more frequent. The exact nominal referents of parallel Num + Clf phrases like (6b) or (6c) would only be clear in context. Note the interesting semantic categorization of /lə55/; most related languages have a human Clf and a different animal Clf, but Nasu does not. For children, young of large animals and small animals Nasu uses the general Clf /mo33/. However Nasu is not alone among Yi languages in classifying large and small animals

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[4]   Nasu tone sandhi is complex; in this case the outcome is a /33/ tone from underlying /21/, possibly partly due to paradigmatic pressure from the mid tone of /zo33/ in (5a) and (5b).

[5]   Note the sandhi which affects Nasu high tone classifiers: after another high tone, the classifier has a sandhi md tone, as in (8a) below.

differently, or in using the general classifier for small animals; this is also the case in Central Yi Lisu, for example. However Lisu distinguishes between humans (including children) classified with /ʐo44/, large animals classified with /tɕha35/ and small animals classified by the general Clf /ma44/.

There are also two other disyllabic and two other monosyllabic FGCs in Nasu, the latter with a partial overlap in meaning. These reflect relevant social categories in Nasu society, where cross cousin marriage[6] is still normatively preferred. One's /me55 tɕhe21/ are potential wives for males, and potential brothers' wives for females; one's /ɣɯ21 zo55/ are the brothers of potential wives for males, and brothers of potential brothers' wives for females. The two disyllabic forms are also kin terms used as independent nouns, like the Akha and Hani sibling noun and FGC; presumably the FGC form is derived from the nominal form.

(7)a   (me55) tɕhe21   mother's brothers' daughters/brothers' wives
b   ɣɯ21 zo55   mother's brothers' sons/wives' brothers
c   pho55   father's or mother's brothers' sons OR father and sons
d   fɔ33   siblings and father's brothers' children (either gender)

The monosyllabic form /pho55/ is derived from disyllabic FGC /pho55 zo33/, parallel to the monosyllabic /mɔ21/; it may have the same meaning as /pho55 zo33/, or alternatively a different meaning, father's brothers' sons; again only males are included. Unlike /pho55 zo33/, a group classified by the FGC /pho55/ cannot include a male ego, his father or his brothers; nor does it include his father's brothers. It overlaps with the more general FGC /fɔ33/ which includes all nonmarriageable members of the same patrilineal clan in one's own generation, male or female, with the same father or not.

There are various alternative patterns with the /me55 tɕhe21/ term, as seen in (8) below: as a head noun, as a two-syllable FGC, or as a one-syllable FGC omitting the first syllable, without or even with the head noun. But as in Hani and Akha, it is not possible to have the full nominal combined with the full FGC form as in (8e).

(8)a   me55 tɕhe21   ɲi55   lə33
       female X cousin   two   Clf/human
       'two adult female cross cousins'

b   ɲi55   me55 tɕhe21
       two   FGC/female X cousin
       'two female cross cousins'

c   me55 tɕhe21   ɲi55   tɕhe21
       female X cousin   two   FGC/female X cousin
       'two female cross cousins'

d   ɲi55   tɕhe21
       two   FGC/female X cousin
       'two female cross cousins'

e   *me55 tɕhe21   ɲi55   me55 tɕhe21
       female X cousin   two   FGC/female X cousin

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[6]   To be more exact, of real or classificatory mother's brother's daughter and father's sister's son. Cross cousins are the children of one's mother's brothers or father's sisters. Parallel cousins are the children of one's mother's sisters or father's brothers.

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2.2.2 Nosu

The Northern Yi language with the largest number of speakers, nearly three million, is Nosu of southwestern Sichuan and northwestern Yunnan. This language appears to have only one two-syllable FGC, and it is for brothers: /vɿ55 ɲi33/, the first syllable related to /vɿ55 vu33/ 'elder brother'. The example given in Ayu (1989: 13) is (9).

(9) so33   vɿ55 ɲi33
     three FGC/brothers
     'three brothers'

Nosu (Shengza dialect) does however have two one-syllable FGCs, one for father plus children /pɔ33/, and the other for mother plus children /mo21/, both of which participate in the normal sandhi processes of Nosu as shown below. The /mo21/ form is related to /a21 mo21/ 'mother', one of two alternative forms; however the /pɔ33/ form is not derived from /a21 bo33/ or /a44 ta33/ 'father', nor from the one-syllable alternative /pha33/ cited from Ayu (1989: 1) in (10). Note that in Nosu with its one-syllable FGCs, preceding kin terms are normal although not obligatory. In this, Nosu is unlike the other languages cited; there an FGC is incompatible with preceding kin terms.

(10) pha33 zɯ33 ɲi33 pɔ33
      father son two   FGC/father
      'a father and a son'

Chen et al. (1985: 114) give further examples.[7]

(11)a a21 bo33   a44 zɯ33   ŋɯ33 pɔ44
       father   son   five FGC/father
       'a father and four sons'

b   a21 bo33   a21 m33   fu55 pɔ33
       father   daughter   six   FGC/father
       'a father and five daughters'

c   a21 mo21   a44 zɯ33   so33 mo44
       mother   son   three FGC/mother
       'a mother and two sons'

d   a21 mo21   a21 m33   fu55 mo21
       mother   daughter   six   FGC/mother
       'a mother and five daughters'

Examples in (10) and (11) contain a preceding head nominal, which appears to be more likely in Nosu than in the other Yi branch languages which have two-syllable FGCs. The tones of the one-syllable FGCs in Nosu differ between dialects; the Yinuo forms are regularized to high tone /po55/ and /mo55/.

It should be noted that the FGC which includes 'mother' is not the same as the usual human Clf in Nosu, which is /ma33/ after Nums one and two and /jɔ33/ after Nums from three

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[7]   Tonal transcription is altered here to conform to Shengza dialect forms, with sandhi [44] tone where it occurs.

upwards, as seen in (12).[8] The default or general Clf is also /ma33/, with cognates throughout the Yi branch of Burmic.

(12)a   a21 m33   ɲi33   ma33
        daughter   two   Clf
        'two daughters'

b   a44 zɯ33   so33   jɔ33
        son   three   Clf
        'three sons'

Nosu FGCs for groups including grandparents do not exist.

2.3. Central Yi paradigmatization

Some languages of the Central Yi subgroup show a more advanced grammaticalization of the FGC forms. These include Lalo, spoken by about 500,000 members of the Yi nationality in western Yunnan, China, concentrated mainly in Wenshan and Nanjian counties but also in many surrounding areas; Lipo, with about 200,000 speakers in north central Yunnan; and Lisu, spoken by over a million members of the Lisu nationality in northwestern Yunnan and into Burma, Thailand, India and Laos. In all three languages the second syllables of all FGCs have initial /l/, which is etymologically derived from the initial of the 'grandchild' term, even in the terms which instead refer to children; and the vowels of both syllables have been levelled to /a/ (with regular change of *a to /o/ in Lipo) in FGCs including children and to /i/ in FGCs including grandchildren. The /a/ vowel is etymologically regular for 'father', 'mother' and 'child' in any case; and the /i/ vowel is etymologically regular for 'grandmother' and for 'grandchild'.[9]

2.3.1. Lalo

In Lalo the FGC forms are only partly paradigmatized. Here the FGCs partly reflect etymologically expected forms, but the corresponding core kin term forms have undergone sound change, notably the 'grandchild' term which has lost its initial /l/ and the 'grandmother' term which has changed from initial /p/ to initial /n/, perhaps under influence from Chinese. In Nasu and in Lalo, it may also be that vowel harmony has played a role in the generalized 'grandparent' FGC, with the form containing the /i/ vowel in both syllables winning out, perhaps due to paradigmatic analogy from the accidental fact that the 'parent' FGCs both happen to contain the same vowel in both syllables, and the equally accidental syntagmatic fact that both 'grandmother' and 'grandchild' already contain the vowel /i/. The two alternative Lalo forms here reflect dialect alternatives. western and eastern. There is no semantic distinction, but the first reflects a term for 'ancestor' that still exists as an independent form, while the second is more directly relatable to the form seen elsewhere.

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[8]   There are dialect differences in use of the /ma33/ form; in southern Nosu Sondi, it is only used with 'one'.

[9]   It is tempting to suggest that the Lalo /pi21/ and Lisu /pi55/ forms are derived from the etymological 'grandmother' term (Bradley 1979: 312), which is still present in Lipo but has been replaced in its core meaning in Lalo and Lisu; however the aspiration of the initial is irregular, and the /fi21/ alternative in Lalo also suggests otherwise.

Table 3: FGCs and related kin terms in Lalo

pa21 la̠21	father plus children	a55 ti33	father
ma33 la̠21	mother plus children	a55 ma33	mother
fi21 li̠21	grandparent plus grandchildren	a21 ni33	grandmother
pi21 li̠21	grandparent plus grandchildren	a55 pa21	grandfather
		fi21	ancestor
		za21	son
		i21 pa̠21	grandson
		i21 ma33	granddaughter

2.3.2. Lipo
Lipo has a full four-member FGC paradigm.

Table 4: FGCs and related kin terms in Lipo

po55 lo21	father plus children	ɑ21 bo21	father
mo55 lo21	mother plus children	ɑ21 mo33	mother
pi55 li̠21	grandfather plus grandchildren	ɑ21 po̠33	grandfather
phi21 li̠55	grandmother plus grandchildren	ɑ21 phi21	grandmother
		zo21	child/son
		li55 po55	grandchild/grandson
		li55 mo33	granddaughter

It can be noted that the /phi21 li̠55/ form contains the 'grandmother' term plus the 'grandchild' term with a creaky tone, while the /pi55 li̠21/ form is less transparently related to the component terms.

2.3.3. Lisu
In Lisu the paradigm is even more grammaticalized, as follows.

Table 5: FGCs and related kin terms in Lisu

pa55 la̠21	father plus children	a44 ba21	father
ma55 la̠21	mother plus children	a44 ma44	mother
pi55 li̠21	grandfather plus grandchilren	a55 pa44	grandfather
mi55 li̠21	grandmother plus grandchildren	a55 za21	father's mother
		a55 pho21	mother's mother
		za21	child/son
		li55 pa55	grandchild/grandson
		li55 ma44	granddaughter

Within Lisu there is considerable variation in the knowledge and use of the grandparent terms. Most speakers do not use the /mi55 li̠21/ form, and some instead use it to refer to a group of relatives separated by an additional generation: great grandparents and great grandchildren. Those who lack /mi55 li̠21/ or use it for lineal kin groups over four generations use /pi55 li̠21/ for groups including a grandparent of either gender. There are also speakers who do not use /pi55 li̠21/ either, but who instead use the normal grandchild terms as FGCs, as in (13).

(13)a sa33 li55 pa55
      three   grandson
      'grandfather and two grandchildren'

b   sa33   li55 ma44
        three   granddaughter
        'grandmother and two grandchildren'

Note that the grandchildren here can be of either gender; the gender of the grandparent - not the grandchild - is being indicated by the /pa55/ and /ma44/ of the grandchild terms. This pattern is found among some of the northernmost Lisu in China, in Weixi and Gongshan counties of northwestern Yunnan, but is vigorously rejected by speakers from nearby areas further south in China and west in Burma. There are also some speakers who use both /pi55 li21/ and the grandchild terms as FGCs.

The tone pattern [55 + 21] and the initial /l/ of the second syllable of the Lisu FGCs are fixed and different from the corresponding nominal forms for children and grandchildren. FGC forms with /m/ always include a female in the higher generation, and those with /p/ mostly include a male in the higher generation. Similarly, /a/ in both syllables shows that the higher generation kin is one generation older, and /i/ in both syllables usually shows that there is a two generation difference.

Etymologically, the /pa55/ form is an infrequent alternative form for the 'male' suffix, which is mainly /pha21/; it is not derived from the word for 'father'. The /ma55/ may be derived from the 'female' suffix /ma44/ and/or from 'mother' /a44 ma44/, but the tone has been paradigmatically levelled to /55/. The vowel and pitch of the second syllable in the forms for adjacent generations may be related to /za21/ 'son'/'child', but not the initial /l/ or the creakiness of the vowel.

The initial /l/ of all four second syllables may be related to /li55/ 'grandchild', which may also be one source of the vowel in the forms including three generations. The first syllable of the 'grandparent' forms may reflect the earlier etymon for 'grandmother' still found outside Lisu but now replaced in Lisu by two distinct forms /a55 za21/ and /a55 phu21/. There may also be backward vowel harmony to /i/ involved here, by analogy with the 'parent' forms with /a/ in both syllables.

In any case there has been a lot of levelling going on here: the tone sequence is completely levelled to /55 21/, giving forms which are mainly no longer identical to their etymological sources. All four have /l/ initial in the second syllable, following the FGC forms elsewhere with two generations gap and originally probably from the 'grandchild' term. All have generalized the initial /p/-male versus /m/-female opposition derived from male/female suffix forms. And all show generational vowel harmony, with /a/ from the male, female and child forms and /i/ from the 'grandmother' and 'grandchild' forms.

Lisu also has some monosyllabic FGCs, such as /ʂɿ55/ which refers to groups of same-generation siblings and cousins or to spouses;[10] with '2', the more likely meaning is spouses; with odd numbers from '3' the sibling/cousin meaning is highly likely and the spouse reading unlikely, except in polygamous families. For even numbers from '4' the spouse meaning is possible in referring to more than one married couple, and the sibling/cousin meaning is also possible, as shown in (14).

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[10]   As for the Nasu and various other Yi groups, cross cousin marriage is possible; such a spouse was already a cross-cousin prior to marriage and no change of FGC use results. The form /sa44 ʂɿ55/ is also the song language couplet for /ɲi21 ʂɿ55/ in Lisu marriage songs; there it does not really mean 'three'.

(14)a	ŋwa33 nu21	ɲi21	sɹ55	'The two of us (spouses/siblings/cousins)'
	we (excl.)	2	FGC	
b	ŋwa33 nu21	sa44	sɹ55	'The three of us (siblings/cousins)'
	we (excl.)	3	FGC	
c	ŋwa33 nu21	li44	sɹ55	'The four of us
	we (excl.)	4	FGC	(siblings, cousins, two pairs of spouses)'

In Lisu families that I have observed, there is considerable variation in how the two-syllable FGCs are extended. Firstly, many Lisu speakers simply lack the generalized form /mi55 li̠21/, using instead /pi55 li̠21/ for groups of any grandparent of either gender plus grandchild(ren). Most people extend these forms to include spouses in the descending generations, and the three-generation terms can also be used to refer to groups including people over up to four generations including grandparents, parents, children and their children (that is, great-grandchildren of the grandparents). Provided that some people in the lower generation are included, these terms are also used for groups including more than one person in the higher generation. Thus, Lisu /ku44 pi55 li̠21/ '9 FGC/grandfather' can mean 'grandfather plus eight grandchildren', 'grandfather, grandmother and seven grandchildren', 'grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, and five grandchildren', 'grandfather, father, father's brother, father's brother's wife, two grandchildren who are children of the father, one of their spouses, their child (who is a great-grandchild) and a child of the father's brother', among many other permutations; for some it can also mean 'grandmother plus eight grandchildren' and so on. It is sometimes even extended to include close family friends. Thus, unlike Nasu, the range of extended meanings for some FGCs is very wide.

If both father and mother are included in the FGC in Lisu, the choice is determined by focus: focus on the mother is implied by /ma44 la̠21/, and focus on the father by /pa55 la̠21/. This is also the case for those speakers who have both /pi55 li̠21/ and /mi5 li̠21/. That is, in Lisu there is no obligatory gender dominance: female senior FGC forms can also include senior males, and vice versa.

Comparing Lalo, Lipo and Lisu, we see the same generalization of /l/ initial and /21/ tone in the second syllable, with further tonal and initial levelling in the first syllable in Lisu. We also see Lalo /pi21/ and Lisu /pi55/ forms which may be partly a result of vowel harmony and partly due to the use of a cognate for 'grandmother' now replaced as a core kin term but surviving in the FGC. The shared features of the second syllable may be an innovation within the Central Yi sub-branch of languages: they are absent from Northern Yi and Southern Yi languages with FGCs, as we have seen.

2.3.4. Lahu

Lahu has over 800,000 speakers, including some 450,000 in southwestern Yunnan, China, as well as about 250,000 in northeastern Burma, nearly 100,000 in northern Thailand, over 10,000 in northwestern Laos and about 1,500 in the US. Unlike the other Central Yi languages, Lahu completely lacks FGCs. Rather, it tends to use four-syllable compound nominals preceding a Num plus the normal human Clf, thus producing six-syllable phrases as in (15).[11]

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[11] Again in Lahu, the Num 'three' shows tone sandhi; here between /33/ and /21/ tones as in (15a), which is conditioned by the tone of the following Clf.

(15)a ɔ21 pa33 ɔ21 ja53   ɕɛ21 ɣa53
    father-child   three Clf
    'father and two children'

b   ɔ21 vi35 ɔ21 ɲi33   ŋa53 ɣa53
    elder sibling-younger sibling   five   Clf
    'five siblings'

In these four-syllable compounds, as in the FGCs elsewhere, the term for the elder relative precedes. Lahu has gone to the extreme in its generalization of four-syllable compounds, especially for nominals; it may thus be particularly resistant to the use of three-syllable rather than two-syllable Num + Clf phrases. Lahu may have eliminated the two-syllable FGCs found in all the most closely related Central Yi sub-branch languages for this reason.

3.   CONCLUSION

The distribution of these FGC forms follows genetic groupings established on other grounds: they are found in all three sub-branches of the Yi Branch of Burmic within Tibeto-Burman, but not outside. Although Nasu and Nosu in Northern Yi, Lisu, Lipo and Lalo in Central Yi and Akha and Hani in Southern Yi have such FGCs, other languages such as Lahu within Central Yi lack them entirely. The FGCs thus appear to be a shared preservation of an earlier Yi Branch pattern which has been lost in languages such as Lahu, and mainly reduced to one-syllable forms in languages such as Nosu. Such disyllabic FGCs are completely absent from other less closely related but adjacent Tibeto-Burman languages, such as Burmese and Gong within Burmic; Jinghpaw and other Baric languages; Nu, Dulong, Rawang, Naxi and other Qiangic languages, and so on.[12]

As we have seen, some Central Yi sub-branch languages have FGC paradigms which are more fully grammaticalized, a process only partly reflected in the Northern Yi sub-branch; while some languages in the Northern and Southern Yi sub-branches have a larger number of culturally-relevant categories of FGC. Languages in the southern Yi sub-branch have the most transparent FGC forms; some are also disyllabic nominal forms, while others are compounds of existing nominal elements.

The FGC forms are syntactically anomalous, since they break the otherwise rather rigid pattern that a Clf has only one syllable, and therefore that a Num + Clf contains two syllables. We have seen that some languages, such as Nasu, have some monosyllabic alternative forms which have clearly been shortened from two syllables, and it is likely that those languages like Nosu and Lahu which have fewer or no disyllabic FGCs have eliminated the rest by regularising back to monosyllabic Clfs, thus eliminating the syntactic problem. This is part of a general tendency to favor two and four syllable patterns, stronger in some Yi Branch languages than in others, which may also be related to the rather rigid pattern of traditional Yi Branch oral and written literature, with five or seven syllable lines in pairs with parallel structure. It is thus intriguing that two-syllable FGCs requiring a three-syllable pattern should have developed in the first place. Of course, if a one-syllable pronoun precedes the Num + FGC, as it sometimes does, then the outcome is again a four-syllable structure.

All the Yi Branch languages with an FGC system have distinct forms for family groups of father and children versus mother and children. Those in Southern Yi and Central Yi also have one or more terms for groups over three generations, including grandparents and grandchildren. A separate FGC for parents, children and grandchildren is unnecessary as the middle

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[12]   For more details of the subclassification of Tibeto-Burman, see Bradley (1997).

generation can also use the three-generation FGC for a family group including themselves, their parents and their children. Additional FGCs in some Southern and Northern Yi languages include various collectives for different categories of siblings, cousins and wider kin groups. Num + Clf phrases containing an FGC form are very often used for address, but can also be used for reference; they are extremely frequent in everyday spoken use in some languages such as Lisu and less so in some others.

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