

Grammaticalization and Tai Syntactic Change

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In the past decade *grammaticalization* has become established as a promising direction in linguistic research.¹ The term refers to lexicosyntactic or morphosyntactic processes whereby more content-oriented lexemes, such as nouns or verbs, come to take on grammatical functions. In inflecting languages, content lexemes have been found to evolve into bound morphemes marking categories like tense, aspect, or case relations. For languages like those in the Tai family, other pathways can be seen: nouns and verbs may come to take on the functions of closed-class items such as prepositions, auxiliaries, or conjunctions. A number of shifts classed as grammaticalization have been widely observed across languages. Linguistic change propelled by cognitive processes such as metonymy or metaphor may account for some of this commonality, and such shifts may point to “natural” or cognitively-based universal tendencies.

General linguistic theory and Tai linguistic research in particular would each stand to gain from investigating the nature of grammaticalization in Tai languages.

First, on the general side, some Tai input could be of benefit in testing and refining universal hypotheses or in suggesting new lines of analysis. The effect of sociolinguistic factors in grammaticalization is an especially important area. For general theory, Tai languages are a valuable, but under-utilized, resource. With a spread of synchronic data increasingly accessible, comparative reconstructions of high plausibility can be made for Tai. Further provided is the important potential of cross-checking from a written tradition. A reserve of diachronic/philological resources is available—but still little used in linguistic research. Several Tai varieties have phonologically based writing systems of long standing, and datable documents may reach back as far as 700 years. For pursuing cross-linguistic generalizations in linguistic theory, few non-Indo-European languages have what the Tai family provides.

Secondly, in the other direction, Tai linguistics stands to gain new research perspectives and insights. It seems likely that grammaticalization theory will provide solutions to quandaries raised by earlier approaches, such as whether Central Thai has “prepositions” and, in general, how to delimit the membership of closed syntactic classes. Constraining the elaboration of structurally determined homonyms is a related issue. In the same vein, pseudo-problems may be unmasked. Awareness of new critical factors in the operation of grammaticalization throughout the Tai

¹Some of what follows took shape in *The Role of Theory in Language Description*, a conference of the Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, organized by W. A. Foley (Ocho Rios, Jamaica, October 1987), in which Christian Lehmann's contribution was especially relevant to what is developed here. A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the Fifth International Conference on Thai Studies, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, July 1993, where Conference participants provided useful suggestions. Particular gratitude goes to Pranee Kullavanijaya, Wilaiwan Khanittanan, Marybeth Clark, and Robert B. Jones for comments and encouragement and to Ulrike Kölver and Lev Morev for making their work available to me.

languages may dispose of some heavily theory-dependent issues taken as “problems” in other frameworks.

What follows is of necessity programmatic in scope, a survey-overview of key issues. This paper is thus more a raising of questions than an answering of them definitively.

1. GRAMMATICALIZATION: BACKGROUND ISSUES

In this section general features of grammaticalization are reviewed, including a brief summary of historical issues. Some illustrations utilize Tai data and are a prelude to further Tai considerations in later sections.²

1.1 Grammaticalization, Synchronic Derivation, and Polysemy

Grammaticalization as a term was apparently introduced by Meillet as early as 1912 and was used subsequently by Indo-Europeanists such as Kuryl'owicz, but hardly by others outside that field. More recently it has been critically restored and reapplied by scholars such as Lehmann, Heine, and Reh. From the 1980s the term and the type of analysis it implies has gained acceptance in English-based linguistics, two notable applications in English syntax being Brinton (1988) and Sweetser (1990). Grammaticalization was the focus of an important international conference in 1988 organized by Givón, a leader in the field. Papers from that conference (Traugott & Heine, 1991) taken together are now a useful resource in the development of a critical approach to grammaticalization. Heine, Claudi, and Hünemeyer (1991), emphasizing African material, and Hopper and Traugott (1993) also review these current developments.

As these studies indicate, linguistic typology is one factor in recognizing general tendencies of grammaticalization and in determining how principles are realized. Inflectional languages have been widely found to exhibit certain affix-creating

²**TRANSCRIPTION NOTE.** Since phonetic detail is not generally at issue in this paper and data from several Tai varieties are compared, a uniform straightforward adaptation of the Thai Royal Institute system is used, with vowels as follows:

i	[i]	u'	[u]	u	[u]
e	[e]	œ	[ɤ]	o	[o]
æ	[æ]	a	[a]	o'	[ɔ]

Phonologically long diphthongs are **ia** [iə] **u'a** [uə] **ua** [uə]; otherwise length is shown by a colon. Some Tai languages have a centralized offglided vowel [au], e.g., for items cognate to Central Thai **hây** 'give'; this is indicated here by **-au'**, e.g., in ***hau'**C₁ 'give.' As the preceding 'give' forms indicate, tones are either shown in the Haas system for Central Thai or etymologically in the case of comparisons across Tai languages. Etymological tone class is shown with subscripts using the system of Li (1977); e.g., A2 refers to a Central Thai mid tone, C2 to a high tone, etc., but to other regular tonal values in different Tai varieties. This system has required superficial changes in quoted data. Initial glottal stop is not indicated in this transcription. (In References, a closer version of the Royal Institute system is used except for names where author's preference is known.)

principles, but relatively isolating/analytical languages, such as those in the Southeast Asian region, will favour instead lexical derivations which imply periods of transitional lexical polysemy and related syntactic alternation.

In the Tai context, one could well ask: is not *grammaticalization* simply *syntactic derivation*? Why the need to use new “jargon”—and a rather unwieldy seven syllables at that?

As the terms are generally used now, many cases of synchronic syntactic derivation would indeed be instances of grammaticalization. In particular, cases involving reanalysis from open-class content status (e.g., noun or verb) to—or at least in the direction of—closed-class function-word status (e.g., auxiliary, preposition, conjunction) would be considered grammaticalization, but using the latter term implies some extra interests. To consider an instance of syntactic derivation to be grammaticalization would be at least to open the question of diachronic change. The historical background of the formation might be traced and the pathway compared cross-linguistically.

Another set of interests evoked by the term grammaticalization concerns cognitive motivation: is the shift in some way propelled through a general cognitive process such as semantic extension along the lines of metonymy or metaphor? Is there a widely attested semantic tendency involved? Cross-language comparison and generalization along this line of inquiry would be larger projects.

In more formal logical terms: some, but not all, cases of syntactic derivation should be considered grammaticalization, and some, but not all, cases of grammaticalization should be considered syntactic derivation. The relationship is one of partial overlap.

Given that Thai is especially rich in figurative tropes, including metaphor and metonymy, for the term *grammaticalization* to be useful it must be restricted to the production of the type of abstract functional linguistic relationships typically associated with closed syntactic classes or inflectional affixes. For example, the extension of a body-part noun like **lǎng** ‘back’ to a preposition-like spatial marker is common throughout languages of the world. This is clearly to be included under grammaticalization and is taken up below. To be excluded however are many other figurative formations, such as metonymic extensions like Thai **fay**:

‘fire’ >> ‘light’ >> ‘electricity’ (>> inner emotional ‘spark’).

The contrast can also be brought out through Thai animal terms as applied figuratively to humans. The use of **sǔ’a** ‘tiger’ to mean ‘outlaw, robber’ is a simple case of metaphorical extension. By contrast, the use of **nǔ**: ‘mouse, rat’ to indicate a person of junior status should be considered at least incipient grammaticalization. The latter form has clearly acquired some pronominal characteristics in Central Thai, although we might not wish to go so far as to claim it has become fully a pronoun. The critical point is that for many speakers **nǔ**: functions as a contrasting component in a limited first-person/second-person reference set, with semantic relations tying **nǔ**: firmly into the network of other “true” pronouns like **ku**: or **chǎn**. In this way **nǔ**: is becoming grammaticalized in a way that **sǔ’a** is not.

Also probably to be excluded from grammaticalization are instances of open-class structural polysemy and similar semantic/syntactic derivations like the following:

- (a) lexical forms that can serve as noun or verb, such as **thây** ‘plough’ or **tho:(rasàp)** ‘(tele)phone’ (where English equivalents and those in many other languages are similarly cross-categorical);³
- (b) nominalizations with compounding heads such as
- (i) **khô’:-**, (cp. noun **khô’:**, ‘node, joint; item’), as in **khô’:-sò’p** ‘examination’ (< **sò’p** ‘to examine, take an examination’); **khô’:-tòk-long** ‘agreement’;
 - (ii) **kham-** ‘word’ as in **kham-thă:m** ‘question’ (<**thă:m** ‘ask’) **kham-tò’p** ‘answer’;
 - (iii) semantically varied nominal compounds in **hũa-** ‘head’ (see Juntanamalaga, 1992).

Are these to be considered cases of grammaticalization? While the prefixal nominalizing components **ka:n-** and **khwa:m-** represent quite advanced cases of grammaticalization, (i)-(iii) above would seem borderline, or better, incipient “pre-grammaticalization.”

At the other end of the spectrum, the Thai bound form **nák-** seen in **nák-bin** ‘aviator’ (cp. **bin** ‘to fly’) and **nák-sù’ksă:** ‘student’ (cp. **sùksă:** ‘study, learn’) represents what the general literature would probably consider another case of grammaticalization, albeit involving language contact. In this instance, a Khmer form meaning ‘person’ (Old Khmer **anak**) has been loaned into Thai, ultimately coming to function as a fairly general agent prefix.⁴ Few modern Thai speakers would be aware of this development and perhaps none would now use **nák** freely in conversation as an independent noun meaning ‘person.’ So for contemporary Thai speakers, there is no (longer?) synchronic polysemy or an impression of syntactic reanalysis associated with this particular form. It is thus in a state of “post-grammaticalization.”

1.2 The Ideological Background

Before a review of some current approaches to grammaticalization, a note on related ideological issues is in order. One feature of linguistic scholarship of the 19th century and before was an urge to identify certain languages, normally those of

³Since the process appears to be productive within a restricted semantic field, as shown by new-arrival “fax” functioning both as noun and verb (again, in each language), we are dealing with what Sapir (1921) called a “grammatical process”; but this should be distinguished from “grammaticalization.”

⁴Varasarin (1984, p. 167) indicates that the agent-prefix usage can be traced to Old Khmer. In Thai, sparse inscriptional evidence (Ishii, et al., 1989) suggests that **nák-** was originally borrowed into Thai as a bound prefix in Khmero-Indic loans like **nák + prà:t** ‘learned person’ (attested 15th century), **nák + bun** ‘pious person’ (16th century). We can speculate that this compounding pattern was later extended analogically to **nák +** (Thai, etc.) noun or verb, as above, where it is still semi-productive; **nák-kho’:mphiwthoe:** ‘computer expert, hacker.’

European colonial powers, as “developed,” while other languages were to be “primitive.”

By the 17th century general typological features of Chinese (and also Vietnamese) came to be known in Europe, in particular the fact that Chinese was characterized by a total lack of inflectional morphology. In 1669 the English scholar Webb claimed that Chinese was “the most primitive language of mankind,” since it had no inflectional endings (Robins, 1979, p. 10), i.e., no “grammatical rules” in the sense that Latin, Greek, or other European languages made morphological demands of their speakers. A century and a half later Thai was perhaps to fit into a similar mode of characterization. The first extensive grammar of Thai written in English, Capt. James Low’s 1828 *Grammar of the T’ai or Siamese Language*, is a remarkably insightful work in many ways, but in spite of the book’s title Low was able to maintain that Thai had “no grammatical rules” (p. 21).

The 19th century saw an attempt to transfer evolutionary theorizing to linguistics and, often using an organic metaphor, the evolutionary level of a language was linked directly to race. Languages were sometimes seen as progressing along a natural path of growth and development similar to how Darwinians saw species of plants and animals evolving. In spite of erroneous assumptions behind “racial linguistics,” valuable preliminary insights into (what was later called) grammaticalization were achieved in some of this work, e.g., in that of Georg von der Gabelentz, who saw grammatical evolution progressing in spiral-like cycles.⁵

Much of the 20th century has witnessed a severe reaction to this type of evolutionary speculation, particularly in the English-speaking scholarly world. As field evidence accumulated, it became clear that so-called “primitive” languages were not so simple after all in structural terms. African, American, and Australian aboriginal languages, for example, were shown to have morphological rules and principles often the rival of Latin or Sanskrit. Race was shown to be irrelevant to language. Few would now subscribe to an ideology that evaluated languages in simple evolutionary terms or considered some as primitive in any way other than literary or lexical. *A priori* assumptions that third-world languages are syntactically inferior to European ones seem outmoded: few today would wish to claim that German or English is inherently more structurally evolved, developed, or perfected than Central Thai, Lao, or any other Tai variety.

Of course, in terms of writing, literary traditions, and in superficial areas of technical vocabulary it could be granted that languages might be relatively “undeveloped.” Colloquial English or Thai would be “undeveloped” when it came to referring to different types of sand which an Australian aboriginal language (or an English geology textbook) might carefully distinguish. Modern English would be inferior to White Tai in distinguishing component beams of White Tai houses. But this is unsurprising.

Partly because of 19th-century excesses, during most of the 20th century the dominant trend in linguistics, especially among English-language-based researchers in the tradition of Bloomfield, Chomsky, and others, has been to separate synchronic and diachronic research into discrete activities, and the majority of linguists would probably still heed Saussure’s recommended division in this regard. In particular, main-stream syntax has been considered a matter of system-internal relationships

⁵Work of Humboldt, Gabelentz, and other relevant 19th century authorities is discussed in detail by Hopper and Traugott (1993).

holding at given points in time. Keeping synchronic syntactic argument free of “diachronic explanations,” or perhaps relegating the latter to marginalia, has been the norm.

1.3 Grammaticalization Theory and Universals of Syntactic Change

On the other hand, a viewpoint differing from one requiring absolute separation of diachronic and synchronic analysis has been maintained by a number of scholars, especially by Continental linguists interested in Indo-European, and more recently, in African languages. Grammaticalization is an important component in this perspective. As noted above, a key notion in grammaticalization theory is the tracing of grammatical forms, either bound affixes or limited-class function words, back to open-class content-based lexemes, usually to nouns or verbs. This is generally, although not inevitably, a question of language history and involves examination of historical textual data and/or analysis across related languages/dialects. An earlier syntax may need to be reconstructed using comparative techniques reminiscent of the classical Comparative Method in phonological reconstruction. From this basis, specifics of syntactic development can then be traced.

Another part of the project is to detect in the current syntactic behaviour of grammatical forms under consideration certain residues of earlier form or function—in effect providing a partial diachronic account of synchronic processes. What might appear to be arbitrary or unmotivated cooccurrence restrictions or types of variation from a strictly synchronic point of view could then find plausible diachronic explanations.

To establish universal tendencies through cross-language comparison is one goal of grammaticalization theory. Universals of this type are likely to be neither innate nor explicitly learned. That is, these processes probably do not refer directly to the type of inherited species-wide neurological organization that certain syntactic principles are attributed to by generative grammarians. Nor need grammaticalization phenomena be considered a matter of arbitrary facts learned about specific languages. Rather, many of these processes may be cognitively motivated by principles such as iconicity, “natural” metaphorical extensions, or systems of associations based on widely shared human experience. The fact that Central Thai **long**_{A2} ‘descend’ and English *down* each occur in an extended sense in expressions of temperature reduction like **yen**_{A2} **long**_{A2} and “cool down” is thus neither an arbitrary chance correspondence nor directly attributable to our innate neurological language endowment.

Languages in the Tai family illustrate a number of phenomena that seem to reflect grammaticalization processes as discussed in the wider literature. Some processes found in Tai languages are so widespread elsewhere as to be virtually “cognitive universals.” A good example is in the quasi-metaphorical development of body-part terms, as in (1). The pattern of extension is:

body part > *spatial relationship* > *temporal relationship*
 (> *information-sequencing marker in discourse*).

(1)		<u>Central Thai</u>	<u>Nung</u> (Bé et al., 1982)
	<i>back (body)</i>	lang A1	lang A1
	<i>behind</i>	(khangC1-)lang A1	slanA1 lang A1
	<i>time after</i>	(thi: A2-)lang A1	hoiA2 lang A1

Could this particular metaphorical or metonymic process involving “back” be a Tai idiosyncrasy? Clearly not. In a sample of 125 African languages, Heine, Claudi, and Hünemeyer (1991, p. 126) found that for 80% of the languages surveyed, the spatial relationship *behind* was regularly coded by a term based on the body-part term *back*. It is well to keep this African statistic in mind when considering what the Central Thai / Nung data could imply about Proto-Tai—and there are similar cases, such as for Tai items cognate to CT **na:**_{C1} ‘face.’ On the other hand, a different metaphorical extension of **lang**_{A1} as ‘classifier for houses,’ as though rooflines were thought of as ‘backs,’ is more idiosyncratically Tai. Compare also the semantics of the Tai temporal extension (with a nuance of *after*) with that of English (with a nuance of *before* or *previous*, as in “back in January”).

1.4 Pathways of Grammaticalized Shifting

In the Tai case, an added complication lies in areal patterning, which could relate historically to protracted periods of language contact, stable bilingualism, and/or the arising of creolized varieties. These historical possibilities raise some problems for the comparative method as traditionally applied. Matisoff (1991), focusing on Lahu, has recently called attention to a number of Southeast Asian areal features relating to grammaticalization. In (2) are seen ten such items, most of which are areal features previously described and documented in further detail by Clark (1978), Kölver (1984), Clark and Prasithratsint (1985) and others.

(2) Typical Southeast Asian grammaticalizations (after Matisoff, 1991).

<u>content meaning</u>	<u>derived function</u>
(a) VERBS	
1. <i>able to</i> (root modal)	<i>might, could perhaps</i> (epistemic)
2. <i>think, desire</i>	desiderative/irrealis particles
3. <i>say</i>	complement markers for predicates of expression, cognition and perception
4. <i>live, dwell</i>	progressive/continuative markers
5. <i>get, obtain</i>	ability; achievement/accomplishment markers
6. <i>give</i>	causative/benefactive/purposive markers
7. <i>finish</i>	perfective/perfect markers

8. *come, go* indicate deictic perspective
- (b) NOUNS
9. *thing* possessive markers
10. *side;* generalized locative markers

Also: *path*

(3) Central Thai items reflecting derivational relationships in (2).

- | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--|
| 1. a:tD1 | a:tD1 phu:tD2 | ' <i>might</i> speak' |
| 2. ca, cakD1 | ca phu:tD2 | ' <i>will/would</i> speak' |
| 3. wa:B2 | phu:tD2 wa:B2 | 'say <i>that...</i> ' |
| 4. yu:B1 | phu:tD2 yu:B1 na:nA2 | ' <i>be talking</i> for a long time' |
| 5. dayC1 | dayC1 phu:tD2 | ' <i>had a chance to</i> speak' |
| 6. hayC1 | phu:tD2 hayC1 fangA2 | 'tell (<i>someone something</i>)' |
| 7. lae:wC2 | phu:tD2 lae:wC2 | ' <i>to have</i> spoken <i>already</i> ' |
| 8. ma:A2, payA1 | phu:tD2 payA1 | ' <i>stated</i> it, spoke' |
| | | [= past/perfective] |
| 9. kho':ngA1 | banC1 kho':ngA1 rawA2 | 'our house' [= the house of us] |
| 10. kha:ngC1 | kha:ngC1-na:C1 | 'ahead' [= side facing] |
| Also: tha:ngA2 | tha:ngA2-khwa:A1 | ' <i>to the</i> right' |

Five pathways of linguistic change which have been widely cited in discussions of grammaticalization are shown in (4). These processes are not mutually exclusive, nor are latter ones restricted to grammaticalization as narrowly defined.

(4) Common modes of grammaticalization.

1. **Diachronic reduction** of content lexical item to (bound) morpheme or to limited-class functional item, sometimes referred to as "semantic bleaching" or de-semanticisation (Traugott & Heine, 1991, p. 4).
2. **Phonological attrition** or lenition, often (but not necessarily) accompanying semantic change.
3. **Paradigmatic organization**, where analogical processes operate to unify disparate content-based lexemes into a more tightly organized functionally-based scheme.
4. **Metaphorical generalization**, especially from more concrete semantics to more abstract (e.g., extensions along the progression of physical object > spatial relationship > temporal relationship > logical or information-packaging relationship).
5. **Metonymic extension**, where what formerly were presuppositions associated with a fully content-based expression gain a

dominant functional status which is less content-oriented and more generalized (e.g., a shift from a verb of desire involving an implied future condition to an explicit marker of future time; see also (20)).

(5) General features of grammaticalized change.

1. *Persistence* of “some traces of original lexical meanings” which “tend to adhere” to a grammaticalized form, with “details of its lexical history ...reflected in constraints on its grammatical distribution” (Hopper, 1991, p. 22).
2. *Unidirectionality* of change, in that progressions such as in (2) normally proceed in a single predictable direction. Opposite-direction changes, such as from a grammaticalized form to a content item (e.g., preposition > noun) or from abstract to more concrete syntax, would be considered marked or unusual (Traugott & Heine, 1991, p. 4).

As comparative study of grammaticalization across a number of languages and language families proceeds, some widespread features can be observed. Two important ones are noted in (5). These appear to emphasize opposing perspectives, but in many specific instances the two characteristics are not mutually exclusive.

Do these grammaticalization processes—and in particular, the unidirectional hypothesis—signal a return to some version of the evolutionary linguistics of the last century? Would we be once again justified in calling some languages more developed, evolved, or perfected than others? We return to this provocative speculation below.

2. STUDIES OF TAI SYNTACTIC SHIFTING

Although not using the term grammaticalization, earlier studies of Thai syntax have often confronted the concept and presented useful analyses. Decisions as to “polysemy” Vs. “homophony” have been part of the confrontation. Studies of Thai in what is generally referred to as the structuralist tradition have emphasized synchronic form classes as determined by sentence test frames. In this tradition, frames are typically taken *a priori* as the main criteria in the setting up of a system of syntactic classifications. This may lead to “structural homophones.” If a form occurs in each of two test frames set up to distinguish form classes, then even if there is a strong semantic motivation for considering the form a single word, the guiding assumptions normally require it to be taken as two separate lexical items. Alternatively, a new form class could be proposed. This would be defined by requiring occurrence in each of two or more separate test frames. The polysemy/homophony decision thus appears to be forced, perhaps arbitrarily, by presuppositions of analysis.

For example, the Central Thai verb **aw**_{AI} ‘to take’ is treated by Noss (1964, p. 238) as having structural homonyms in the preposition, postposition, and conjunction

classes; the item is thus in a sense “four words,” with a number of other verbs behaving in a similar homophone-proliferated mode. Morev (1991, p. 156) has suggested that a notion of “defective verb” (*nedostatochniy glagol*) would be a more appropriate characterization for such associated uses. He further observes that it does not seem feasible to draw absolute morpheme-class lines in these cases.

A similar shift of emphasis can be seen in the work of Kullavanijaya (1974), Clark (1978) and Clark and Prasithratsint (1985) using notions of synchronic lexico-syntactic derivation and including intermediate categories like ‘coverb,’ within the general Lexicase approach (see Starosta, 1979). Clark’s work also is one of the first to devote close attention to comparative Southeast Asian syntax in this regard. The work of Kölver (1984) comes to some similar conclusions for local prepositions, but is more radical than some former work in stressing the *gradient* nature of progressions from noun to preposition and from full verb to secondary verb (or coverb) to preposition. Kölver thus speaks of the “syntactic versatility of *single* lexical items” (1984, p.9, emphasis added), contrasting in style with the homophone-proliferating analyses of the structuralist tradition.⁶ Finally, Morev (1991, p. 155–7), in treating the development of temporal-aspectual auxiliaries in Tai languages, refers to (Russian equivalents of) “degree of grammaticalization” and to “level of desemanticization”—clearly gradient notions.

Another dimension of what we can consider Thai grammaticalization has been taken up in work such as that of Prasithratsint (1985), Bamroongraks (1987) and Khanittanan (1988). This approach investigates diachronic shifts directly, making use of comparative-historical sources as evidence and taking socio-cultural factors into consideration. In an earlier tradition of philological study, Wimuktalop (1970), Ittaratana (1974) and others uncovered evidence in Thai literary sources pointing to a range of what would be considered grammaticalization phenomena today.

While what follows below is in the tradition of earlier work like the preceding, a purpose here is to underscore the advantages of a *synthetic* methodology. This would combine techniques and insights of the approaches cited above: typological-synchronic and historical-sociolinguistic. A further contention that cannot be more than mentioned here is that as a prerequisite to a full understanding of how grammaticalization has occurred in a particular daughter language, such as in Central Thai, more attention needs to be given to establishing diachronic stages of Tai syntax, including the syntactic makeup of earlier Southwestern Tai. Morev (1991) has assembled many useful cross-Tai comparisons in this regard, among them cases of grammaticalization. It is this type of methodological synthesis that is especially advocated through appropriating the term *grammaticalization*.

⁶For work written in the Thai language, Navavan Bandhumedha (writing as Pho Nawawan, 1970, 1984) is one of the earliest sources to assemble, illustrate and discuss a number of grammaticalized and other similar polysemous lexical forms. This compendium remains an important—and entertaining—resource, all the more valuable for an informed native speaker’s insights that “single words” are being considered. Other detailed work on individual verbs which have acquired grammaticalized functions in Central Thai include the analyses of *hây* by Detthamrong (1970), of *loe:y* by Arimit (1986) and of *mi:* by Ngamsom (1984).

3. SOME TAI COMPARISONS

We now turn to some instances of Tai grammaticalization. Some patterns are Tai-wide and may well have characterized the proto language. Several such possibilities are cited in 3.1. To establish these patterns through comparisons, three Tai varieties have been selected to represent the branches of the Tai family proposed by Li (1977). The Northern Branch is represented by Fengshan Zhuang; Central, by Fan Slihng Nung; and Southwestern, by Wiangchan Lao.⁷ Along with comparative synchronic data, diachronic confirmation is sought through citations from the Sukhothai inscriptions.

In other cases, illustrated in 3.2, constructions indicating grammaticalization do not appear uniformly across the Tai language family. There are several ways to account for this. Perhaps patterns were once present in the proto language—thus as cases of what could justifiably be called synchronic derivation at that time—but were only selectively preserved in certain daughter varieties. They were then lost in others. Alternatively, the proto language may not have exhibited the patterns in question at all. Rather, they developed differentially in daughter varieties. Perhaps such developments were in line with certain universal tendencies or general cognitive universals—and/or the effects of sociolinguistic pressures.

3.1 Shared Serial-verb and Coverb Grammaticalizations

Comparative indications are that Proto-Tai used verb forms such as ***hau**'_{C1} 'give,' ***Xaw**_{C1} 'enter,' and ***day**_{C1} 'obtain' in a number of serialized constructions that would be considered grammaticalized functions.

3.1.1 PT ***hau**'_{C1} 'give'

Tai evidence is strong for a serial-verb benefactive or dative-marking construction with forms cognate to PT ***hau**'_{C1} 'give,' as in (6). This construction allows the introduction into one sentence of three nominals: giver, item given, and recipient.⁸

- | | | | | | | | |
|-----|--------|-----------------------|--------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| (6) | Zhuang | na:y _{A1} | liew _{C2} | 'aw _{A1} | no:B2 | hau' _{C1} | te:A1 |
| | Nung | ya:-law _{C2} | cing _{B1} | 'aw _{A1} | nu': _{C1} | hau' _{C1} | mu'n _{A2} |
| | Lao | nya:B2 | cing _{B1} | 'aw _{A1} | sin _{C2} | hay _{C1} | man _{A2} |
| | | <i>fa's mo</i> | <i>so</i> | <i>take</i> | <i>meat</i> | <i>give</i> | <i>3P</i> |
- 'Grandmother then gave him some meat.'

⁷Luo Yongxian, Pichit Roinil and Peter Ross have kindly assisted with data collection. Nung data are from Saul and Wilson (1980).

⁸The Central ditransitive construction:

[NP₁ + **hây** + NP₂ + NP₃]

—where NP₁ = agent; NP₂ = direct object; NP₃ = indirect object—is not found in early sources and may be a recent innovation. The grammaticalization of **hây** in Central Thai has been treated at length by Detthamrong (1970) and in many sources mentioned in Section 2. For indirect-object marking in **kàe**: in the inscriptional text in (6), see 4.3.3.

Insc. 38.1.20 tha:n_{B2} ... pay_{A1} ha:A₁ hay_{C1} kae:B₁ caw_{C1}-kha:C₁
He. go find give to slave-owner
 'He ... [should] fetch them for the slave owner.'

Purposive and controlled complement constructions in cognates of ***hau**'_{C1} are widely found as well, but sometimes with minor shifts in syntax. These developments are well-known cross-linguistically.

3.1.2 Serialized directional verbs

Directional sequences involving cognates of forms **khu**'_{n_{C1}} 'ascend,' **long**_{A1} 'descend,' **khaw**_{C1} 'enter,' **o':k**_{D1} 'exit,' and **pay**_{A1} 'go,' are widely found. Also found are verbs meaning 'come' which are more variable lexically, while still occurring positionally constant in the shared patterns. A number of directional patterns can be defined. In a simple statement about someone or something moving, or (transitively) moving something, a common serial pattern is a threefold specification:

- (i) a specialized motion description: the type of action involved;
- (ii) directionals like 'ascend,' 'descend,' which apply to the *moving subject* of the sentence;
- (iii) 'go'/'come,' applying to the statement's selected "*deictic perspective*"—e.g., often to interlocutor viewpoint (or to where "the mind's eye" is to be in a narrative scene).

A purpose verb or clause may follow this. It is interesting that such a highly specific ordering principle appears to be constant throughout the Tai family, as (7) suggests.

(7)	Zhuang	te:A ₁	pin _{A1}	hu'n _{C1}	pay _{A1}
	Nung	mu'n _{A2}	pem _{A2}	khu'n _{C1}	pay _{A1}
	Lao	la:w _{A2}	pi:n _{A1}	khu'n _{C1}	pay _{A1}
		<i>3P</i>	<i>climb</i>	<i>ascend</i>	<i>go</i>
		'He climbed up.'			
	Insc. 2.2.41	bae:k _{D1}	it _{D1}	tae:B ₁ tam _{B1}	khu'n _{C1} pay _{A1}
		<i>carry</i>	<i>brick from</i>	<i>low ascend</i>	<i>go</i>
		'(They) carried bricks up from below.'			

When verbs of motion occur as secondary verbs in patterns like (7) they are still spatial in semantics, and the degree of grammaticalization can be considered milder than in their other typical developments, e.g., shifts into temporal-aspectual markers. In line with predictions of grammaticalization theory, it is this milder, more literal, patterning of the verbs that is attested in common Tai-wide patterns, while temporal-aspectual developments are widely present but far more varied in developmental detail.

Other than in the preceding section, coverb extensions tend to show considerable lexical variation. In some cases a semantic notion may be predictive but specific items may vary. Verbs **thu'ng**_{A1} in Central Thai and **ho':t**_{D2} in Lao both mean 'to reach,' with each also extended non-spatially as a preposition-like coverb meaning 'about' in phrases like "to think about," "to speak about" (see 4.2).

3.1.3 PT *'day_{C1} 'to obtain; be able'

Another widely-encountered set of serial patterns involves forms cognate to Central Thai **day**_{C1}. Used as a main transitive verb the form means 'obtain, get' in most Tai languages. Two shared distinct secondary uses of this verb are attested in the three languages selected here to represent the Tai branches and were probably present in the proto language. (8) shows that postpositionally after a main verb, **day**_{C1} acts as an auxiliary or modal form indicating ability. (9) shows the preverbal variant order, where the emphasis is on indicating accomplishment ([ACCMP]) or fulfilled opportunity. Such a semantic notion of completion or perfectivity is often associated by default with past time, but in the Sukhothai inscriptions preverbal **day**_{C1} should not be taken exclusively as a past tense marker. The "curse" text in (9) indicates this. Both pre- and postverbal constructions freely occur in the negative, illustrated in (8) and (9). See also Morev (1991, p. 159).

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|--------|------------------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|-------------|
| (8) | Zhuang | ku:A1 | | tawC2 | sang A2 | 'dayC1 |
| | Nung | kaw A1 | | moe:A2 | sang A2 | dayC1 |
| | Lao | ku:A1 | nyangA2 | moe:A2 | bo':B1 | dayC1 |
| | | <i>IP</i> | <i>still</i> | <i>return</i> | <i>not-(yet)</i> | <i>able</i> |
| | | 'I cannot return yet.' | | | | |

Insc. 2.2.24 ha:A1 pu:nA1 miD2 dayC1
find lime not able
 '(They) could not find any lime.'

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|--------|---|--------------|------------------|---------|------------|
| (9) | Zhuang | ku:A1 | | sang A2 | dayC1 | ku'n A1 |
| | Nung | kaw A1 | | sang A2 | dayC1 | kinA1 |
| | Lao | ku:A1 | nyangA2 | bo':B1 | dayC1 | kinA1 |
| | | <i>IP</i> | <i>still</i> | <i>not-(yet)</i> | [ACCMP] | <i>eat</i> |
| | | 'I haven't eaten yet (/had a chance to eat).' | | | | |

Insc. 49.1.21 ya:B1 dayC1 kha:tD2 dayC1 phopD2 phraD2-phutD2
do-not [ACCMP] estimate [ACCMP] meet Buddha
 'May (such a one) have no prospects of meeting the Buddha...'

3.2 Differential Verb Grammaticalizations

In contrast to the preceding items, important *differences* can also be detected in how grammaticalization has operated across Tai varieties. Cognate forms that can be traced back to Proto-Tai verbs have often undergone shifts along different lines. These developments show that grammaticalization in the Tai case is seldom a simple or entirely predictable progression. The changes rather suggest a model where general principles of grammaticalization apply, but interacting with other principles or subject to individual conditions in the separate languages, as suggested in later sections.

3.2.1 The case of *kwa*:_{B1} [originally] 'to pass beyond'

A verb that almost certainly meant 'pass, cross over' in Proto-Tai is a good illustration of varied developments, eight of which are illustrated here. A full account of diachronic processes applying to such forms cognate to *kwa*:_{B1} would need to consider areal patterns outside of the Tai family, since Chinese and Vietnamese both have corresponding lexical items that undergo similar types of grammaticalization.⁹

(i) *Directional verb*. (10) shows that the form occurs still as a directional verb, e.g., in serial constructions, in Northern and Central-branch languages like Zhuang and Nung, although these languages may show developments outlined below as well. Note that (10) adheres to the motion ordering principle discussed for (7). (11) documents a similar usage for Tày (Tho), another Central-branch language of Vietnam (data adapted from Day, 1966, p. 56).

(10)	Zhuang	te:A1	yu:A2	kuaB1	payA1	
	Nung	mu'nA2	viw A2	ka: B1	payA1	
		3P	swim	across	go	
		'He swam across.'				
(11)	Tày (Tho)	mi:A2	koenA2	kwa:B1	nayC1	ma:A2
		have	people	cross	here	come..
		'There are people crossing over to here...'				

(ii) *Directional verb; serialized ablative marker*. In the Sukhothai inscriptions the form also occurs (rarely) as a directional verb as in (12), but with an ablative sense of passing from; this usage is found in older literature, especially from the Lanna area, as in (13), cited by Ittaratana (1974, p. 192). It has also been recorded for Shan (Morev, 1991, p. 61). An ablative coverb construction with this item is no longer found in Central Thai.¹⁰

⁹For example, Marybeth Clark (p.c.) has indicated that some grammaticalizations of the Vietnamese counterpart form differ from those in Tai.

¹⁰See also 3.2.2 (iv) and discussion of Central Thai ablative markers in 4.3.3.

- (12) Insc. 1.1.22 ...lomC2 ta:yA1 ha:yA1 kwa:B1 yawC1 ru'anA2...
 ...*fall die disappear pass home house*...
 'If (anyone) die or pass away from house and home...'
- (13) Thao Hung manA2 ko'[C1] pha:yB2 ni:A1 kwa:B1 mu'angA2
 3*P then defeat flee pass town*
 'They were then defeated... and fled from the town.'

(iii) *Comparative adverb*. The earliest dated inscriptional sources also document a use of **kwa:B1** in constructions where it means 'to surpass.' These passages can be read as equivalent to the modern Central Thai comparative one, e.g., [X **di:A1** **kwa:B1** Y] 'X is better than Y.' One can detect the verb meaning of 'to surpass' in passages such as:

- (i) "...more learned than [surpassing] monks in this town" (1.2.30);
 (ii) "... greater than [= surpassing] all ghosts in this town" (1.3.7).
 Cf. also (14), from an inscription dated 1339 A.D. (The reading follows Na Nagara & Griswold, 1992, p. 773.)

- (14) 107.1.5 ... anA1 di:A1 phiD2se:tD2 kwa:B1 inthaph[rom]...
CLF good special surpass Indra [-Brahma]
 '(the Triple Gem) which is more excellent than Indra and Brahma...'

The comparative development is found in other Southwestern Tai varieties, such as Lao and Southern Thai. In the latter, reduced to **wa:B1**, in addition to a comparative marker it now functions nearly as a final hortatory particle, e.g., **payA1 wa:B1** [more phonetically: **pay**^{/34} **wa**^{/52}] 'let's go,' as though based on '[it's better] to go.'

(iv) *Temporal conjunctive adverb*. The Central Thai use of **kwa:B1** as a temporal conjunction meaning 'before' or 'until' seems to be a more recent development, although it is clearly documented in the *Law of the Three Seals* of 1805 (as the index of Ishii et al., 1989, shows). (15) indicates that temporal usages are found in Lao as well as in Central Thai .

- (15) Central Thai i:kD1 na:nA2 kwa:B1 caD1 payA1
 Lao i:kD1 hoengA1 kuaB1 si:A2 payA1
additional long until will go
 'It's still a long time before we'll be going.'

Among Southwestern Tai varieties to the west of the Salween River (i.e., those often called "Shan" collectively) **kwa:B1**, reduced to **ka:B1** through regular processes, has undergone the three developments in (v) - (vii):

(v) *Main verb 'to go.'* Semantics has broadened and the form functions in Khamti and many Shan varieties as the most high-frequency main verb meaning 'go.'

(vi) *Progressive marker.* In some varieties (e.g., Mau or Dehong) as a secondary auxiliary verb **ka**:_{B1} is used to connote continuous or progressive aspect (cp. **yu**:_{B1} in Central Thai), as in (16), adapted from Young (1985, p. 145).

- (16) Tai Mau ta:C2 hauA2 yu:B1 ka:B1 hu'ngA1 thu'ngA1-ya:wC2 nanC1
 if 1-PL stay PROG long reach -already there
 'if we go on living there a long time'

(vii) *Past tense marker.* In other Shan-related varieties, e.g., those spoken in northeastern India, **ka**:_{B1} still functions as a main verb 'go,' but as a secondary auxiliary element it codes past time. Similar developments have been reported for certain Northern-branch varieties (Morev, 1991, p. 170). An extreme development, as (17) shows, is in the Assamese variety Aiton, where the item has become a postclitic on main verbs. The direct object, if any, follows. In this construction the form has achieved the status of a virtually obligatory morphological bound affix—a rare grammaticalization development for a Tai language.

- (17) Aiton mu'-ya:mA2 mae:B1 mu'nA2 hanA1=ka nanC1
 then mother 3-SG see=PAST that
 'when her mother saw it...'

(viii) *Verbalizing formative.* In Southern Zhuang (Kullavanijaya, 1992) **kwa**:_{B1} (**gvaq** in the local orthography) occurs in a number of expressions suggesting a functional role, but how productive this may be needs further investigation. The form seems to facilitate using a noun as a verbal predicate with passive sense, albeit retaining a notion of 'passing': **gvaq-tsaengh** 'to pass the scales' > 'to be weighed'; **gvaq-soq** 'to pass quantity' > 'to be tabulated'; **gvaq-taz** 'to pass the eyes' > 'to be seen.'

3.2.2 The case of **to**':_{B1} 'connect'

Unlike the preceding item, in the case of **to**':_{B1} 'connect,' main-verb and grammaticalized uses are found side-by-side in modern Central Thai. The historical sources and comparative evidence taken together point to a rather long period of "stable polygrammaticalization,"¹¹ but with some language-by-language difference. Probably main grammaticalized functions extend back to the proto language.

¹¹"Polygrammaticalization" has been used by Craig (1991) to refer to a single content lexeme (in this case a form meaning 'go') that has developed along a number of different grammaticalization pathways in the same language. On the ultimate provenance of **to**':_{B1} there remain questions, since—along with a number of other items—Proto-Tai status is firm, but so are early Austroasiatic connections (e.g., with Old Khmer).

(i) *Basic main-verb distribution.* This form was originally a verb meaning ‘to connect’ in both transitive and middle-intransitive senses of the English translation. The main-verb function is still very common in Central Thai and is found widely throughout the family, with or without individual developments below.

(ii) *Derived main-verb uses.* In some Tai languages the verb has become specialized. These shifts of main-verb meaning would not count as grammaticalizations. In Nung **to’**:_{B1} now means ‘to assemble,’ e.g., to join wooden components and build something. (Note the archaic “carpentry” sense of *to join* or *joiner* in English.) A similar meaning is found in a Sukhothai inscription of 1345 A.D., mentioning dismembered fragments of old Buddha images which are reassembled. Lao has developed the usage seen in **to’**:_{B1}-**pa:k**:_{D1} [connect + mouth] ‘engage in conversation in alternate turns.’ The Thai/Lao expression **to’**:_{B1}-**ra:A1** **kha:A1** ‘to bargain’ seems close to this notion. Another common inscriptional meaning is to ‘face off’ (connect) in combat, especially in elephant fighting, where **cha:ng**:_{C2} ‘elephant’ is then typically direct object. A similar use, widely found in the Tai family and perhaps in Proto-Tai, is to set animals such as roosters or bulls to fight each other. The modern compound **to’**:_{B1}-**su**:_{C1} preserves this basic ‘fight’ meaning.

(iii) *Distributive quantifier.* A usage of **to’**:_{B1} meaning ‘per’ as in “100 km. **per** hour” or “six guns **per** measure of tin” is found in Central Thai written sources from at least the 18th century, and in Lao. While this usage is not general throughout Tai, for Southern Zhuang, Kullavanijaya (1992) records a reminiscent set of compounds in **to’**:_{B1} (i.e. **doq**) that denote equality, such as **to’**:_{B1}-**pi**:_{B1} (i.e. **doqbei**) [connect + year] meaning ‘to be of the same age,’ and similar items meaning ‘of the same lineage,’ etc.

(iv) *Pre-nominal (quasi-prepositional) semantic case marker.* A different secondary-verb or coverb development is seen in modern Central Thai expressions like **di**:_{A1} **to’**:_{B1} **la:n**:_{A1} [good + connect + grandchild] and **prayo:t**(_{D1}) **to’**:_{B1} **ra:ng**:_{B2}-**ka:y**:_{A1} [benefit + connect + body]. Here **to’**:_{B1} has a dative function: (grandmother was) ‘good *to* her grandchildren’; (exercise is of) ‘benefit *to* the body.’¹² Something close to this dative usage is attested in early inscriptions (e.g., “afraid of doing evil *to* the elders”).¹³ Interestingly, a semantically contrasting ablative or source case-marking use of **to’**:_{B1} has been documented in earlier usage by Wimuktalop (1970, p. 114)—as though the directionality of the “connecting” notion were at one time not specified. This is seen in early 19th century expressions like “borrow *from* them” and “receive *from* them,” where **to’**:_{B1} is used coverbally. As Wimuktalop notes, this ablative usage was later replaced by another specifically ablative coverb **ca:k**:_{B1} ‘leave > from’ (see 4.3.3), currently in use, with the coverb function of **to’**:_{B1} then restricted to dative notions.

¹²Also as in the proverb:

to’: _{B1}	na:C1	wa:B2	phlapD2	pho’:A2	lapD2	wa:B2	tako:A1
connect	face	say	sp.tree	when	disappear	say	sp.tree

‘To her face, call her [a beautiful] *plap* tree; when she’s gone, call her [an ugly] *tako* tree.’

¹³2.1.42. In fact, Inscription 2 (1345 A.D.) clearly documents main-verb, temporal and dative-marking functions.

(v) *Temporal/aspectual marker*. One type of grammaticalized shift is to temporal/aspectual marker. In Central Thai **tham**_{A2} **to'**:_{B1} [do connect] 'continue doing' or **rian**_{A2} **to'**:_{B1} [study + connect] 'continue one's studies,' illustrates this secondary-verb use. Reversed order, but similar semantics, is seen in temporal deictic expressions like **to'**:_{B1}-**pay**_{A1} [connect + go] and **to'**:_{B1}-**ma**:_{A2} [connect + come]. These can have values of either 'continue on' or 'subsequently, later' (as though: 'continuing on...'). Diachronically, temporal uses are common in written Central Thai sources from about 1400 A.D. onward, especially in a high-frequency sequence **to'**:_{B1}-**thaw**_{B2} [connect equal] 'until' (now obsolete).

In rural Southern Thai **to'**:_{B1} has acquired consistent *future-time* nuances and has gone on to play a crucial role in a temporal paradigm relating to past and future day names as in (18). Nung—which recall is in a different branch of the language family—shows some similar lexical forms, but lacking the **to'**:_{B1}- formative. (Nung uses **van**_{A2} 'day' instead, both for the future and the past.) This strongly suggests that Proto-Tai possessed such an "interlocutor-centric" day-naming system with cognate forms, but probably without the prefixal use of **to'**:_{B1}- which developed subsequently and idiosyncratically in Southern Thai.

(18)		Southern Thai	Nung
	'when' [future]	to': _{B1} -day:A1	(van _{A2} -hau'A2)
	'tomorrow'	to': _{B1} -phro:kD2	van _{A2} -pukD2
	'2 days hence'	to': _{B1} -ru':A2	van _{A2} -lu'A2
	'3 days hence'	to': _{B1} -ru'angB2	van _{A2} -loengB2
	'4 days hence'	to': _{B1} -rawA2	van _{A2} -litD1

COMPARE:

	'when' [past]	boeB2-day:A1	(van _{A2} -hau'A2)
	'today'	wan _{A2} -ni:C2	van _{A2} -nayC1
	'yesterday'	rae:kD2-wa:A2	van _{A2} -va:A2
	'2 days ago'	tae:B1-wa:A2-su':A2	van _{A2} -slu'nA2
	'3 days ago'	tae:B1-ru'angB2	van _{A2} -mu'nC2
	'4 days ago'	tae:B1-rawA2	-

Many additional cases of partially differential grammaticalization across Tai languages remain to be thoroughly investigated.

4. GRAMMATICALIZATION IN CENTRAL THAI

From considerations based on comparative and historical evidence such as in the preceding examples, it seems possible in principle to attest to a common Tai

syntactic core and to trace Tai-wide patterns of grammaticalization. These could then be distinguished from particular developments applying only to sections of the language family or to single varieties. Before a convincing Proto-Tai syntax along these lines could be formulated and such developments studied in detail, a data base would need to be consulted far more inclusive than that used here. Morev (1991) has made important progress in this project. However, until more work of this type is done, it would be premature to make *comprehensive* claims regarding how an individual Tai language, such as Central Thai, had developed syntactically from Proto-Tai.

4.1 Approaches to Analyzing Thai Syntactic Change

More contained aspects of the preceding question can feasibly be investigated, especially if an assumption is made that the Sukhothai inscriptions and similar written sources can be taken as representing a form of Tai that is a direct precursor of modern Central Thai. (This assumption needs more study.) Sukhothai-period syntax has been recently described in depth by Bamroongraks (1987) with emphasis on zero anaphora. As noted above, Ittaratana (1974) has also surveyed a number of differences between usage of the earlier period, as documented by inscriptional and literary texts, and Central Thai of the present day.

Excellent text-based studies of the development of specific Central Thai constructions have been completed, with particular attention to the past century or two. Prasithratsint (1985, 1988) has admirably documented the 200-year complex development of Central Thai so-called passive constructions, e.g., in **thu:k_{D1}**—a verb originally meaning ‘to touch, strike / be struck’; then coming to mean ‘to undergo’ and taking on a passive-marking function. In many styles of Thai this construction has been loosely limited to a so-called adversative passive, with some persistence of the original ‘strike’ meaning. (Also involved in the passive history is the parallel development of the modal **to':ng_{C1}** ‘must,’ originally meaning ‘touch’ as well and at one time having had a passive-like function.) Khanittanan (1993) has carried analysis of **thu:k_{D1}** up to the present by showing that among middle-class speakers of Thai, the form now is virtually unrestricted as a passive marker and for these speakers, at least, grammaticalization of the passive is very advanced.

More generally, Khanittanan (1988) has convincingly demonstrated the arising of what she refers to as a “more autonomous” style of language characterizing much recent Thai academic/professional writing. The newer style is seen as coexisting with other registers closer to informal speech, including some forms of popular journalism. The more autonomous register involves production of a type of semantic textual autonomy, partly through reduction of zero anaphora, thus leaving much less by way of inference on the part of message receivers (1988, p. 124). This contrasts with what Vongvipanond (1992) has referred to as “cool” properties of more informal spoken Thai, where more is left to be construed from shared background knowledge or expectations.

The autonomous style is also partly constituted through increasing the range of the **thu:k_{D1}** construction and the density of abstract nominalizations in prefixal **ka:n_{A1}** and **khwa:m_{A2}** along with an increase in abstract prepositional phrases. The

combined effect of these innovations is to mark more explicitly semantic relationships involving nominals and nominalized clauses. In more colloquial speech, some of these semantic functions, including semantic case-role relationships, would need to be inferred. The emerging register, linked to Western models, can thus “express relations of abstract ideas that have never been expressed before” (Khanittanan, 1988, p. 124).

4.2 The Gradualness of Thai Syntactic Shifting

An important problem raised by grammaticalization theory and particularly significant in the Central Thai case involves categorical versus quantitative syntactic shifting. In some approaches to historical linguistics, it would be important to distinguish trends which were considered gradual or merely statistical from others which involved the “sudden” emergence of new syntactic categories, new form classes, or new construction types. For example, should the studies mentioned above dealing with constructions in **thu:k**_{D1} or **ka:n**_{A1} be seen as documenting quantitative or categorical shifts? At which point in time can we say the verb **thu:k**_{D1} ‘to undergo’ or ‘suffer’ has now introduced a “passive construction type” or that compounding in **ka:n**_{A1} ‘activity’ is now an example of nominalization (rather than perhaps a more general form of prefixation)?

Available evidence suggests that for Central Thai grammaticalization has occurred very gradually over centuries in many cases, but in a few cases, more abruptly in a matter of mere decades.

A good example of gradual change is the development of the current Central Thai future-irrealis marker **ca**. This is derived from an earlier fuller form **cak**_{D1} ‘to desire, intend.’ Still earlier, in Proto-Tai, the meaning seems to have been ‘to recognize, know’ (Li, 1977, p. 164). The development of **ca** aptly illustrates most modes of grammaticalization in (4). In terms of phonological attrition, (19) shows a gradual replacement of the fuller verb form by the unstressed clitic, a process not yet complete, since **cak**_{D1} can still occasionally be found in formal styles.

(19) % **ca** vs. **cak**_{D1} in 13th–16th century inscriptions.

(Fine Arts Department, 1983. N = 131.)

period (A.D.)	ca	cak _{D1}
1292-1350	0	100
1351-1400	4	96
1401-1450	37	63
1451-1550	91	9

In terms of semantic and syntactic functions of **ca** (or **cak**_{D1}), (20) indicates a seven-century course of development. This involves constructional polysemy with gradual quantitative shift quite in line with cross-language generalizations as to how markers of this type tend to evolve (Bybee, Pagliuca, & Perkins, 1991). For Thai of

the 14th century as well as in the present language, all of the functions of (20) can be discerned. There are no sudden shifts. All the same, there is a clear quantitative shift toward the right of the scale (Diller, forthcoming).

- (20) *desire > intention > future > irrealis*
 > (*irrealis-complement formative*)

As for more abrupt change, a striking example taking shape recently is what could be called a compound “existential passive” construction of form (21).

- (21) (NP) + **mi:A2** + **ka:nA1** + VP
 ‘there is being/has been a ... [NOMINALIZATION]... (of NP).’

This has a journalistic/bureaucratic flavour similar to English nominal agentless expressions like “there has been a reconsideration of the motion, but in Thai there is often a local object within the nominalized VP, as though: “this motion has not yet had a casting of votes.” This construction was uncommon before 1970, although its components were present in the language. Its sudden jelling and popularity seems to show that in Thai the arising of a grammatical pattern can happen quickly if conditions are right.

Recent work on grammaticalization mentioned above (Hopper & Traugott, 1993) has called sudden diachronic jumps of form class into question. For most affected lexical items, categorical shifts can be traced through stages of more gradual reanalysis, involving perhaps extended periods of constructional polysemy, where competing or superimposed semantic senses and syntactic interpretations are available to speakers. Also, older senses may persist as is noted in (5).

A methodological aspect of this issue involves the gradient or variable nature of certain Central Thai *grammaticality judgments*, especially some which are sociolinguistically sensitive (Diller, 1988, 1993). For example, in an attempt to separate coverbs from “true” prepositions, differential stranding potential in relative clauses may be utilized as a test. True prepositions such as **bonA2** ‘on’ and **kapD1** ‘with’ do not admit stranding in relative clauses for most Thai speakers; e.g., these speakers do not accept direct Thai counterparts of “the table I put it **on**” or “the person I went **with**.” On the other hand, a coverb such as **thu'ngA1** in the sense of ‘about, concerning’ *can* be stranded, as in (22):

- (22) ru'angB2 thi:B2 khawA1 phu:tD2 thu'ngA1
matter REL 3P speak reach
 ‘the matter she spoke about.’

This suggests a more verb-like syntax for forms like **thu'ngA1**.¹⁴ Now for certain items, such as **ca:kD1** ‘to leave’ (main verb), ‘from’ (coverb or preposition), this

¹⁴On might argue that **thu'ngA1** accepts stranding because **phu:tD2** - **thu'ngA1** is a lexical compound, a transitive verb. This argument is similar to the one above in that the “coverb” form is recognized as a valence-increasing formative. However, for the “compound” argument to work, one would need to admit many similar “compounds” such as those in **khitD2**, **nu'kD2**, ‘think,’ **a:ngC1**

stranding test appears not to produce categorical judgments of grammaticality across all speakers. Some speakers accept the Thai analogue of “the village she came **from**”; others do not. It seems plausible to propose that gradience in judged grammaticality could be taken as evidence for a *gradual* shift of specific coverbs toward preposition status. Similarly, the new construction type referred to as the “existential passive” above has not achieved universal normative acceptance.

4.3 Developments in Some Central Thai Closed Functional Classes

Comparative-historical evidence indicates that for certain closed classes a small stable core of lexical items is shared through many varieties of the Tai family and perhaps reflects a Proto-Tai heritage. Then, in developments that somewhat belie the label of “closed class,” Central Thai and other Tai languages have elaborated, scaled down, or rearranged sets differently.

For Central Thai, elaborated classes certainly include *auxiliaries*, *pronouns* and *classifiers*; also perhaps *speech-act particles*, although evidence is less abundant. Scaled-down sets include *negative forms* and *deictics*. More complex patterns of readjustment characterize *prepositions*, *conjunctions*, and *complementizers*. Brief overviews follow.

4.3.1 Pronouns

Evidence that the Proto-Tai pronominal system, or at least that of Proto-Southwestern-Tai, regularly distinguished person and number has been adduced by Strecker (1984) and Morev (1991, p. 134). First-person dual and plural may have cross-categorized inclusive/exclusive distinctions. Person/number distinctions linger on for the modern Thai first person, but number and even sometimes person are now formally obscured elsewhere in the system.¹⁵ Some of this earlier number-sensitive system can be traced in the inscriptions, including the archaic forms **su**:_{A1}, **ra**:_{A2}, **phu’a**_{A1} and **tu**:_{A1}, with (23) showing a possible interpretation of the inscriptional evidence:

cf story she told / spoke about

‘refer,’ **kla**:_{WB1} ‘speak,’ and many (most?) verbs of expression and cognition—semantically motivated sets, not lexical idioms. Worse still, there are discontinuous possibilities like **khuy**_{A2} **kan**_{A1} **thu’ng**_{A1} ‘to chat together about’ which admit stranding too. It thus seems more convincing to take **thu’ng**_{A1} in these expressions as an independent grammaticalized lexeme, albeit with close semantic links to the clausal main verb.

¹⁵In modern Central Thai, plural and “outgroup” nuances perhaps persist in resumptive 3P expressions like:

di: **kwà**: **khon ù’**:_n **kháw** ‘better than the others.’

Southwestern languages like Dehong (Northern Shan) show a complex person/number system (Wu Lingyun, p.c.) including forms cognate to those shown in (23). Lao and Southern Thai reflect more of (23) than current Central Thai does. Note that in Central Thai 3P forms **man** and **kháw** are sometimes even used for 1P reference. Further, 2P/3P reference is formally tenuous, with forms like **kae**:, **khun**, **thân** used in both 2P and 3P functions. Epithets like **nǐ** (‘rat’) extend to all three persons.

(23)	<u>singular</u>	<u>dual</u>	<u>paucal-exclusive(?)</u>	<u>plural-exclusive</u>	<u>plural-inclusive</u>
1P	ku:A1	ra:A2	phu'aA1	tu:A1	raw A2
2P	mu'ngA2	-	-	su:A1	-
3P	man A2	-	-	khaw A1	-

For modern Central Thai most of the earlier number contrasts have been replaced and elaborated with sociolinguistically-based distinctions. Hoonchamlong (1992) and sources mentioned therein have traced these in some detail. There is evidence that court forms of prescribed personal reference became highly stratified as court polity became increasingly complex in the Ayudhya period. The modern Thai system is then a residue of this, extended by education, media, etc., throughout the speech community—or better, a synthesis derived from the elaborated elite system and elements of the more basic common one. One Southeast Asian areal feature, common in the Tai family and perhaps the original impetus for Central Thai elaboration, is a grammaticalization of words meaning ‘slave’ or ‘servant’ which become first-person forms (Diller, 1985).¹⁶ Similarly, forms originally meaning ‘lord,’ ‘excellency’ are incorporated as 2P and 3P possibilities.

So many new quasi-pronominals have been added, including pronouns borrowed from other languages, as to question whether Central Thai personal pronouns could still be considered a “closed” functional syntactic class. In particular, Central Thai address terms have undergone a complex proliferation in the past two centuries, as documented by Tingsabadh and Prasithrathsint (1986); titles and other address terms are commonly used for reference in a quasi-pronominal fashion. This development seems to run counter to claims of grammaticalization theory in that an earlier *paradigmatic organization*, a diachronic target noted in (4), has broken down for the personal pronouns to be replaced by an unstable far “messier” system based on shifting sociolinguistic sensitivities in a more complicated social milieu.

As for relative pronouns, grammaticalization theory perhaps fares better. The Sukhothai inscriptions and comparative evidence strongly favour the general classifier **an**_{A1} or other classifiers to form relative clauses, a usage still possible in some styles of Central Thai (see (14)). For locative relatives, inscriptions and early sources show clauses in **thi**:B2 ‘place (where)...’ grammaticalized from a basic nominal meaning of ‘place.’ For reasons not evident in functional terms, at the expense of the older **an**_{A1} construction, the new **thi**:B2 locative construction generalized to become the most common standard mode of relative clause formation.

¹⁶The evidence indicates that at first these forms are introduced as polite euphemisms. Over time, some forms have undergone contraction, such as such as Lao:

[**kha**:C1 ‘slave’ + **no**:yC2 ‘small’] > **khano**:yC1 > **kho**:yC1.

Some remain in polite usage, while others, like Central Thai **kha**:C1 ‘slave’ > ‘I,’ have become less polite, opening the way for further cycles of elaboration, including the introduction of epithets like **nũ** (‘rat’), loans from Taeciw Chinese (**úa**) and even from English (**a:y**). In the past, another source for quasi-pronominal forms may have been clan names. Thus modern Nung distinguishes 1P forms **kaw**_{A1}, the original pronoun, and **ngo**:A2, a more familiar form at first apparently meaning ‘member of the Ngo clan’ (Bé et al., 1982). Perhaps something similar has happened in the case of the form **la:w**_{A2}, used in Lao as a 3P form.

A similar pathway characterized the development of relative clauses in **su'ng**_{B2}, originally a Khmer loanword. The latter form was actually favored in Ayudhya-period writing in contexts where **thi**:_{B2} is now more usual.¹⁷

4.3.2 Classifiers

To judge from historical and comparative evidence, Proto-Tai was a classifier language, although the question of original order remains open. Morev (1991), Conklin (1981) and others have compared classifiers across Tai languages. Juntanamalaga (1988) has shown that an earlier limited system has become lexically elaborated in ways which now often appear arbitrary, partly through imposition of prescriptive norms. In some cases there has been explicit linguistic engineering, e.g., by King Mongkut (Prasithratsint, 1988; Diller 1988; 1993).

Briefly, in the early inscriptions classifiers are often omitted (from the modern point of view), although the basic syntactic patterns of modern Central Thai classifier syntax are all documented. Lexically, a few familiar shape-based classifiers are found with approximately their modern values, e.g., **phu'**:_n_{A1} to enumerate pieces of cloth. However the form **an**_{A1}, a generic inanimate classifier, is the norm in early sources in many inanimate contexts that would now require special idiosyncratic classifiers. This wide distribution of **an**_{A1} also has comparative backing (Juntanamalaga, 1988, p. 323). It was also the main marker for relative clauses, as above. In modern Central Thai, **an**_{A1} still retains older functions.

Also used in the written sources by 1360 A.D. was **nuay**_{B1} for fruits, legumes, and the like. It was probably in use much earlier.¹⁸ **nuay**_{B1} became common as a nearly general inanimate classifier in Lao,¹⁹ Southern Thai, and in a number of other Tai languages. By the 19th century it was even used in abstract astrological calculations in Northern and Northeastern sources.²⁰ A specialization in this mathematical sense now characterizes Central Thai **nuay**_{B1}, which has come to function as an abstract noun or classifier meaning 'unit' (also common as 'unit' in the bureaucracy).

By about 1500 A.D. sources indicate substantial flux in the earlier system, e.g. with the classifier **duang**_{A1} used in the 16th century to classify a wide variety of items, including cups, bowls, boxes, trays, and even inscriptions.²¹ Some of these

¹⁷The difference is now partly a matter of genre. **thi**:_{B2} 'place' also occurs grammaticalized as a relator-noun preposition 'at' and in a number of other functions. Another Tai form originally meaning 'place' is **bo'**:_n_{B1}, grammaticalized as a relator noun in Lao, but acquiring pejorative nuances like 'den' in Thai.

¹⁸Insc. 11.1.10 (Na Nagara & Griswold, 1992, p. 470). Also as a classifier compound **nuay**_{B1} **thuap**_{B1} **sadae**:_k_{D1} used to refer to a single legume (mung bean?) 305.3.24, 1451 A.D. (Pongsripan 1991, p.120; Na Nagara & Griswold, 1992, p. 753, who translate 'pea'). For comparative indications that this form was current at least in Proto-Southwestern-Tai usage, see Juntanamalaga 1988, p. 323). The Nung cognate is glossed as 'fragment' (Bé, et al., 1982, p. 190).

¹⁹Used for monastic manuscript cabinets by 1834 A.D. (Inscription Ubon 14.1.5, National Library 1986, p. 272).

²⁰Na Nagara (1991, p.80); National Library (1986, p.252).

²¹See Na Nagara and Griswold's (1992, p. 648-9) reading of Inscription 14, of Sukhothai, 1536 A.D. For **duang**_{A1} to classify inscriptions, see Khonkaen 10.1.2, date 1596 A.D., from Kalasin Province; Nongkhai 6.1.4, dated 1608 A.D. (National Library 1986, pp. 352, 355).

items had earlier occurred with **an**_{A1} and later, in Central Thai, came to require different classifiers like **bau'**_{A1} (i.e., **bay** 'leaf'), **lu:k**_{D2} or **lak**_{D1} (for inscriptions). Also, **bay**_{A1}, **lu:k**_{D2} and the high-register Indic-derived **phon**_{A1} have become usual for fruits and roundish vegetables, replacing **nuay**_{B1} for this purpose in Central Thai.²² Taxa now classified by **duang**_{A1} in Central Thai have shrunk to light sources, seals, stamps, and the like, although in rural Northeastern Thai/Lao knives and hoes may still be classified by this classifier. Evidence of widespread readjustment is thus clear and the elaboration and codification characterizing the present system is recent and in some cases normatively imposed.

Palakornkul (1976), Carpenter (1987), Juntanamalaga (1988), and others have documented continuing shifts in classifier usage into the present. For example, in colloquial speech, some individual items, such as **tua**_{A1}, have been expanding their taxa quickly at the expense of other classifiers. Also, a common tendency of the popular press to omit classifiers for humans and otherwise to fall short of the normative standards in classifier use comes in for steady comment from prescriptive authorities. These phenomena are in line with the history sketched above in suggesting that, whatever speculations one may entertain as to cognitive bases or etymological origin, the Central Thai classifier system has been substantially affected by sociolinguistic forces and continues to be subject to variation of this sort.²³

4.3.3 Prepositions

In harmony with cross-language generalizations, earlier work has shown that many current Central Thai prepositions or quasi-prepositions are derived from verbs and nouns. It appears that a small class of true prepositions—difficult to reconstruct convincingly for Proto-Tai—has been elaborated. Literary forms of the language have been especially affected. In line with grammaticalization theory, lexical content sources—verbs and nouns—have come to function as coverbs and nominal-head relators. Verbs have tended to supply allative and ablative case marking, while nouns, more static locatives, e.g.,

thu'ng_{A1} 'reach' (V) > 'to, towards' [+ NP/goal]

²²Although Nung and other Tai languages use **bau'**_{A1} 'leaf' as a classifier for sheets, in the early inscriptional texts available it occurs only as a noun 'leaf.' Classifier use is attested by the late 18th century, at least for the North, e.g., to count umbrellas (now requiring **khan**_{A1}), but the use of this term to count fruit and solid round items is only recent and appears to be restricted to Central Thai. See Na Nagara 1991, pp. 89, 92. Thus a direct etymological connection with Austronesian forms cognate to **buah** 'fruit' seems implausible; but see Conklin (1981). For evidence that classifier **an**_{A1} persisted into the 19th century in quite general usage and that current taxa for classifiers like **tua**_{A1}, **lang**_{A1}, **khan**_{A2} etc., have developed recently, see Wimuktalop (1970, p. 117).

²³More cognitively, Placzek (1985, 1992) proposes that what he calls generic classifiers derive historically from perceptual ones—the modern extension of **tua**_{A1} bearing this trend out. This proposal may ultimately be valid, but for intermediate stages the philological and comparative facts reviewed above suggest some "noise" in the system: certain classifiers, such as **an**_{A1}, may actually have been "more generic" in the past than at present. Others, like **duang**_{A1}, seem to have narrowed their scope from a wider (more generic?) basis to a more perceptually salient one, but more study of this interesting problem is needed.

khaw C1	'enter' (V) >	'(go) inside' [+ NP/goal]
na: C1	'face' (N) >	'in front of' [+ NP/locative]
lang A1	'back' (N) >	'behind' [+ NP/locative]

although the latter are not excluded from descriptions of motion. As though through a conspiracy, several older prepositions have been subjected to replacement from these other sources.

Some quasi-prepositional uses of nouns are found in texts earlier than one might expect. The noun **suan**_{B1} literally means 'part,' but is widely used in modern technical prose to introduce a contrastive topic, the equivalent of English "as for...." Interestingly, this topic-marking usage can be documented as early as 1536 (insc. 14.2.10).

The contrast set into which grammaticalized forms were incorporated has been sociolinguistically sensitive. It has included a number of style-marked prepositions borrowed from Mon or Khmer by the 14th century, e.g., **na**_{D2} 'at,' a high-register locative. Centuries later, King Mongkut further specified and codified the usage of a number of prepositions (Diller, 1988, 1993).

(24)	'to leave'	'from [location]'	'from [time]'	'but; only'
pre-16th c.	ca:k _{D1}	tæ: _{B1}	tæ: _{B1}	(luan _{C2})
post-16th. c.	(ca:k _{D1})	ca:k _{D1}	ca:k _{D1} , tæ: _{B1}	tæ: _{B1}

In investigating grammaticalization, tracing the development of related sets of items is apt to be more revealing than inspecting the history of individual lexemes. As (24) shows, the coverb **ca:k**_{D1}, from a lexical verb 'to leave' in Proto-Tai, has mainly displaced Sukhothai-era locative preposition **tæ:**_{B1} 'from' (7), now rarely used for spatial ablative purposes in Central Thai. However **tæ:**_{B1} 'from' is still common for temporal expressions, e.g., **tæ:**_{B1} **cha:w**_{C2} 'from the morning' (also generalized to mean 'in the morning'); similarly: **tang**_{C1}-**tæ:**_{B1} + temporal item. More abstract functions are now usual, including quantitative/distributive modification similar to English *each* or *per* (in the pattern N + **tæ:**_{B1} -**lae:**_{D2} + classifier) and disjunctive discourse marking *but, however*.²⁴

²⁴The earlier spatial locative (ablative) function of **tæ:**_{B1} is preserved in Lao, Southern Thai, and most Southwestern Tai varieties. The earliest textual 'but' use of **tæ:**_{B1} seems to occur in a complex "but if" expression (**tæ:**_{B1} **ko'**_{C1} **ha:k**_{D1}) in Inscription 64 (1:20) of 1396 A.D. By the mid 16th century disjunctive usage is common. The quantificational use can perhaps traced to the early 15th century: "not *only* did [the queen] build the Asokaram monastery, she also built..." (93.1.27, 1399 A.D.). The ultimate etymology of this item remains obscure. A Nung phrase **teo**_{B2} **va:**_{B2} means 'but' (Bé et al, 1982, p. 280) however **teo**_{B2} is regularly cognate with Central Thai **thiaw**, not **tæ:**. Gedney (1991, p. 416) records a form **te**_{B1} 'from' for Yay, suggesting Proto-Tai provenance.

Three noteworthy early usages which did not survive (intact, at least) in Central Thai are:

(i) to mark a contrasting topical NP: "As *for* materials and equipment, the congregation constructed..." (15.2.7, 1525 A.D.); "As *for* Phraya Sisayarana, he donated..." (86.2.6, 1528 A.D.);

Turning to dative/recipient marking, we observed above (3.2.2 (iv)) the coverb function of **to'**_{B1} 'connect' and also similar functions of **hau'**_{C1} 'give.' Something similar to the fate of **tae'**_{B1} as an ablative preposition has befallen the dative form **kae'**_{B1}, along with its level-sensitive companion **dae'**_{B1}, both apparently of non-Tai provenance but widely used in Sukhothai. In early written sources **kae'**_{B1} is much more frequent as a dative marker than at present. For Sukhothai inscriptional contexts like (6), the preposition **kae'**_{B1} is favored to mark recipient nouns in benefactive and related goal phrases. Ittaratana (1974, p. 146) has indicated a number of inscriptional constructions with this preposition that in modern Central Thai would now require **hau'**_{C1} (i.e., **hây**) alone instead, without **kae'**_{B1}. For other constructions, sequences of both forms are characteristic of formal registers of modern Thai. In these cases it seems that a serial-verb strategy has gradually been winning over a prepositional one, but subject to sociolinguistic constraints.

Another factor in the demise of **kae'**_{B1} is documented by Wimuktalop (1970, p. 103). She shows that in the early 19th century some half-dozen common verbs required this preposition to introduce a targeted object nominal into their predicates:

kro:tD1 + **kae'**_{B1} + NP 'to be angry *with* NP,'
songA1-sayA1 + **kae'**_{B1} + NP 'to be suspicious *of* NP,' etc.

On the other hand, in modern Central Thai the verbs in question have now become fully transitive or at least no longer require this particular preposition.²⁵ It is likely that a similar fate has befallen the formerly common allative prepositions **yang**_{A2} and **su'**_{B1} 'to, towards.'

Thus it is unsafe to conclude categorically that earlier stages of Central Thai simply lacked prepositions as a form class with prepositional forms subsequently supplied through the grammaticalization of content lexemes.²⁶ The picture is more complicated. Grammaticalized forms have rather interacted with and gradually displaced certain earlier prepositions. Some prepositions were or later became sociolinguistically specialized (e.g., **kae'**_{B1}/**dae'**_{B1}; allative **yang**_{A2} and **su'**_{B1}), while

(ii) as a temporal conjunction meaning approximately 'when' or 'after' (with little sense of contextual contrast): "*after* Lord T. was born...*when* he was a youth..." (291.1.2-6, c. 1450 A.D.); compare also (18), showing a Southern Thai use of **tae'**_{B1} as a past-time indicator in the day-name paradigm;

(iii) as a genitive marker: "Lord S. became the ruler *of* Chiangmai..." (305.2.17, 1451 A.D.). This genitive usage is found in Southern Thai where it is especially common in discussing kinship relationships.

²⁵Further examples (Wimuktalop 1970, p. 103-4): **du'**_{A1-min}_{B1} 'to insult,' **thu'ngA1-cayA1** 'to satisfy,' **thamA2-ra:yC2** 'to harm,' **pru'kD1sa:A1** 'to consult' (now used either transitively or with preposition **kapD1** 'with'), **wiD2wa:tD2** 'to quarrel with' (now taking **kapD1**). Also documented is a tendency to replace **nayA2** 'in, at' and **duayC1** 'with' by **bonA1** 'on' and **kapD1** 'with' (1970, p. 114).

²⁶Provocatively, Warotamasikhhadit (1988) has argued that current Central Thai lacks prepositions. Some of the argumentation is along the lines above and perhaps approaches a terminological issue.

others shifted functionally in different directions, such as toward conjunction or quantifier.

4.3.4 *Conjunctive adverbs, conjunctions and complementizers*

Developments are especially mixed and complex in these categories. Recall the Central Thai functions of **kwa**:_{B1} (3.2.1)—comparative marker and temporal conjunction ('before')—derived from a verb 'to pass.' For written language samples, a weak general trend is a shift toward indication of interclausal pragmatic functions through explicit clause-initial markers. Similarly, preverbal epistemic or deontic modification increases. In effect, a few *generalized clause-final markers* of discourse-functional relations such as **say**_{C2} and **lae**:_{A2}—common in earlier sources—tend to give way to a greater range of *more specific clause-initial* markers characteristic of modern written registers. Similarly, unmarked parataxis tends to give way to explicitly-conjoined clauses.

Older phrase-final forms like **say**_{C2}, marking a range of conditional and similar cause-result sequences, have fallen out of use, while others, like **lae**:_{A2} (> **lae**_{D2}) in conjoining function, have been reanalyzed as clause-initial. However, clauses can be found in all periods with marking of both types, and the trend is far from categorical.

Among good candidates for grammaticalization is the verb **lae**:**w**_{C2} 'finish.' Occurring widely throughout the Tai family, this verb has acquired an interclausal linking function 'then' as well as a temporal-aspectual function of marking event completion as viewed from the speaker's or other relevant perspective (thus not entirely unlike the English perfect tense). Perhaps these developments characterized the Proto-Tai stage. Several further diachronic and synchronic derivations have been claimed for **lae**:**w**_{C2} in Central Thai, among them two shown in (25); these derivations seem plausible but should be considered speculative until better established.

- (25) (i) **lae**:**w**_{C2} 'finish' > **lae**:_{A2} 'then' (clause-final particle) > **lae**_{D2} (i.e., **lâe**)
 'and'
 (ii) **lae**:**w**_{C2} 'finish' > **la**_{D2} (i.e. **lá**, **lâ**) 'also' (phrase-final particle)

Etymologically, some forms, such as **ko**:**n**_{B1} 'before' (in the temporal sense only) can be reconstructed for Proto-Tai, and many Tai varieties form temporal clauses with this item. Grammaticalizations of forms meaning 'after, later' derived from body-part nouns have been illustrated in (1); these may come to function, usually in compounds, as interclausal linkers in clause-initial position. Forms apparently cognate to the immediately pre-predicate linking conjunction **cu**'**ng**_{A1} can be found in several Southwestern-branch languages, and in inscriptions; see (6). Other conjunctive adverbs frequently used in Central Thai such as **ko**'_{C1} 'so,' **phu**'_{A2} 'in order to,' **phro**'_{D2} 'because,' **ru**'_{A1} 'or,' and **loe**:**y**_{A2} 'so... just,' occur in Sukhothai inscriptions but are not of Proto-Tai provenance; rather they represent early loans from Mon or Khmer.

As for conditional markers, Li (1977) did not reconstruct a Proto-Tai form for 'if' and there is wide variation throughout the family in marking conditional clauses (or in leaving them unmarked). For Central Thai, conditional and concessive forms such as **tha**:_{C1} 'if' and **thu'ng**_{A1} 'even though' are good candidates for instances of grammaticalization. They patently have developed from main verbs meaning 'wait' and 'reach' respectively. (The modern respelling of **tha**: 'wait' as B2, as though to differentiate it from 'if,' is recent and spurious.) Inexplicably, Sukhothai and Lao inscriptions consistently show a conditional conjunction **phi**_{D1}. This is no longer common in Central Thai, and it is unclear why this form has given way to the grammaticalization of 'wait' to mark conditional clauses.²⁷

Complementizers have been illustrated as Southeast Asian areal features in (3), items 3 and 6. In particular, verbs meaning 'say' and 'give,' used in serial constructions, have developed into complement-marking forms. In the Central Thai case this was in the distant past, since these complement constructions are found throughout the Tai family. The extension of **wa**:_{B2}-marked ('say') clauses to verbs of cognition and perception in Central Thai may be more recent.²⁸

A more recent arrival in the complementizer category, limited to languages in the Thai-Lao area, is a factitive clause type marked with **thi**:_{B2} (or **thi**:_{B2-ca}). As noted earlier, **thi**:_{B2} has its origin in a noun meaning 'place,' a usage still found. From this it has developed a clause-marking function parallel to what Givón (1991) has reported for Biblical Hebrew (26):

(26) 'place' > locative relative > general relative > factitive clause marker

4.3.5 Deictics

Comparative and textual evidence shows that a grammaticalization process of paradigmatic formation has occurred for deictic items. Proto-Tai probably had an extensive but formally diffuse deictic system. Deictic subsystems in ***d**, ***n**, ***hn**, and ***p** are attested. In modern written Central Thai this complex has been distilled down to a well-formed six-item paradigm (with all items in **n**-, with tone B2 or C2). This occurred through analogical processes in which phonological-semantic iconicity played a crucial role, as treated in detail elsewhere (Diller & Juntanamalaga, 1988).

In terms of pragmatic function, paradigm formation was paralleled by the functional determination of particular syntactic constructions. It is interesting that the well-known tendency of demonstratives to function as definite articles (along with

²⁷Could the older form reflect a cognate of modern **phu'**_{AB1} 'in case, for, if'? Note that the Tai Mau form meaning 'if' in (16) would not be a regular cognate of 'to wait,' but of a different verb meaning 'to challenge' (CT **thá**:), indicating yet another source of grammaticalized conditionals/concessives.

²⁸It is remarkable that what are now the most common main verbs of speaking throughout the Southwestern Branch of the Tai family are variable: Central Thai **phu**:_{tB2}, Lao **waw**_{C2}, Northern Thai **u**:_{C1}, Southern Thai **lae**:_{ngA1}—however the complement-marking form **wa**:_{B2} used after these forms remains stable throughout.

forms based on the number ‘one’ to function as indefinite ones) is only moderately discernible in Central Thai.²⁹

4.3.6 *Negatives; verbal auxiliaries*

Tai Northern-branch Zhuang varieties are exceptionally rich in negative forms, with cognates of **mi**_{D2}, **bo’**:_{B1} and **am**_{A1} all used to negate normal statements, perhaps with different nuances relating to volition, etc., and **sang**_{A2} as in (8)–(9) available as a special temporal negative ‘not yet.’³⁰ The first two and possibly the third also occur, sometimes together, in the Sukhothai inscriptions. This suggests that the Proto-Tai and earlier Southwestern Tai negation systems were more complex than Central Thai is at present. The main Central Thai negative form **may** (spelled B2, but perhaps etymologically C1) and its unstressed and apparently more archaic alternate **mi**_{D2} seem to be semantic generalizations derived from an earlier richer system. Should grammaticalization principles be seen here as “tidying up” the multifarious negatives? Note that **bo’**:_{B1}, **am**_{A1} (or syllabic **m- ng-**) and **may**_{B2} have been selected respectively by the modern Southwestern language groups Lao, Northern Shan, and Central Thai. Each now operates with essentially a single negative form—but each with a different one of the three.

The development of the future-irrealis marker **ca** was sketched above. Little detail is yet available on how other preverbal auxiliary items developed in Central Thai. The inscriptions show a sparse epistemic-deontic auxiliary system, the epistemic **yo’**:**m**_{B2} ‘usually, generally’ being one of the few common preverbals in the inscriptional texts.³¹ Of course, inscriptional genres may not be concerned to indicate levels of uncertainty, and one should not conclude too much from the absence of preverbal epistemic auxiliaries in these texts. In any case, at some point Tai verbs such as **mak**_{D2} ‘to be fond of’ and **khong**_{A2} ‘to preserve, defend’ came to occur in the same preverbal position as **yo’**:**m**_{B2} and to function also as epistemic markers. Irrealis **ca** came optionally to function as postclitic on such items, probably though truncation of serial-verb collocations. Thus perhaps:

mak _{D2} + cak _{D1}	>	mák-ca
‘be fond of’ + ‘intend’	>	‘apt to’.

It further seems likely that Khmer loan items like **a:t**_{D1} and **kam**_{A1} **lang**_{A2} were accepted in this preverbal position, developing the auxiliary meanings ‘might’ and PROGRESSIVE respectively. The form **khuan**_{A2} ‘should,’ also from Khmer, was first borrowed as a main verb meaning ‘to be appropriate’ with a sentential complement clause (Wimuktalop, 1970, p. 227). Subsequently, it would appear that through reanalysis over the last century or so **khuan**_{A2} has been demoted toward auxiliary

²⁹The definite-marking function is quite developed in Tai varieties of India like Phake and Aiton. Southern Thai shows a similar definite-marking tendency (with definite postclitic **-an**, probably derived from a fuller deictic form). Southern Thai and Lao show elaborated deictic systems reflecting more of the earlier system.

³⁰I am indebted to Luo Yongxian for observations in this paragraph.

³¹The provenance of this item—not ultimately Tai, it would seem—remains obscure.

status with the former complement construction now arguably taken as main clause. This analysis should be considered tentative however (Diller, forthcoming).

The evolution of Thai auxiliaries, still in progress, is an especially promising vantage point from which to study of the effects of sociolinguistic context on more cognitive factors in grammaticalization.

5. CONCLUSION

Do the Tai languages then show evidence of having evolved from a “primitive state”? Is Central Thai to be considered “more developed” in structural terms than Proto-Tai or other Tai varieties?

In a 19th-century sense of linguistic progress linked directly to presumed stages in human biological evolution, the answer of this century is clearly negative. Also, however race may be defined, there is no evidence linking specific genetic features of a racial sort with specific linguistic features. On the other hand, when sociolinguistic development is considered, a different set of questions becomes relevant. These questions refer to sociocultural context and to its historical change. Here relations between linguistic structures and their evolving contexts of use do indeed constitute a fruitful area of research. In responding to questions of syntactic development among the Tai languages, the modern national languages Central Thai and Lao especially show a set of motivated diachronic shifts relating rather directly to sociolinguistic context. Some shifts are ongoing.

Grammaticalization, and in particular patterns of unidirectional grammaticalization, become significant in this type of analysis. Sections above have shown that a number of grammaticalizations occur widely throughout the Tai family. What is the status of such patterns? Within the Tai context, one can ask whether common developments are part of the shared linguistic heritage of the Tai family or have developed independently in Tai languages as parallel changes. A wider set of questions concerns patterns that are areal in distribution or that reflect “cognitive universals,” such as metaphorical or metonymic extensions involving body parts, motion verbs, or verbs of giving or acquiring.

However, in the Tai languages grammaticalization processes have not always been uniform or entirely predictable from universal principles as we presently understand them. This is illustrated by varied developments throughout the Tai family of verb forms such as **kwa**:_{B1} and **to**':_{B1}. In origin these were main verbs respectively ‘to pass’ and ‘to connect,’ but based on these meanings a wide range of motivated but non-uniform functional shifts have occurred in the various Tai languages.

In other cases grammaticalized shifts may be limited to fewer members of the Tai family. For Central Thai, with its particular sociolinguistic history as an evolving national language, functional word classes have been elaborated or restricted in ways not necessarily characteristic of the language family as a whole:

elaborated:	auxiliaries, pronouns, classifiers
restricted:	negative forms
restricted, paradigmatic organization:	deictics
complex readjustment:	prepositions, conjunctions.

The elaboration of pronouns transparently refers to sociocultural change. For auxiliaries and classifiers, connections may be less clear, but some are there to be traced. Also, differentiated genres or registers of Central Thai (and by now matching diglossic “high” registers of Lao) show unique developments referring to conditions of modern nation-state literacy. Bureaucracy, big business, professions, and other modern communicating groups have non-traditional communicative needs. In some cases, such as in written scientific-technical discourse, semantic relations must be made precise and explicit, sometimes accomplished through grammaticalization processes, such as in the explicit marking of nominalized verbs or the extension of the **thu:k**_{DI} pseudopassive (Prasithrathsint, 1988; Khanittanan, 1993). These changes may contribute to a genre that would be opaque or tedious if articulated as colloquial speech. In other cases, the pressure may be for just the opposite—for vagueness, prevarication or suppression of information. Grammaticalized constructions may come to fill these new communicative needs also, such as an increasingly popular pattern of “existentialized nominalization” (**mi:**_{A2} + **ka:n**_{A1} + VP), in which vagueness about temporal-aspectual detail of an event is facilitated and an agent may be suppressed without much impression of its absence. These constructions are subserved by print and electronic media, effecting their rapid dispersal and acceptance.

To help clarify the status of this variation, it is reasonable to propose that especially for the standardized national languages, sociolinguistics has interacted with cognitive processes as though to license and constrain them. Sociolinguistically-associated grammaticalized shifts seem especially compelling for Central Thai. These include the elaboration or contraction of certain syntactic classes, sometimes in line with more cognitive hypotheses of unidirectional grammaticalization, but sometimes developed less “naturally” under outside influence or subject to normative direction.

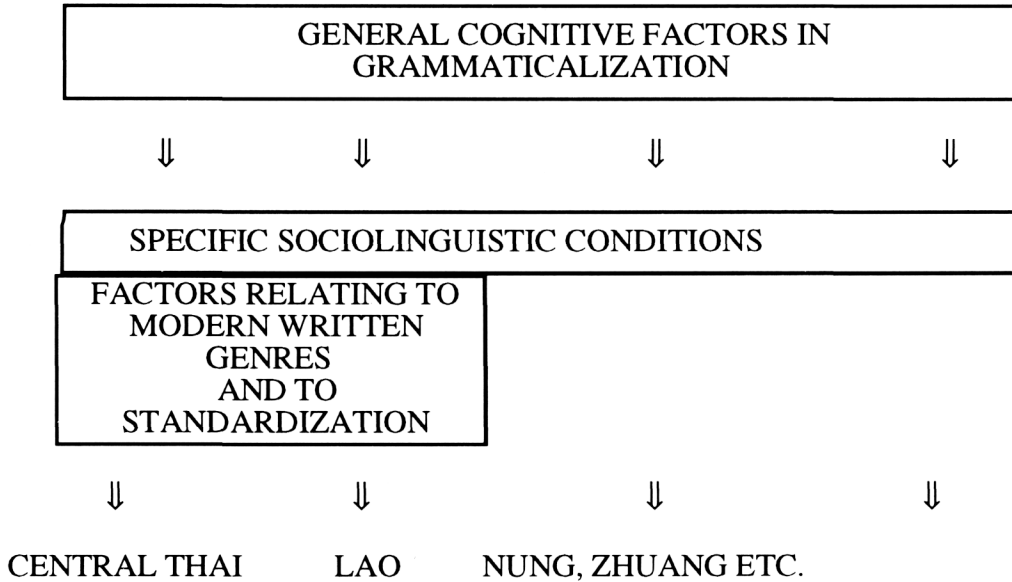
For an accurate picture of how Central Thai (and other Tai) syntax has developed, future research would do well to incorporate a balance of insights from three sources:

(i) from a data base combining historical-philological textual sources and modern comparative evidence;

(ii) from grammaticalization theory—but critically evaluated—which may often point to cross-language trends, areal patterns, and perhaps to cognitive universals, and

(iii) from sociolinguistic analysis, relating to the more specific moments and norms of Thai history and culture.

Thai syntactic change seems to have a dynamic becoming clear when these viewpoints are associated.



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