

OBJECT-VERB IN AKHA: THE ABB STRUCTURE*

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In Akha there are numerous examples of noun-verb constructions—syntactically mostly object-verb—where the verb has the same phonetic shape as the second syllable of the preceding noun. These are sometimes referred to as *cognate object* constructions. E.g.:

<i>nó bàŋ bàŋ</i>	‘wear socks’
<i>sjhà bjèq bjèq</i>	‘chop raw meat’
<i>dà dà dà</i>	‘tell a proverb’
<i>í dì dì</i>	‘swim’
<i>tjhé dyq dyq</i>	‘soak rice’
<i>ùjé jé</i>	‘to rain’
<i>ájéq jéq</i>	‘to flower’
<i>mó ná ná</i>	‘have a wound’
<i>dà ný ný</i>	‘sit’
<i>njín tsoq tsoq</i>	‘build a house’
<i>dù xhàŋ xhàŋ</i>	‘dig a hole’
<i>lá ñà ñà</i>	‘stutter’

Going through my files, and adding a few from Lewis 1989, I easily found 300 examples, and have stopped there to analyze what I have so far before hunting for more.¹ I also went through some 700 pages of transcribed texts, i.e. around 40,000 words, to analyze this “ABB construction” from the points of view of word structure, syntactic behaviour and semantics.

STRUCTURE

Generally speaking, all the ABB’s can be separated between AB and B through e.g. the negation marker *mà*, or a numeral + classifier (the noun may

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¹ There are many fewer in Lahu. I have counted only about forty in my Dictionary. See the following article in this issue. [Ed.]

<i>tjhé kha kha</i>	'plant rice'
<i>γò njố kha</i>	'plant vegetables'
<i>tjhé àη</i>	'sell rice'

Some verbs and nouns may enter into more than one ABB construction, as e.g.

<i>tjhé kha kha</i>	'plant rice'
<i>tjhé phi phi</i>	'carry rice'
<i>tjhé thàn thàn</i>	'pound rice'

tjhé 'rice' is a monosyllabic noun.

<i>ádzàη dzàη</i>	'make a bundle'
<i>ùdzàη dzàη</i>	'wear a turban'
<i>djòq dzàη dzàη</i>	'wear a woman's belt'

dzàη is a verb 'to bundle'; the prefix *á-* makes it into a noun: 'a bundle'; *ù* comes from *ùdù* 'head'; *djòq* 'waist' is a monosyllabic noun.

<i>í dì dì</i>	'swim'
<i>í lál lál</i>	'boil water'
<i>í sjhü sjhü</i>	'urinate'

í is from *ítjùq* 'water'.

Below I go through the different categories in order of frequency.

1. The A syllable has its origin in a dissyllabic noun.

This is the most frequent structure, with 105 examples from the basic list, i.e. 37 percent of the examples assembled so far. Of these, the A syllable comes from the first syllable of a dissyllabic noun in 64 cases, but from the second syllable in 41 other examples. Some occur in many combinations, others are restricted to one. Consider the following:

From *sjhà-djí* 'meat' e.g.

<i>sjhà bjím bjím</i>	'divide meat into piles'
<i>sjhà bjeq bjeq</i>	'chop raw meat'
<i>sjhà the the</i>	'hunt'
<i>sjhà tjhé tjhé</i>	'pickle'

From *dò-dàŋ* ‘buttock, bottom’

dò kàq kàq

‘wear a loincloth’

dò ný ný

‘sit’

dò thé thé

‘slip and fall on rump’

From *tshó-hà* ‘human being’

tshó mjáŋ mjáŋ

‘to give a name’

tshó xhò xhò

‘steal’

tshó ŋó ŋó

‘weep for a dead person’

From *mí-tshà* ‘earth’

mí bjaq bjaq

‘to have a landslide’

mí luq luq

‘to have an earthquake’

From *já-ŋɛ* ‘field’

já mòq mòq

‘weed’

já ín ín

‘work in the fields’

From *ùdù* ‘head’

ùdzàŋ dzàŋ

‘wear a turban’

ùtjhó tjhó

‘wear a woman’s headdress’

ùxòq xòq

‘wear a hat’

From *ŋà-shà* ‘fish’³

ŋà djỳq djỳq

‘fish with hook and line’

From *àlàq* ‘hand, arm’

làq bè bè

‘wear a ring’

làq duq duq

‘wear a bracelet’

làq tsàq tsàq

‘hold hands’

làq tuq tuq

‘clench one’s fist’

From *àkhý* ‘foot’

khý byq byq

‘have a numb foot’

khý taq taq

‘put on male’s leggings’

From *átjaq* ‘rope’

tjaq pjèq pjèq

‘plait a rope’

³ In Lahu *ŋà* ‘fish’ is a free monosyllabic noun, and the binome *ŋà-šā* means ‘fish as food’ (lit. ‘fish-flesh’). [Ed.]

tjaq tuq tuq 'measure circumference in fists with a rope'

From *ábó* 'tree'

bó gú gú 'for a tree to wither'
bó djò djò 'kill a tree by ringing'

From *sàq-lá* 'soul'

lá bá bá 'for souls to wander away'

From *mè-lá* 'tongue'

lá ñàq ñàq 'stutter'

From *khàñ-láñ* > *lɔ* 'neck'

lɔ bé bé 'to have a goiter'
lɔ dañ dañ 'wear a necklace'

From *mjaq-pjhò* 'face' (eye + side)

pjhò khà khà 'wear glasses'

Where the A syllable derives from the second syllable, the first is often but not always the prefix *a-*. (See above: 'hand', 'foot', 'rope', 'tree'.)

These A syllables can only function as a noun together with the B syllable, or otherwise in their original disyllabic form. The negation can only be placed in front of the second B syllable. Classifiers come after the AB noun with the word order AB (noun) + numeral + classifier + negation + B (verb):

A	B	Num	Clf	B	
<i>sjhà</i>	<i>bjín</i>	<i>õ</i>	<i>bjín</i>	<i>bjín</i>	'divide into four piles of meat'
<i>dò</i>	<i>ny</i>	<i>thì</i>	<i>poq</i>	<i>ny</i>	'sit once'
<i>tshó</i>	<i>mjáñ</i>	<i>thì</i>	<i>mjáñ</i>	<i>mjáñ</i>	'give a person one name'
<i>ù</i>	<i>dzàñ</i>	<i>thì</i>	<i>kháñ</i>	<i>dzàñ</i>	'wear one turban'
<i>làq</i>	<i>bè</i>	<i>thì</i>	<i>bè</i>	<i>bè</i>	'wear one ring'

A	B	Num	Clf	Neg	B	
<i>làq</i>	<i>bè</i>	<i>thì</i>	<i>bè</i>	<i>mà</i>	<i>bè</i>	'not wear one ring'

A	B	Neg	B	
<i>dò</i>	<i>ny</i>	<i>mà</i>	<i>ny</i>	'not sit'

A	B	Neg	B	
<i>tshó</i>	<i>mjáñ</i>	<i>mà</i>	<i>mjáñ</i>	'not give a name'

2. The A syllable may function as a monosyllabic noun

About 20 percent of the sample belongs to this category. The absolute top scorer in terms of combinatory versatility is *tjhé* 'rice' as e.g.:

<i>tjhé boq boq</i>	'pop rice'
<i>tjhé dì dì</i>	'thresh paddy'
<i>tjhé dyq dyq</i>	'soak rice'
<i>tjhé lōq lōq</i>	'dry paddy in the sun'
<i>tjhé ná ná</i>	'for rice to become deceased'
<i>tjhé kha kha</i>	'plant rice'
<i>tjhé phi phi</i>	'carry rice on back'
<i>tjhé thàn thàn</i>	'pound rice'
<i>tjhé tsoq tsoq</i>	'transplant rice'

Heavenly phenomena, from *ìn* 'heaven', are also common:

<i>ìn djè djè</i>	'to thunder'
<i>ìn mjòq mjòq</i>	'to lighten'
<i>ìn tjìq tjìq</i>	'get towards evening'

There is a tendency for this *ìn* to change into *ù*, influenced by the disyllabic noun *ùdù* 'head'. This *ù* can't occur alone but many occur in other ABB structures. Examples:

<i>ù bja bja</i>	'to dawn'
<i>ù jé jé</i>	'to rain'
<i>ù thú thú</i>	'get up at dawn'

Some other examples:

From *sjhín* 'iron'

<i>sjhín teq teq</i>	'forge iron'
<i>sjhín kha kha</i>	'for iron to get rusty'

From *hò* 'cooked rice'

<i>hò thàn thàn</i>	'make rice cakes'
<i>hò tju tju</i>	'wrap rice in leaves'
<i>hò tsuq tsuq</i>	'make rice balls'
<i>hò dzà dzà</i>	'eat rice'

From *njín* 'house, home'

njín tsoq tsoq

'build a house'

njín dàŋ dàŋ

'set up one's own household'

From *nèq* 'spirit'

nèq khà khà

'teach reciting to the spirits'

nèq thó thó

'recite to the spirits'

From *shà* 'tooth'

shà djiq djiq

'gnash one's teeth'

shà gəq gəq

'for teeth to chatter'

The word order with classifier and negation is the same: AB + numeral + classifier + negation + B:

A Num Clf B

bàn thì bàn bàn

'make one nest'

A B Num Clf Neg B

hò tsuq thì tsuq mà tsuq

'not make one rice ball'

A B Num Clf B

hò dzà thì poq dzà

'eat once'

A B Neg B

njín tsoq mà tsoq

'not build a house'

A B Neg B

tjhé phi mà phi

'not carry rice'

3. The A syllable is the prefix *a-* (in various tones)

These constitute about 16 percent of the sample. The B syllable may be part of another disyllabic noun; it doesn't occur as a free noun, but does of course occur as a verb. Some examples:

ábá bá

'be a picture, a reflection'

ábe be

'be in the beginning'

ádzyq dzyq

'itch'

àho ho

'sing in the *àho* style'⁴

ájeq jeq

'to flower'

álín lín

'measure in fathoms'

⁴ "A type of chanting that praises rice and keeps away rodents and birds" (Lewis 1989:53). *ho* means 'rodent'. [Ed.]

<i>ápjhà pjhà</i>	'have fever'
<i>áshì shì</i>	'produce fruit'
<i>átjhù tjhù</i>	'to bud'
<i>áəq əq</i>	'to burp'

Examples of B syllables that occur both with prefix *a-* and in other combinations:

<i>ábòq bòq</i>	'make a pattern'
<i>shàŋ bòq bòq</i>	'write' (wood +)

where *ábòq bòq* has a more general meaning and *shàŋ bòq bòq* a more specific one.

<i>ábəq bəq</i>	'play with <i>ábəq</i> seeds'
<i>mì bəq bəq</i>	'shoot with a rifle' (fire + shoot)
<i>shà bəq bəq</i>	'fluff up cotton' (cotton + shoot) ⁵

mì from *mì dzà* 'fire', *shà* from *shà là* 'cotton'. The *ábəq bəq* game consists of kicking or 'shooting' a kind of big seeds, called *ábəq*, and hitting each others' in a variety of ways.

<i>ádzàŋ dzàŋ</i>	'make a bundle'
<i>ùdzàŋ dzàŋ</i>	'wear a turban' (head +)
<i>djòq dzàŋ dzàŋ</i>	'wear a woman's belt' (waist +)

The *a-* prefixed form has again the most general meaning and the others are specific, 'have a bundle on one's head, a bundle around one's waist'.

Classifiers and the negation are placed as usual:

AB	Num	Clf	B	
<i>áshì</i>	<i>thì</i>	<i>shì</i>	<i>shì</i>	'produce one fruit'
AB	Num	Clf	B	
<i>ájəq</i>	<i>thì</i>	<i>jeq</i>	<i>jeq</i>	'for one flower to flower'
AB	Neg	B		
<i>ápjhà</i>	<i>mà</i>	<i>pjhà</i>		'not have fever'

⁵ Cf. Lahu *šá-lá bô?* ve (Matisoff 1988:1163).

4. The A syllable occurs only in the AB structure

This group comprises around 22 percent of the data. It seems also as if the B syllable here is less independent, i.e. it occurs mainly as part of ABB. The A syllable doesn't derive from another disyllabic noun, nor does it occur by itself. The meaning is often very specific, restricting combinatory possibilities. This whole group needs to be further worked upon with informants.

<i>ny dag dag</i>	'be filthy, dirty'
<i>tháj djö djö</i>	'to rob'
<i>bə duq duq</i>	'plant a bush'
<i>gý dəq dəq</i>	'make war' (<i>dəq</i> 'cut')
<i>bə kəq kəq</i>	'make a box' (<i>bə</i> from <i>bàn</i> 'nest'?)
<i>xaq ló ló</i>	'make a chicken basket'

xaq- occurs in several words for baskets. *ló* is only used for making this special kind of basket, otherwise *djàq* 'weave' is used.

<i>bə shə shə</i>	'use a fan' (<i>bə</i> 'blow')
<i>bə ú ú</i>	'clean intestines'
<i>là yà yà</i>	'wear a long skirt'
<i>gə djə djə</i>	'for there to be a mountain'

gə djə is a commonly used word for 'mountain', but *djə* doesn't seem to be used by itself as a verb.

5. Miscellaneous

(a) I have so far found two examples of the syllabic order ABA. Both have auto-classifiers but use different syllables:

<i>dà jaŋ dà</i>	'be a guest'
A B Num Clf B	
<i>dà jaŋ thì jaŋ dà</i>	'be one guest'
<i>jaq pjhó jaq</i>	'sweep with a broom'
A B Num Clf B	
<i>jaq pjhó thì jaq pjhó</i>	'sweep with one broom'

(b) Some ABB's I suspect are onomatopoeic:

<i>há tjhà tjhà</i>	‘sneeze’
<i>í tyq tyq</i>	‘hiccup’
<i>áəq əq</i>	‘burp’

(c) Some may be nominalized verb concatenations, indicating repetitive or gradual action. Both the A’s and the B’s here seem only to occur independently as verbs, but in the ABB construction here the AB can of course be followed by a classifier or a negation:

<i>ín bē bē</i>	‘start to work’ (work + begin)
<i>gy lu lu</i>	‘fry’ (dry+stir)
<i>ba nīm nīm</i>	‘to sprout’ (‘give birth + ?)
<i>thàn pjōq pjōq</i>	‘pound in a bamboo mortar’ (pound + spurt)
<i>tēq puq puq</i>	‘make gruel’ (slap + boil)
<i>bəq tjhē tjhē</i>	‘shoot back and forth’ (shoot + argue)
<i>ín tjhē tjhē</i>	‘have a race in working’
<i>lá ya ya</i>	‘go visiting’ (come + visit)

SYNTAX

Of 186 occurrences found in the sample of running text, more than 50 percent consists of an uninterrupted ABB followed by a sentence particle, verb particle, conjunction or a post-head versatile verb meaning ‘go/come to ABB’. For the rest, the last B may be preceded by a negation, adverb or pre-verb-head auxiliary, or followed by a post-head versatile verb, i.e. the same possibilities as for any other object-verb:

ítjùq bàq mēq náa, yà nà nà ɔ́, ítjùq dɔ́ nà djé
 water carry thirsty when strength rest vP water drink sP fP
 ‘When they got thirsty carrying water, they had a rest and drank water.’

shà the the í má lé
 game hunt go sP fP
 ‘Let’s go hunting.’

hò t̃hu t̃hu ɔ́, dəq-hà bàq ɔ́...
 rice wrap vP axe carry vP
 ‘Wrapping rice, carrying an axe and...’

shàn-phà thì yà tshɔ́ mò mò le nà djé
 ruler one CLF person old go sP fP
 ‘There was one ruler, he had become old.’

ùshò ù thú thú náa, ɲa djeq djeq ó í a
 morning morning get up when banana cut vP go sP
 'In the morning, when he got up, he went to cut bananas.'

tjé dyq àdjóq é dyq phà ɲá ma ó lé
 rice soak how soak should sP mother INTERJ fP
 'How should I soak the rice, mother?'

ùbja mà djó bja tjhó
 dawn not stay dawn able
 'Can't stay up until dawn.'

Syntactically, the ABB doesn't differ to any great extent from other object + verb sequences. There is a tendency for ABB more often to concatenate with the post-head versatile verbs meaning 'go/come', i.e. 'go/come to ABB' than what is otherwise found in concatenations.

It has already been mentioned that a negated ABB always is AB + Neg + B. When the AB contains a free noun A, there is a contrast between A + B or AB + B, A + Neg + B or AB + Neg + B. When A doesn't occur as a free noun, it has to occur as AB or as part of the dissyllabic noun from which it derives. There seems to be a difference in stress: in AB + B the verbal action is stressed whereas in A + B the object is stressed, i.e. it contains new information or is in contrast to another expressed or possible object:

A B B	
hò dzà dzà	'eat (action of eating)'
A B	
hò dzà	'eat rice (have a meal)'
A B Neg B	
hò dzà mà dzà	'not eat (not do the action)'
A Neg B	
hò mà dzà	'not eat rice (but maybe something else)'
hò dzà mà dzà mòq	'don't want to eat (anything)'
hò mà dzà mòq	'don't want to eat rice'

hò 'rice' is a free monosyllabic noun, dzà (V) 'eat', mòq (Aux V) 'want'

While working on this problem I haven't had access to Akha informants, which would enable me to elicit contrasting examples, but the ones I do have point to this interpretation:

hò mèq mèq

‘hungry (for food generally)’

but compare:

hò mèq ηε ... ja-phí mèq ηε.. ‘while craving rice...while craving opium’

also:

àjòq hò dzà dzà lá náa, xhìn-mà mà áη ε à,
 she rice eat come when bowl not have if
hò mà dzà nja á, hò dzà dzà lá náa, àjòq hó pho
 rice not eat can sP rice eat come when she over there
le kəq náa, àjòq hò mèq mèq lá ηáá
 come arrive when she rice hungry come sP

‘When the time has come for her to eat (in the land of the dead), if she doesn’t have a bowl, she won’t be able to eat food; when the time has come to eat, when she arrives over there, she will be hungry.’

The ABB structure is used here for the general meaning ‘to eat’ and ‘to be hungry’, but when the situation is the need of a bowl to eat ‘rice = food’, ABB is not used. Cf also:

hò dzà dzà ηε, kaq-thé jú daq thà
 rice eat while woven bamboo take up keep
náa, hò mà dzà áη nja lé é a djé
 when rice not eat down can fP say sP fP

‘While she eats (lying shrouded), when the piece of woven bamboo has been taken off (her stomach), she can’t get the food down, she says (if that piece, like a log, lies on her, hindering her from eating).’

Again, the first reference is to the general act of eating (ABB), and then it is stressed that she can’t get food down (B not repeated).

The choice of classifiers also reinforces this analysis. Some years ago, when my attention was first called to this phenomenon, I collected the ABB I had at the time and asked my best informant to produce classifiers. Spontaneously he mostly gave *poq* ‘one time’ as a classifier, i.e. giving the interpretation ‘doing the V once’ as the first that came to his mind. He did, though, also give specific classifiers for quite a number of them, sometimes after having been pressed by me. Some examples—of many—where only *poq* was given:

ùbja bja

‘to dawn’ (head + light)

sjhà bjeq bjeq

‘chop meat’ (meat + chop)

<i>í dì dì</i>	‘swim’ (water + beat)
<i>shà djiq djiq</i>	‘gnash one’s teeth’ (tooth + move)
<i>gý dəq dəq</i>	‘make war’ (? + cut)
<i>tjhé dyq dyq</i>	‘soak rice’ (rice + soak)
<i>jaq pjhó jaq</i>	‘sweep with a broom’ (broom + ?)
<i>ìn mjəq mjəq</i>	‘lightning flashes’ (heaven + lighten)
<i>nèq thó thó</i>	‘recite’ (spirit + recite)

The last example also took *naŋ* ‘day’ as a classifier, ‘recite to the spirits for a day’, giving the time length of the action.

This leads us to the last aspect of our discussion:

SEMANTICS

What then is the common semantic feature—if there is one—of an object-verb being structured as ABB? Some groupings can be made:

1. *Wearing on the body*

Some consist of a verb, the B, denoting the way a piece of clothing is attached to the body or how it is worn; and a noun, the A (monosyllabic or derived from a dissyllabic noun) denoting the place on the body. Both the noun and the verb can be used independently or in other combinations:

<i>khý bàŋ bàŋ</i>	‘wear female leggings’
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khý from *àkhý* ‘leg’, *bàŋ* from *bàŋ bàŋ* ‘make a nest’, cf. also *í-bàŋ* ‘bamboo section for carrying water’.

<i>khý taq taq</i>	‘wear male leggings’
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where *taq* means ‘lock, fasten’

<i>dò kàq kàq</i>	‘wear loincloth’
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dò from *dò-dàŋ* ‘buttocks’, *kàq* ‘put together, bind on’

<i>ù dzàŋ dzàŋ</i>	‘wear a turban’
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ù from *ù-dù* ‘head’, *dzàŋ* ‘bundle’. Cf. next:

djòq dzàŋ dzàŋ 'wear a female belt'

djòq 'waist', and next:

djòq toq toq 'wear a male belt'

toq 'put a brace under, support'. A female's belt is tied around her waist, on her long jacket, with the end pieces hanging down in front to keep the skirt in place when walking or sitting, while the male's belt is used for keeping his trousers up.

làq sjàq sjàq 'wear a bodice'

làq from *àlàq* 'arm', *sjàq* 'wear crosswise over shoulder'. The bodice covers the breasts but is tied only across one shoulder. Cf. *phé-tháj sjàq* 'wear a shoulder bag across the shoulders'.

pjhò khà khà 'wear glasses'

pjhò from *mjaq-pjhò* 'face', *khà* 'cover'.

Some are more restricted to this one meaning, the A in the same way denoting the place on the body, but the B verb occurring almost only in the ABB frame:

làq bè bè 'wear a ring' (hand + ?)⁶

làq dùq dùq 'wear a bracelet' (arm + ?)⁷

ù tjhó tjhó 'wear a female's headdress' (head + horn?)

ù xoq xoq 'wear a hat' (head + ?)⁸

The remaining pieces of daily clothing are not constructed in this way but use the verb *dm* 'wear' preceded by a dissyllabic noun:⁹

⁶ Cf. Lahu *làʔ-pě* 'ring'; *pě* (bound morpheme) occurs in other compounds like *qá-pě* 'neck-ring' and *qá-pě* 'neck' (Matisoff 1988:836). [Ed.]

⁷ Cf. Written Tibetan *lag-gdub*, *gdu(b)-bu* 'bracelet' (Jäschke 1881: 266). [Ed.]

⁸ Cf. Lahu *ú-cí qhǎʔ ve* 'wear a hat', *qhǎʔ* 'wear on the head; protect the head', as also in *cǎ qhǎʔ ve* 'spread umbrella over the head', *cí-qǎʔ-pha qhǎʔ ve* 'protect head with plastic poncho' (Matisoff 1988:310). [Ed.]

⁹ The Lahu cognate is *dε* 'wear/put on an upper garment' (Matisoff 1988:710). [Ed.]

<i>phé-xhàŋ dm</i>	‘wear a female jacket’
<i>phi-di dm</i>	‘wear a female skirt’
<i>lâq-di dm</i>	‘wear male trousers’

Maybe the reason is that there is no body term covering the part of the body where those pieces are worn?

2. Heavenly and earthly phenomena

Heaven *m̄* (or changed to *ù*) and earth *mí-tshà* > *mí* combine with various verbs—some restricted to the ABB construction only:

<i>mí bjaq bjaq</i>	‘be a landslide’ (earth + scatter)
<i>mí luq luq</i>	‘be an earthquake’ (earth + move)
<i>ù bja bja</i>	‘dawn’ (heaven + light)
<i>m̄ djè djè</i>	‘thunder’ (heaven + ?)
<i>ù jé jé</i>	‘rain’ (heaven + ?)
<i>m̄ mjðq mjðq</i>	‘be lightning’ (heaven + ?)
<i>m̄ tjìq tjìq</i>	‘get towards night’ (+ ?)

Also some combinations with *ítjùq* > *ílý* ‘water’:

<i>ý djè djè</i>	‘overflow’ (water + expand)
<i>ý né né</i>	‘river to get muddy’ (+ red)

3. Bodily functions and sicknesses

This is quite a big group, similar to group 1 above, in that A often refers to a place on the body and B varies in versatility, often restricted to the ABB construction:

<i>mjaq djó djó</i>	‘be squint-eyed’ (<i>mjaq-nyq</i> ‘eye’ + ?)
<i>mjaq bèq bèq</i>	‘be blind’ (eye + ?)
<i>khý byq byq</i>	‘have numb feet’ (foot + ?)
<i>ló bé bé</i>	‘have a goiter’

ló from *khàŋ-láŋ* > *ló* ‘throat’. In the next example, A (*khð*) probably comes from the first syllable of *khàŋ-láŋ*:

<i>khð sjhə sjhə</i>	‘sing or recite in a special rhythm’
<i>shə djəq djəq</i>	‘gnash one’s teeth’ (tooth + move)
<i>shə gəq gəq</i>	‘for teeth to chatter’ (tooth + ?)

<i>mε djoq djoq</i>	'clean one's mouth' > 'brush one's teeth' (<i>xhà-mε</i> 'mouth' + wash)
<i>ù pèq pèq</i>	'vomit' (<i>ù-màq</i> 'stomach' + break open)
<i>dò thé thé</i>	'fall on rump' (<i>dò-dàŋ</i> 'buttocks' + ?)
<i>dò ný ný</i>	'sit' (buttocks + sit)
<i>ny tshá tshá</i>	'feel hot' (<i>ny-ma</i> 'heart' + hot)

Some derive from *mó-do* > *mó/má* 'body':

<i>má bjòq bjòq</i>	'have a scar' (+ ?)
<i>mó ná ná</i>	'have a wound' (+ be in pain)
<i>má taq taq</i>	'shroud a corpse' (+ fasten)
<i>má lú lú</i>	'have a boil' (+ mound)
<i>má nìn nìn</i>	'for wounds to heal gradually'

Sometimes the A is the prefix *a-*:

<i>ápjhà pjhà</i>	'have fever'
<i>ásaq saq</i>	'have a rash'

One, I think, describes the sound of the action:

<i>í sjhü sjhü</i>	'urinate' (water + ?)
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4. Producing a specific thing

In this type, the occurrence of B outside ABB seems to be rather restricted, though there are exceptions. The first two examples consist only of AB:

<i>bàŋ bàŋ</i>	'make a nest'
<i>tjhò tjhò</i>	'make a friend'
<i>dja lé lé</i>	'make riceballs'
<i>dá lé lé</i>	'make a ritual star'
<i>djeq dzín dzín</i>	'cut a double rib' (rib + pair)
<i>bò kəq kəq</i>	'make a box'

Some A's derive from *sjhà-djí* 'meat':

<i>sjhà bjín bjín</i>	'divide meat into piles' (+ pile)
<i>sjhà bjeq bjeq</i>	'chop meat' (+ chop)
<i>sjhà tjhé tjhé</i>	'pickle meat' (+ sour)

Some A's are the monosyllable *hò* 'rice':

<i>hò thàn thàn</i>	'make rice cakes' (+ pound)
<i>hò tjhu tjhu</i>	'wrap rice in leaves' (+ wrap)
<i>hò tsuq tsuq</i>	'make a rice ball in one's hand'

Some are prefixed with *a-*:

<i>ábòq bòq</i>	'make a pattern'
<i>ádzàn dzàn</i>	'make a bundle'
<i>ájaq jaq</i>	'make flat cakes'
<i>ánè nè</i>	'make bamboo strips'
<i>áshì shì</i>	'produce fruit'
<i>ájeq jeq</i>	'blossom'
<i>átjhu tjhu</i>	'bud'

* * *

These are the main semantic categories that can be set up. There are others, with just a few examples so far of each—and some outstanding and peculiar cases, like:

<i>ànjò</i>	<i>thà</i>	<i>njò</i>	'don't talk about buffaloes'
buffalo	don't	buffalo	

This ABB occurs only in the negative imperative—and can also be used with monkeys and a few other animals. I have the feeling that maybe my informant got tired and made a fool out of me!

The same ABB structure is reported for Lahu by Matisoff (1973:68), where the examples given are often perfect cognates with Akha. Lahu has only a relative handful of them though (Matisoff, personal communication). They are analysed as having the noun derived from the verb as in Akha. Diehl (1988) finds the corresponding construction in Jingpho but concludes that the noun is the base and the verb derives from it. He gives some interesting examples of recent loanwords from Chinese. It is not clear to me how frequent a feature ABB is in Jingpho.

In Akha it is frequent but I don't know how productive it is, e.g. in dealing with new loanwords. I will look into that at the first opportunity.

As we have seen, there is in Akha a great variety in the origins of the A syllable:

1. a monosyllabic noun, e.g. *tjhé* 'rice'
2. the 1st syllable of a disyllabic noun, e.g. *mì* from *mì-dzà* 'fire'
3. the 2nd syllable of a disyllabic noun, e.g. *lá* from *sàq-lá* 'soul'
4. A occurs only with B as a disyllabic noun, e.g. *bɔ-duq* 'bush'
5. A is a prefix, serves to nominalize B, e.g. *ábòq* 'pattern', *bòq* 'make a pattern, write'

Always in the ABB structure, AB can occur as a noun followed by a numeral and a classifier, and the B can be preceded by the negation *mà*. The combinatory possibilities of AB to serve as objects to verbs other than B, and of the verb B to take other objects than AB, vary from 'never' to 'rarely' to 'very often'.

For example, 'rice' *tjhé* is planted, weeded, harvested, threshed, carried, pounded and soaked with ABB, and finally eaten as *hò* 'cooked rice', also in ABB: *hò dzà dzà*. Other edibles are not planted etc. with ABB:

<i>γð-ŋjǒ kha</i>	'plant vegetables'
<i>ádu kha</i>	'plant maize'
<i>lɔ-bò tsəq</i>	'pluck tea'
<i>djɪ-bà dɔ</i>	'drink liquor'

There are no expressions like *du kha kha*, *lɔ tsəq tsəq* etc. The work with rice is so basic, that most times when you perform an agricultural operation, it is a question of rice.

As I showed in the contrasting examples with negated AB + neg + B contra A + neg + B, the stress in the ABB seems to be on the action more than on the object. This is also hinted at with the regular choice of *poq* 'once; (one) time' as classifier. The noun is almost incorporated into the verb, and only comes out in full strength when combined with its second syllable, or by standing alone as a monosyllabic noun, followed only by a single B.

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