

The Mother of All Morphemes Augmentatives and diminutives in areal and universal perspective

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dào kě dào fēi cháng dào
míng kě míng fēi cháng míng
wú míng tiān dì zhī shǐ
yǒu míng **wàn wù zhī mǔ**¹
Dao De Jing

I. Introduction: Mothermorphs in Arabic and English²

The Gulf War is already fast receding into memory, but not without having left a modest mark on our language, as the following aggrieved letter to the New York Times (Feb. 25, 1991) attests:

To the Editor:

Iraqi statements on the Persian Gulf war, as reported in the press, have been filled with references to "the mother of battles." You quote the commander of the Iraqi Republican Guard saying that his troops "will repel the heathen alliance led by America in the mother of battles."

The translation is based on a misunderstanding of the use of the Arabic word **umm** 'mother'. Besides its literal meaning, **umm** -- when followed by another noun -- is often equivalent to English words like *chief*, *main*, or *principal* (as in *mother lode*) and is used in quite prosaic contexts where a literal translation would be absurd.

Thus, **umm al-waṭan** ("mother of the homeland") means 'metropolis'; **ummahāt al-hawadith** ("mothers of events") means 'major

events'; **ummahāt as-suhuf** ("mothers of newspapers") means 'leading newspapers.' The Arabic phrase literally meaning "mother of battles" (**ummu al-maʿārik**) can best be translated 'the great battle; the mighty battle; the decisive battle'.

This does not of course invalidate William Safire's statement (Feb. 24) that the phrase was originally associated with the great Arab victory at Qadisiya in the year 636.

Louis Jay Herman (retired UN translator)

There was something immediately appealing about this calqued construction to English speakers both in Britain and the U.S., and for a while it spread like wildfire, spawning (to change the metaphor) what *Newsweek* called "a virtual ocean of bad puns and dopey wordplay":

In the Gaza Strip, Khalid al-Kidra, a prominent lawyer, said, "Iraq's withdrawal will have impact in the Arab world, and I expect this will bring international attention to a peaceful solution for the Palestinian question, which after all is *the mother of instability* in the Middle East." [*New York Times*, March 1991]

...Mike Royko, on media coverage of the war: "This will be *the mother of all journalistic changes*." The Toronto Star, on the war: "...*the mother of all retreats*." The Boston Globe, on TV coverage: "Images are *the mother of all words*." White House spokesman Roman Popadiuk, on James Baker: "[He will take] *the mother of all trips*." London's Sunday Times, on the war: "*the mother of all routs*." And Newsweek's own Conventional Wisdom Watch, on Saddam's predicament: "...*the mother of all corners*." This is truly the *mother of all clichés*. [*Newsweek*, March 1991]

The instant success³ of this construction in English seems to stem from its piquant combination of strangeness and familiarity. While it is pleasingly exotic, it is also immediately understandable, readily lending itself to an indefinite number of new contexts. Not only does it fit right in with our

preexisting construction *the granddaddy of all N's* (as in *This morning I woke up with the granddaddy of all hangovers*), but it also gibes very well with metaphorical ramifications of the word *mother* itself throughout the documented history of English.

All this got me thinking about metaphorical extensions and grammaticalizations of "mothermorphs" in general, both in English and in the languages of East and Southeast Asia. What similarities and differences are there? What aspects of matrisemantics are universal, and what are area-specific or idiosyncratic? This investigation necessarily involves the consideration of *child* and *father* as well as *mother* -- since these are often metaphorically opposed as *diminutive* vs. *augmentative*, or *masculine* vs. *feminine*.

1.1 Arabic collocations

Arabic dictionaries⁴ give many examples of metaphorical mother-collocations beginning with the "construct state" (genitive/attributive form) of 'mother': *umm(u)* 'the mother of' [sg.] / *ummahāt* 'the mothers of' [pl]:

<i>umm-al-kitāb</i>	'the original (of a book or scripture)'
<i>umm-al-khabā'ith</i>	'wine' (lit. "mother of bad qualities")
<i>umm-al-nujūm</i>	'the Milky Way' ("mother of stars")
<i>umm-al-qurā</i>	'Mecca; metropolis' ("mother of cities")
<i>umm-al-ṭarīq</i>	'main road' ("mother of roads")
<i>ummahāt-al-faḍā'il</i>	'cardinal virtues' ("mothers of virtue")

A subset of these expressions are fauna names, where the head noun indicates the most salient characteristic of the beast:

<i>umm uwaīq</i>	'screech owl' ("mother of bad luck") ⁵
<i>umm al-ḥibr</i>	'cuttlefish'

	("mother of ink")
umm arba' wa-arba'in	'centipede'
	("mother of 44 [legs]")
umm qarn	'rhinoceros'
	("mother of horn") ⁶

Particularly interesting are the medical names for the *meninges*, the membranes covering the brain and spinal cord, which Medieval Latin calqued from Arabic (perhaps via the intermediary of Jewish doctors):

umm al-dimāgh	'meninx; meninges'
	("mother of the head")
al-umm al-jāfiyah	'dura mater'
	(Lat. "hard/coarse mother")
al-umm al-raqīqah	'pia mater'
	(Lat. "tender/soft mother")
al-umm al-hanūn	'pia mater'
	(Lat. "gentle mother")

A broad, composite definition of this Arabic morpheme would then be something like: *'mother; source, origin; basis, foundation; original, original version; the gist, the essence; (as attribute) original, primary, basic, parent; main or chief part of a thing, or that which is a compriser or comprehender of things'*

1.2 Mother in English

As always, the *Oxford English Dictionary* is a fount of wisdom (indeed a veritable mother of knowledge) when it comes to tracing the semantic history of *mother*.⁷ The OED summarizes the range of literal and metaphorical senses of the word roughly as follows:

1. *a female parent; a woman who has given birth to a child*
2. *applied to things more or less personified, with reference either to a metaphorical giving birth, to the protecting care exercised by a mother, or to the affectionate reverence due a mother*
3. *said of a quality, condition, event, etc., that gives rise to some other*
4. *said of the earth; said of the church; said of a country, city, etc. in relation to its natives; said of one's university*

5. *the material source of a substance; also, the parent stock on which anything grows, or the main stem or channel from which others branch off*

6. (*obs.*) *the womb* ⁸

A few examples from medieval and early modern English:

Hasard is very **mooder of lesynges** [*lies*]

And of deceite and cursed forswerynges

Chaucer (ca.1386), *Pardoner's Tale* 263

Ydelnes, **mooder of all vyces**

Rolls of Parliament (1463-4) V.507/I

(The aorta is) the great Arterie, **mother Arterie**, or **mother of arteries**

Randle Cotgrave (1611) *A Dictionarie of the French and English Tongues*

Who fed with the papp of Aristotle at twenty or thirtie yeares of age, and suck at the duggs of **their mother the university**

Anthony Wood (1647-8), *Life from 1632 to 1672*,
I.140

I congratulate you on the repeal of that **mother of mischiefs**, the Stamp Act.

B. Franklin (1766), *Letters*, Wks. ed. (1887) III.463

Yet Arabic-like collocations with *mother* (especially in senses 2,3,5) seem to have been much more frequent in earlier stages of English than they have been since -- at least until very recently. We still say *Necessity is the mother of invention*, but this is felt to be pleasantly old-fashioned -- proverbs retain their charm precisely because of their archaic quality. We still use a few adjectival and phrasal collocations like **mother church**, **motherland**, **mother liquor**, **mother ship**, **mother tongue**⁹, **mother wit**, **mother-of-pearl** 'a smooth shining iridescent substance forming the inner layer of some shells'¹⁰, and perhaps a few others, but the OED lists many more that have faded into obsolescence, including:

<i>mother of anchovies</i>	'the scad or horse-mackerel (<i>Trachurus saurus</i>)'
<i>mother of cloves</i>	'the fully expanded flower buds of <i>Caryophyllus aromaticus</i> '
<i>mother of emeralds</i>	'green cochle spar brought from Egypt'
<i>mother of millions</i>	'the ivy-leaved toad-flax [<i>Linaria cymbalaria</i>]'
<i>mother of (the) months</i>	'the moon'

The most interesting obsolete semantic development of *mother* apparently arose from the idea of 'liquid as material source for a solid', i.e. **mother liquor** or **mother water**:

*The liquor that remains after the vitriol is crystallized,
they call **the mother**.*

John Ray (1674), *A Collection of English Words not
Generally Used*, p. 136

Soon the meaning slid into 'solid material that collects on a liquid; scum' as in **mother of vinegar** 'a ropy mucilaginous substance produced in vinegar during the process of acetous fermentation (which it hastens) by a mould-fungus called *Mycoderma aceti*.'¹¹ In his *Dictionarie* (1611) cited above, R. Cotgrave glosses French *fleur du vin*: (lit. "flower of wine") as '**mother of wine**, or the white or moldie spots that float on the top of old wine'. From here it was only a matter of time before the poor mothermorph acquired overtones of putrefaction, especially in its use as a verb or adjective:

*It's an insipid Phlegm...and will not keep long without
mothering and stinking.*

John Quincy (1718), *Pharmacopeia Officinalis et
Extemporanea, or A Compleat English Dispensatory*, p. 228

*If your pickle **mothers**, boil it again.*

E. Smith (1728), *The Compleat Housewife, or
Accomplished Gentlewoman's Companion*, p. 109

*If there is such a juice...is it not enough to make the
clearest liquid in the world both feculent and
mothery?*

L. Sterne (1759), *Tristram Shandy* II.xix

Mothers all over the world will be grateful that this particular path of pejoration seems long ago to have come to a dead end.¹²

II. Mother and child metaphors in East and Southeast Asia

Moving on to the East and Southeast Asian linguistic area, everywhere we look we find collocations similar to English or Arabic ones, where *mother* has the metaphorical meaning of 'principal; large; source'. There are, however, certain special matrisemantic features which seem especially characteristic of this Far Eastern region but are rarely encountered elsewhere. These include (a) the use of a mothermorph in the words for the principal digits, the *thumb* and *big toe*; (b) an explicit opposition in many languages between *mother* and *child*, to signify *augmentative* vs. *diminutive*, respectively; (c) the grammaticalization or bleaching of mothermorphs so that they acquire functorial status, or else lose their original meaning entirely and become mere providers of "phonological bulk."

We shall trace these themes in a sampling of languages from all the great language families of the region, including Malay/Indonesian, Thai, Hmong and Mien, Vietnamese, Chinese, Japanese, and a number of Tibeto-Burman languages.

2.1 Malay/Indonesian¹³

The word *ibu* 'mother', besides occurring in non-metaphorical compounds like *ibu-bapak* 'parents' (+father),¹⁴ participates in many metaphorical collocations, occasionally coming second (*X + ibu*), but usually appearing in first position (*ibu + X*):¹⁵

bahasa ibu (+language)

'mother tongue'¹⁶

rumah ibu (+house)

'main part of house'

ibu afrit (+mischievous ghost; djinn [< Arabic])

'gang leader; ringleader of a bunch of mischievous kids'

- ibu air** (+water)
 (a) 'device in water divining; divining rod'
 (b) [*dial.*] 'source of water'
 /SYN.(b) **mata air** (eye + water)/
- ibu akar** (+root)
 'main root, taproot'
- ibu gelama**
 'kind of sea fish' [*Pseudosciaena diacanthus*]
- ibu gula** (+sugar)
 'saccharin'
- ibu haruan**
 'person (esp. child) who teases or bullies others'
 /*haruan* is a kind of fish, that presumably exhibits bullying behavior/
- ibu keladi**
 'elderly person who behaves like a youngster; dirty old man'¹⁷
 /*keladi* is a kind of yam with itchy juice/
- ibu kelung/gelung** (+rattan lasso)
 'female elephant used to catch other wild elephants'
- ibu kota** (+city)
 'capital'
- ibu kuih** (+dumpling; oilcake)
 'yeast'
- ibu kuntji** (+key)
 (a) 'lock'¹⁸ (b) 'master key; skeleton key'
- ibu negeri** (+city)
 'capital'
- ibu pasir** (+sand)
 'pebble'
- ibu pejabat** (+office)
 'headquarters; main office'
- ibu pembohong**
 'liar'
 /< *pem-* 'agentive prefix' + *bohong* 'tell a lie'/
- ibu pertiwi** (+earth)
 'fatherland'
- ibu roti** (+bread)
 'yeast'
- ibu sungai** (+river)
 'principal river'
- ibu susu** (+breast/milk)
 'wetnurse' ('milk-mother')
 /contrast **susu ibu** 'mother's milk'/

ibu tentara (+army)
'main body of an army'

The vitality of this construction is demonstrated by the neologistic formations that continue to be created:

ibu kad (+card < Eng.)
'control card; master card' (in administration)

ibu kapal udara
'aircraft carrier' ["mother of ship of air"]¹⁹
/kapal udara 'aircraft' ["ship + air"]/

ibu sawat
'exchange'; **ibu sawat satelit** 'satellite exchange'
/sawat means 'shoulderstrap; apparatus, machine; reproductive organs of animals'/

Of special interest are the following compounds:

ibu djari	'thumb' ("finger-mother")
ibu tangan	'thumb' ("hand-mother")
ibu kaki	'big toe' ("foot-mother")

As we shall see, these "digital" formations are paralleled throughout this linguistic area.²⁰

Finally, Malay/Indonesian has a number of antonymically paired expressions where *ibu* 'mother' and *anak* 'child' are both compounded with the same noun, creating a kind of augmentative/diminutive opposition:

ibu (+X)	/	anak (+X)
<i>chief</i>		<i>subordinate</i>
<i>source</i>		<i>product</i>
<i>big</i>		<i>little</i>

ibu panah 'bow' / **anak panah** 'arrow'

ibu kuntji (a) 'master/skeleton key' (b) 'lock' / **anak kuntji** 'key'
/cf. Thai mēē-kuncēē 'lock' vs. lūuk-kuncēē 'key'/

ibu tangga (+staircase) (a) 'banister, railing' (b) 'main piece of wood to which other pieces are attached' / **anak tangga** 'subordinate piece of wood attached to a main piece'

/cf. Thai **lûuk-kroŋ** 'balustrade, railing; sides/upright bar(s) of a cage, pen or balustrade'/

Several pairs of gamelan instruments are denoted by *ibu/anak* compounds, including:

ibu gendang 'big *gendang* drum' / **anak gendang** 'little *gendang* drum'

ibu te(r)tawak 'big *tertawak* gong' / **anak tertawak** 'little *tertawak*'²¹

2.3 Thai²²

The Thai word for 'mother', **mêɛ**, is used in many collocations referring specifically to females, e.g:

mêɛ-kàj (+chicken) 'hen'

mêɛ-jâa-naaŋ

(a) 'spirit guarding a boat, usually propitiated by placing flowers on the bow' (b) 'a mascot, esp. a pretty woman who is one of a party'

/the 2nd and 3rd syllables are probably to be identified with **jâa** 'paternal grandmother' and **naaŋ** 'lady'/

mêɛ-nom (+milk) 'wetnurse'

/cf. Malay **ibu susu**/

mêɛ-sǎa (+tiger)

(a) 'mother tiger' (b) [*fig.*] 'tough woman, esp. one given to bawling people out'

In this relatively non-metaphorical range of its usage, **mêɛ** can function as a kind of gender-marking prefix, especially in kinship terms and names of occupations. In such senses **mêɛ** is opposable to its masculine counterpart, **phôɔ** 'father',

mêɛ (+I) / **phôɔ (+I)** :

(+house)

mêɛ-bâan
'housewife'

phôɔ-bâan
'male head of a household'

(+trade)

mêε-kháa
'woman shopkeeper'

(+kitchen)

mêε-khrua
'female cook'

(+nourish)

mêε-líaŋ
'foster mother'

(+magic?)

mêε-mót
'witch, sorceress'

(+widowed)

mêε-mâaj 'widow'

phṣṣ-kháa
'male shopkeeper'

phṣṣ-khrua
'male cook'

phṣṣ-líaŋ
'foster father'

phṣṣ-mót
'wizard, sorcerer'

phṣṣ-mâaj 'widower'

In more metaphorical collocations, **mêε** appears with augmentative meanings like 'original; chief':

mêε-bíā (+cowrie shell/money)
'hood (of a cobra)'²³

mêε-bèεp (+model/pattern)²⁴
'model; pattern'

mêε-bòt (+text)
'heading/chief part of a text'

mêε-lèk (+iron)
'magnet' /cf. Lahu *ṣo-na-pē*/

mêε-náam (+water)
'river'²⁵

mêε-phim (+print/press)
'a mould, a model'

mêε-rεεŋ (+strong)
(a) 'jack, crane' (b) [*fig.*] 'support, mainstay'
/used of a woman who stands behind a man in what he does/

mêε-síi (+color)
'primary colors'²⁶

Among these augmentative compounds are the digitals:

hŭa-mêε-myy 'thumb' ("head-mother-hand")²⁷

hŭa-mêε-tiin 'big toe' ("head-mother-foot")

hŭa-mêε-tháaw 'great toe'

/tháaw is an elegant synonym of **tiin**/

In its metaphorical sense of 'chief', **mêɛ** loses its feminine reference, and appears in collocations designating people of unspecified or even usually male gender:

mêɛ-kɔɔŋ (+department)

'chief of an organization or section, usually temporary (e.g. an ad hoc fund-raising committee)'

mêɛ-ŋaam (+work)

'the head, the chief (*masc. or fem.*) of an undertaking'

mêɛ-tháp (+army)

'general, commander-in-chief'²⁸

Equally important as a noun-formative is **mêɛ**'s diminutive counterpart, **lûuk** 'child', which has a range of meanings as follows:²⁹ 1. *child*³⁰ 2. *fruit* 3. *classifier for fruits, mountains, typhoons, certain round or small objects* 4. *certain subsidiary devices* 5. *certain ball- or cube-like objects*

Besides its occurrence in non-metaphorical compounds where it designates, e.g. the young of animals, as in

lûuk-mɛɛw	(+cat)	'kitten'
lûuk-mǔu	(+pig)	'piglet',

lûuk appears as "the first element in many a compound meaning a *minor, a subordinate, the object of an action, or the complement of a thing*" and is thus "sometimes...equivalent to the English suffix *-ee*, as in **lûuk-câaŋ** 'employee' (**câaŋ** 'to hire')" [*So Sethaputra, p. 828*]. Some examples:

lûuk-faj (+fire)
'spark'

lûuk-khwaam (+matter/case)
'client of a lawyer'

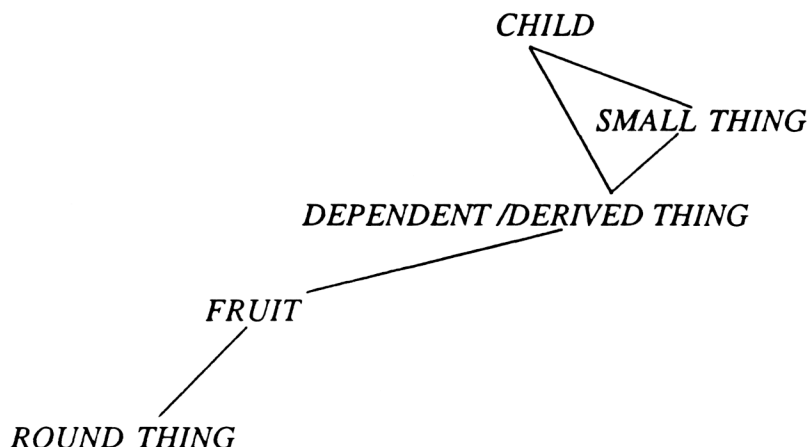
lûuk-kroŋ (+cage)
'balustrade, railing; sides/upright bar(s) of a cage, pen or balustrade'

lûuk-nǔu (+mouse)
(a) 'a firework, somewhat like a small rocket on a wire' (b) 'the biceps'³¹

lûuk-ŋɔʔ	
	'rambutan' (kind of fruit)
lûuk-paa	(+throw)
	'confetti'
lûuk-rya	(+ship)
	'crew of a ship'
lûuk-sawàat	(+love/lovely)
	'young homosexual male'
lûuk-sôo	(+chain)
	'link of a chain'
lûuk-sɔɔn	(+bow)
	'arrow' ³²
lûuk-sùup	(+suck/pump)
	'piston'
lûuk-taa	(+eye)
	'eyeball'
lûuk-thanuu	(+bow)
	'arrow'
lûuk-thiim	(+team [< Eng.])
	'member of a team'

There are compounds where the semantic increment contributed by **lûuk** is not exactly *diminutive*, but rather '*small round or ball-like shape*'. Here **lûuk** may serve simply as a redundant reinforcer of the following noun, which can also stand by itself with the same meaning, as in **lûuk-kradum** 'button' or **lûuk-krapòok** 'testicle', where **kradum** and **krapòok** are free nouns in their own right.

The semantic development of this morpheme was probably from *child* to *small derived thing* to *fruit* (the fruit is child to the tree), thence to *small round object* in general [see Figure 1]. In the nature of things, the class of "subsidiary devices" and that of "ball- or cube-like objects" overlap, since little roundish things are often contained in or attached to bigger things: fetuses in wombs, fruits on trees, keys in locks, etc. It is often hard to tell which idea is predominant in any given compound, as in **lûuk-faj** 'spark' (+fire): is the **lûuk** denoting a round thing or a thing subsidiary to a fire?

Figure 1. Semantic evolution of Thai *lûuk*

Similarly to Malay/Indonesian *ibu* / *anak*, Thai *mother* and *child* are sometimes paired with the same morpheme to create an augmentative/diminutive opposition:

mêɛ (+X) / lûuk (+X)

mêɛ-kuncɛɛ 'lock, padlock' / **lûuk-kuncɛɛ** 'key'³³

mêɛ pîi taj 'the (ten) Celestial Stems' ('mother of the Tai year')

lûuk pîi taj 'the (twelve) Earthly Branches' ('child of the Tai year') / each having an animal as symbol/³⁴

Sometimes unpredictable metaphorical specialization occurs in one or both poles of a **mêɛ (+X) / lûuk (+X)** opposition, so that they are no longer semantically parallel:

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| (+tiger) | mêɛ-sǎa | (a) 'she-tiger' | (b) 'termagant' |
| | lûuk-sǎa | (a) 'tiger-cub' | (b) 'boy scout' |
| (+mouse) | mêɛ-nǔu | (a) 'baby mouse' | (b) 'dear little girl' |
| | lûuk-nǔu | (a) 'firework on a wire' | (b) 'biceps' |

Occasionally *mother*, *father*, and *child* all occur *en famille* before a given morpheme, forming a triadic set:

mêɛ (+I) / phṣɔ̌ (+I) // lûuk (+I)

(+trade) **mêɛ-kháa** 'woman shopkeeper'
 phṣɔ̌-kháa 'male shopkeeper'
 lûuk-kháa 'customer; client'

(+nourish) **mêɛ-líaŋ** 'foster mother'
 phṣɔ̌-líaŋ 'foster father'
 lûuk-líaŋ 'foster child'

2.4 Hmong-Mien

Metaphorical uses of *mother* to mean 'origin; fount; source' must be widespread in Hmong-Mien.

2.41 White Hmong³⁵

The White Hmong morpheme **niam** 'mother; woman' [*creaky tone* "-m"] also serves as an emphatic or augmentative morpheme,³⁶ in which capacity it acquires the *breathy tone* "-g": **niag**. Syntactically, augmentative **niag** occurs before the noun it maximizes, and may be preceded by a numeral, classifier, or both:

lub niag tsua (+limestone)
 'great limestone mountain'
lub niag dej ntuj (+water, +sky)
 'the sea' ("mother watersky")
 /lub is a classifier for round objects, places, abstractions/
ib niag uas (+quiddity/that)
 'a large quantity'
 /ib is the numeral 'one/a'; uas here functions as a noun, but is
 probably the same lexeme as the homophonous relative pronoun/
ib tug niag neeg (+person)
 'an important personage'
 /tug is a classifier for people/
ib tug niag nom loj (+chief, +big)
 'an important chief'
ib niag phau ntawv loj loj (+book, + big)
 'a big fat book'

/phau 'pile; packet', ntawv 'writing; paper', phau ntawv 'book'/

lawv ib *niag* ncaws taw rau kuv

'They gave me a big kick.'

/lawv 'they', ncaws taw 'kick', rau kuv 'to me'/

lawv ib *niag* nrig rau kuv taub hau

'They gave me a big punch on the head.'

/nrig 'punch', taub hau 'head'/

neeg tuaj puv ib *niag* dav hlau

'A big plane full of people came.'

/neeg 'people', tuaj 'come', puv 'full', dav hlau 'airplane'/

lub tsheb ntawd ntim ib *niag* tsheb neeg puv puv

'That car has a full load of people.'

/tsheb 'car', ntawd 'that', ntim 'contain'/

hais tej lub *niag* suab laus nkoos

'speak in a great serious bass voice'

/hais 'speak', tej 'vivid adverb', suab 'voice', laus 'aged', nkoos 'curved; bent over', laus nkoos 'old and venerable'/

Correlatively, the morpheme **tub** 'son' occurs in a number of compounds indicating nouns of agent, individuals who instantiate general actions or phenomena [*Heimbach 1969, p. 325*]:

tub kawm 'student' ("son of studying")

tub ntawv 'id.' ("son of writings")³⁷

/cf. Jingpho ʃòŋ-mà [below 2.81]/

tub luam 'merchant; trader' ("son of business")

tub rog 'soldier' ("son of war")

/cf. Lahu màʔ-yâ [below, note 99]/

tub txib 'messenger' ("son of sending")

2.42 Green Hmong³⁸

In the Green Hmong dialect, the morpheme **n̄ā** 'mother' also means (without tone-change) 'big, large, great (bound form used to denote the augmentative in combination with nouns)':

n̄ā-mâŋ (+hemp) 'female hemp'

n̄ā-ŋgâo (+boat) 'big boat'

n̄ā-klē (+dog) 'big dog (either male or female)'

/this gender-neutral expression shows semantic bleaching; contrast the literal expression **klē n̄ā** 'dog's mother'/³⁹

nā-túaněŋ (+person)

(a) 'big person' (either man or woman)

(b) title used for the governor of a province

nā-klê (+water) 'river'

/cf. Thai **mêe-náam**/

nā-thóŋ (+pail) 'big bucket'

Lyman recognizes a more abstract function of **nā**, to indicate 'the "female" of certain inanimate objects taken in a figurative sense', and observes a parallelism between **nā** and its masculine counterpart **ŋ** 'male' (as in **ŋ-cũ** 'male tiger', **ŋ-nchɛ** 'bull elephant'), which sometimes indicates 'the "male" of certain inanimate objects taken in a figurative sense' (p.103). At least one example exists where both gender suffixes are applied contrastively to the same inanimate nounroot:

zé-nā (+stone) 'mortar' ("female stone")

žé-ŋ (+stone) 'pestle' ("male stone").⁴⁰

2.43 Mien (Yao)⁴¹

The words **maa** 'mother' and **maag** 'female indicator' in this Yao dialect (spoken in Chiengrai Province, Thailand) do not seem to be metaphorically extended in compounds, where they retain their literal meaning, e.g. **maa-puag** 'mother-in-law', **huvb-maag** 'queen'. Similarly, the morpheme **peid**, meaning 'female animal which has not yet borne young', appears only in a literal sense (e.g. **tuvd-peid** 'sow', **Juq-peid** 'bitch'). However, another morpheme applicable to female animals, **Eid** /ŋe i / 'female animal that has borne young; female (of the sex of a newborn baby); woman (slang)' does seem to be "fruitful" in forming metaphorical collocations, judging by the crucial "digital" compounds that unfortunately are the only ones Lombard offers:

puad-Do'q-Eid (+puad 'hand', +do'q 'finger') 'thumb'

zauj-Do'q-Eid (+zauj 'foot') 'big toe'

The two most important classifiers and noun-formatives in Vietnamese, **cái** and **con**, seem clearly to have evolved from morphemes meaning *mother* and *child*, respectively. Both morphemes have undergone a parallel process of metaphoric shift and semantic bleaching.⁴³ From its original meaning 'female; mother', **cái** developed the augmentative sense of 'big; chief; principal', whence it became grammaticalized into a classifier or formative for nouns denoting non-living things. The antonymous **con** 'child' seems also to have passed through a metaphorical diminutive/pejorative stage; then it too became bleached into a classifier or bulk-providing formative, mostly with nouns denoting non-human living beings (but also with some inanimates).

As the second element of non-metaphoric compounds, **cái** still denotes the female of the species, as opposed to **đực** 'male of the species':

bò cái 'cow'

chó cái 'bitch'

bò đực 'bull'

chó đực 'male dog'

mèo cái 'she-cat'

mèo đực 'tomcat'

In many other collocations where it occurs second, **cái** has acquired the metaphorical augmentative meaning of 'main; principal, largest':

cọng cái (+stem)

'main stem of plant/vegetable'

cột cái (+pole/pillar)

'main support pole of a house'

chữ cái (+letter)

(a) 'alphabet' (b) 'capital letter' /cf. Hmong **neeg**

ntawv [above 2.41] and Lahu **liʔ-na-pā** [below 2.86(b)]/

- đòn cái** (+carrying pole)
'main beam; big carrying pole'
- đồng cái** (+coin)
'biggest coin in the coin game'
- đường cái** (+road)
'main road, highway'
- hòn cái** (+island)
'main/big island'
- móng cái** (+claw/hook)
'Big Claw' (place name referring to a piece of land
extending into the sea)
- rễ cái** (+root)
'main root'
- sông cái** (+river)
'great river' (esp. the Red River in North Vietnam)

As usual, these augmentative compounds include the *digitals*:

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| ngón | (+digit) | 'thumb; big toe' |
| ngón tay cái | (+digit, +hand') | 'thumb' |
| ngón chân cái | (+digit, +foot) | 'big toe' |

Most abstractly, **cái** occurs in pre-nounroot position as a classifier or individuator of the head noun. It is a true classifier when it appears together with a numeral in the syntactic frame *Numeral* + ____ + *Noun*, as in:

- ba cái ghế** 'three chairs'
- một cái bàn** 'one/a table'.⁴⁴

With no preceding numeral, **cái** merely serves to single the noun out from all others in its class, to "individuate it" somewhat like an English article:

- cái bàn** 'the table; a table'.

Before stative/adjectival verb roots, **cái** looks like a kind of nominalizer, e.g. **cái đẹp** 'the beautiful; beautiful ones', though this may also be considered as just another aspect of its individuating function ("the one(s) that is/are beautiful").

The antonymous counterpart of **cái** is the morpheme **con**, which retains its literal meaning of *child* in many collocations where it occurs first, e.g. **con côi** 'orphan', **con gái** 'daughter', **con trai** 'son', **con hoang** 'illegitimate child', **con út** 'youngest child'⁴⁵. In second (attributive) position in compounds, after names of animals, **con** indicates the juvenile of the species, e.g. **bò con** 'calf' **chó con** 'puppy', **mèo con** 'kitten'. In this second position, **con** also has a more general diminutive function, where it may contrast with augmentative **cái**:

rễ con 'rootlet' / **rễ cái** 'main root'

bàn con 'small table'

dao con 'small knife'

/contrast **con dao** 'a knife; the knife' [below] /

In initial position, **con** appears in a few non-diminutive compounds referring to occupations pursued by adult human beings, e.g. **con bạc** 'gambler', **con buôn** 'merchant'.⁴⁶ Here **con** is non-gender specific and is neutral in terms of affect.

In a number of other compounds indicating humans, however, **con** refers specifically to females, with a nuance of contempt or pejoration, e.g. **con đĩ** 'whore', **con hát** 'actress', **con ỉ** 'maidservant'.⁴⁷ Indeed **con** itself can refer specifically to 'a small female child', as in the compound **con bé** 'little girl up to seven or eight years old'.⁴⁸

It might at first seem curious that **cá1** and **con**, which are antonymous in many ways, both can refer particularly to females. The difference is basically one of relative status: **cá1** is related to the notion of senior female, Big Mama; while **con** is diminutive/pejorative, oriented more to the small, subordinate female.⁴⁹

At the extremely grammaticalized end of the spectrum, the meaning of **con** is bleached to the point where it functions merely as an individuating noun-formative or classifier. The class of nouns individuable by **con** includes all those denoting subhuman animal species, e.g.

con chó	'a dog; the dog'
con chuột	'a mouse; the mouse'
con voi	'an elephant; the elephant'
con trâu	'a buffalo; the buffalo'

With the order of constituents reversed, these zoonyms receive the diminutive interpretation, referring to the young of the species (e.g. **chó con** 'puppy') [see above]. Both **con**'s may cooccur in an individuated diminutive NP:

con trâu con 'a/the young buffalo'

Most abstractly, **con** also occurs before miscellaneous inanimate nouns, without any special diminutive/pejorative force -- i.e. neither the notion of *child* nor the notion of *little* is particularly salient:

con cò	'trigger'
con chèo	'oar'
con dao	'knife'
/contrast the diminutive formation dao con 'little knife/'	
con dấu	'seal, stamp'
con đê	'dike'
con đôi	'jack' (tool)'

con đường	'road'
con mắt	'eye'
con niêm	'postage stamp; fee stamp'
con quay	'top (toy)'
con thoi	'shuttle'

After a numeral, in the syntactic frame *Numeral* + ____ + *Noun*, **con** serves as classifier for children, animals, and certain inanimate objects:

một con chó	'one/a dog'
hai con cá	'two fish'
ba con dao	'three knives'
năm con em	'seven sons'

It is interesting to note that even languages which have similar augmentative/diminutive semantics based on the *mother/child* dichotomy do not necessarily assign a given inanimate object in the real world to the same pole of the opposition. Vietnamese and Thai do agree on assigning *spinning tops* to the child's side, perhaps because they are so clearly toys and small and round:

'top (toy)' Viet. **con quay**/Thai **lûuk-khàan**).

On the other hand, the languages differ on how they treat the tool known in English by the manly name *jack*. Vietnamese here still uses the diminutive child-prefix (perhaps out of affection toward the handy device), while Thai uses the augmentative mother-prefix before the root for 'strong':

'jack (tool)'

Viet. **con dôi** /

Thai **mêe-rɛɛŋ** ("mother of strength").

2.6 Chinese

As is obvious from the opening verses of the *Dao De Jing*, quoted in the epigraph (yǒu míng wàn wù zhī

mǔ 'the Named is the Mother of ten thousand things'), the metaphorical extension of **mǔ** 母 'mother' to the notion of *origin/source* has been around for a long time in the history of Chinese. This association still survives vigorously in proverbs, e.g. **Shībài shì chénggōng zhī mǔ** 'Failure is the mother of success', and compounds like:

- mǔ-jī** (+machine)
 (a) 'machine tool'
 (b) 'mother aircraft; launching aircraft'
- mǔ-xiào** (+school)
 'alma mater; one's old school'
- mǔ-yè** (+liquid)
 'mother liquor; mother solution'
- mǔ-yīn** (+sound)
 'vowel'
 /SYN. **yuán-yīn**, lit. "source-sound"/
- mǔ-yǔ** (+language)
 (a) 'mother tongue' (b) 'parent language'
- mǔ-zhū** (+plant)
 'mother plant'

As always, the words for *thumb/big toe* are of special interest. The compound **mǔ-zhǐ** 拇指 (**zhǐ** 'finger'; with fully-stressed first syllable), or its fuller variant **dà-mu-zhǐ** 大拇指 (**dà** 'big'; with destressed, toneless **mu**) both contain the mothermorph **mǔ** 母, though this morphemic identity is disguised in writing by a graphic elaboration, the addition of the "hand-radical", yielding a specialized character 拇 that occurs nowhere else in the written language.⁵⁰

Chinese has not developed an augmentative suffix based on *mother*, but Mandarin does have two highly productive suffixes, **-zi** and **-r**,⁵¹ both grammaticalized from morphemes originally meaning *child*, **zǐ** 子 and **ěr** 兒

.⁵² It seems obvious that these were once diminutive in effect, though they have now been bleached into mere bulk-providing elements.⁵³

2.7 Japanese

The literary/learned stratum of Japanese has taken over a number of Chinese matricomps directly, simply pronouncing them with the Sino-Japanese readings of the characters (*bo* is the SJ reading of Chinese 'mother', Mand. **mǔ**), e.g.:

bo-kan	(+ship)	'mother ship; tender; carrier'
/kookuu-bokan 'aircraft carrier'; cf. oya-bune below/		
bo-koku	(+country)	'mother country'
bo(-koku)-go	(+language)	'mother tongue'
bo-kei	(+mold)	'matrix (printing)'
bo-koo	(+school)	'alma mater'
bo-koo	(+port)	'home port'
bo-sen	(+boat)	'mother ship'
bo-shi	(+finger)	'thumb'
/SYN. oya-yubi [below]/		

In a very few technical terms, SJ **bo** 'mother' is opposed to SJ **shi** 'child' (Mand. **zǐ**), e.g. **bo-on** ~ **bo-in** 'vowel' ("mother sound") / **shi-on** ~ **shi-in** 'consonant' ("child sound").⁵⁴ These morphemes sometimes cooccur in the collocation **bo-shi** 'mother and child' (also read with native Japanese pronunciation as *haha-ko*), which is in turn metaphorically extendible to mean 'principal and interest' [cf. Tibetan **ma-bu**, *below* 2.84).

Much more conspicuous in the language are antonymous pairs of compounds involving the native Japanese morphemes **oya** 'parent' vs. **ko** 'child; little',⁵⁵ as illustrated by the digital compounds: **oya-yubi** 'thumb; big toe' / **ko-yubi** 'little finger/toe'.⁵⁶ Similarly:

oya-bashira	ko-bashira
'main pillar' (< <i>hashira</i>)	'minor pillar'
oya-boshi	ko-boshi
'major star in a binary or multiple star' (< <i>hoshi</i>)	'minor star in such a configuration' ⁵⁷

oya-bun 'boss, chief'	ko-bun 'lackey, henchman; bad elements'
oya-bune 'depot ship; big ship' (<i>< hune [fune]</i>)	ko-bune 'small boat'
oya-imo 'a parent taro'	ko-imo 'young taro tubers'
oya-ishi 'cornerstone'	ko-ishi 'pebble'
oya-gaisha 'parent/holding company'	ko-gaisha 'subsidiary company'
oya-gi 'host plant of a graft'	ko-gi 'grafted plant'
oya-kabu 'original stock'	ko-kabu 'new shares of stock'
oya-moji 'capital letter'	ko-moji 'small letter'

These antonymous morphemes sometimes co-occur in the collocation *oyako* (SJ *shinshi*), referring to items that show an intrinsic duality:

oyako-don(buri): 'chicken and eggs over rice in a bowl'

/i.e. the dish includes both the mother (chicken) and the children (eggs)/

oyako-denkyuu 'double-light lamp'⁵⁸

2.8 Tibeto-Burman

2.81 Jingpho, Naga, and Lushai

A number of Tibeto-Burman languages, including Jingpho, the Naga group, and Lushai, reflect a PTB etymon ***nu** 'mother; elder female relative' (not reconstructed in Benedict 1972 ["STC"]),⁵⁹ which shows up in compounds both as an augmentative and as a bleached bulk-provider.

The Jingpho word **nû ~ kənû** 'mother; aunt' reappears in **lənû** 'thumb' (first element *< PTB *lak* 'hand'). More fully specified compounds are **táʔ-lənû** (the first element is the prefixless variant of **letáʔ** 'hand',⁶⁰ and **yùŋ-nû** (**yùŋ** 'finger'). Similarly, 'big toe' is either

ləgō lənū ("foot-handmother") or **ləgō yùŋ-nù** ("foot-fingermother") [*Dai:412, 823-4*].⁶¹

Several Naga languages⁶² use this **nu* mothermorph much more productively and abstractly. In *Chang* (Northern Naga), the word **anyu** 'mother', besides occurring in compounds denoting female kin terms or female animals (e.g. **a-nyu-mau-nyu** 'aunt', **au-nyu** 'hen', **kei-nyu** 'bitch', **lat-nyu** 'widow', **ok-nyu** 'sow', **pe-nyu** 'sister-in-law'), also appears as a meaningless suffix to many other nounroots, e.g.:

am-nyu 'mat'	[AW bu-ñu 'tree'] ⁶³
chi-nyu 'center'	he-nyu 'ladder; bridge'
ja-nyu [AW tza-ñu] 'sun'	ji-nyu 'brass'
lam-nyu 'road'	lit-nyu 'moon'
pi-nyu [AW be-ñu] 'snake'	sau-nyu 'tiger'
thau-nyu 'post, pillar'	tho-nyu [AW tu-ñu] 'elephant'

In the closely related N. Naga language *Konyak* we find the same suffix, realized as **-ñm** (Tamlu dialect) or **-ñu** (Wakching dialect), sometimes retaining its original meaning 'female' (e.g. 'widow' **yam-ñm** / **wam-ñu**), but usually simply providing bulk:

'moon'	let-ñm	/	le-ñu
'tiger'	šaʔ-ñm	/	šaʔ-ñu
'elephant'		/	ma i-ñu

Similarly, in *Sangtam* (Central Naga):

'moon'	2tšo-1nu	'arm'	2ba-1nu
'bean'	2xo-1nu	'bedbug'	1mm-1nu

And in *Yimchunger* (E. Naga):

'moon'	1k1-2nu	'pig'	2kyak-1nu
'dog'	2kiʔ-1nu	'goat'	1miʔ-1nu

'hen'	2tu-1nu	'bird'	1uʔ-1nu
'rat'	2p1ʔ-1nu		

Note that in these animal compounds, the last syllable apparently does not convey the idea 'female of the species'.

This ***-nu** suffix must be posited at least for Proto-Naga.⁶⁴ There is so far no evidence that it ever developed an augmentative force, but seems rather to have evolved directly from a feminine marker to a meaningless bulk-providing formative. For certain concepts, e.g. *moon*, the same suffix appears in several languages (e.g. Chang **lit-nyu**, Konyak **lin-nyu**, Phom **lin-nyü**), even if all the root syllables are not necessarily cognate (e.g. Sangtam **cho-nu**⁶⁵ 'moon').

The same etymon⁶⁶ is reflected in the Central Chin language Lushai (Mizo): **nu** 'mother, maternal aunt, paternal uncle's wife, husband's mother, female, a feminine affix' [*Lorrain and Savidge p. 154*]. It combines with its antonym **fa** 'child' (< PTB ***za**), to form the coordinate compound **nu-fa**, which means literally 'mother and child',⁶⁷ but also seems to have a variety of metaphorical extensions,⁶⁸ including mathematical (it is used to express 'one and a half' and 'one hundred and fifty') and astronomical (**nu-fa thembu inchuh** 'name given to two stars in close proximity to one another in the Unicorn constellation'⁶⁹ [*Lorrain 1940, p. 345*]).

Unlike the Naga languages, Lushai does not seem to make much use of **-nu** as a suffix. Filling this suffixal role, both as a feminine marker and as an augmentative, is another mothermorph, **pui**.⁷⁰ In its literal sense it indicates the fertile female of animal species ("generally used of animals, birds, etc. after they have begun to breed" [*Lorrain 1940:370*]):

vok-pui 'sow'	ar-pui 'mother hen'
ui-pui 'bitch'	se-bong-pui 'cow'

Figuratively, **-pui** has the classic big-mama augmentative sense of '*large, big, great, large species; big person or thing (sometimes used in playful exaggeration); chief, principal, main, permanent*', as in:

in-pui 'permanent house'⁷¹
kho-pui 'chief village'
kong-pui 'main road'
sarzuk-pui 'large species of *sarzuk* '
 /kind of climbing shrub with edible fruit/

As we might expect, this morpheme also occurs in the names of the great digits:

kut-zung-pui 'thumb' (**kut-zung** 'finger')
ke-zung-pui 'big toe' (**ke-zung** 'toe')

2.84 Written Tibetan

The WT morpheme **ma** 'mother' is frequently used metaphorically in the sense of *principal* or *source*, whether financial (*capital*), literary (*original text; pattern; stylistic model*), graphological (*a letter written above another*), or aetiological (*origin; primary cause*) [Jäschke 408], e.g.:

ma-c'u (+water)
 'first infusion of malt or beer'
 /cf. Eng. *mother liquor* /
ma-p'ar (+interest)
 'capital and interest' [*coordinate compound*]
ma-bu (+child)
 (a) 'capital and interest' (b) 'original and copy'
 (c) 'principal beam' and 'crossbeam'
 /cf. Indonesian *ibu tangga* / *anak tangga* /

Tibetan has a number of affixes that specify gender or provide bulk to roots, including **-ma**, **-mo/mo-**, **-pa**, **-po**, and **-pho/pho-**. Since they overlap in meaning and function they should all be considered together. The morpheme **-mo-** (probably morphophonemically related to **ma** 'mother') appears either as a prefix or a suffix, to indicate the *female* of the species:⁷²

bong-mo ~ mo-bong	'she-ass'
be-mo ~ mo-bi	'female calf'
phag-mo ~ mo-phag	'sow'
mo-ri ~ mo-re	'female kid'

bu-mo 'daughter'	bod-mo 'Tibetan woman'
'bri-mo 'tame female yak'	bya-mo 'hen, female bird'
glang-mo 'female elephant'	hla-mo 'goddess'
khyi-mo 'bitch'	tso-mo 'granddaughter'

The antonymous morpheme **-pho-** also appears either as a prefix or a suffix, with a curious dual function relating to the *male* of animal species. (a) With animals that are customarily left sexually intact, **-pho-** (or **-po**) simply indicates the male; (b) with domestic animals that are usually castrated, **-pho-** designates the castratee:

- (a) **bong-pho** ~ **pho-bong** 'he-ass'
bya-pho ~ **bya-po** 'cock'
 /the Tibetans seem not to have fancied capon/
- (b) **glang-pho** 'bullock; ox'
ra-pho 'castrated he-goat'
pho-phag 'castrated boar'
pho-rta 'gelding'

To designate a sexually intact male animal belonging to a castratable species, the prefix **pha-** (with the basic meaning of 'father') is used:

pha-glang 'bull'
pha-phag 'boar'
pha-ra 'billy goat; buck'
pha-rta 'stallion'

Much more conspicuous and important are the suffixes **-pa** and **-ma**⁷³, which sometimes occur with clear grammatical/semantic functions, but often serve merely as "bulk-providers" for nouns:

- (a) Agentive **-pa**:

The **-pa** suffix may appear with agentive function after nounroots, designating 'the person that deals with the thing' or 'the inhabitant of a place' [*Jäschke:321*], e.g. **rta-pa** (+horse) 'horseman', **lug-pa** (+sheep) 'shepherd', **chu-pa** '(+water) 'water-carrier', **khe-pa** (+trade) 'tradesman', **bod-pa** (+Tibet) 'Tibetan'. This agentive **-pa** (morphophonemically

related to **pha** 'father; intact male animal') seems to carry a default nuance of masculine gender. Thus **bod-pa** can mean either (1) 'a Tibetan; Tibetans in general (of either sex)', or specifically (2) 'a Tibetan man'. In the latter sense it is opposable to **bod-mo** 'Tibetan woman'.

(b) Nominalizing **-pa/-ba**:

After verbroots, **-pa** (and its variant **-ba**)⁷⁴ have the highly grammaticalized role of *nominalizers*, reifying the verbal event into something like an infinitive or a gerund, e.g. **dmar-ba** 'to be red; redness'. This suffix always appears in the citation form of verbs, much like our English *to*:⁷⁵

byed-pa 'to make'	dga-ba 'to be delighted'
śes-pa 'to know'	'tshol-ba 'to seek; search'
'dam-pa 'to choose; select'	gnang-ba 'to give'

(c) Meaningless bulk-providing **-pa/-ba**⁷⁶:

Groping for the concept of "phonological bulk", Jäschke says (p.321) of this use of the **-pa** suffix, "Frequently it has no particular signification, or it serves to distinguish different meanings (**rkang** 'marrow', **rkang-pa** 'foot')..." A few more examples:

cog-cog-pa 'grasshopper'	dgon-pa 'monastery'
dong-pa 'padlock'	grod-pa 'stomach'
lba-ba 'goiter'	mug-pa 'moth'
pho-ba 'stomach'	rting-pa 'heel'
yu-ba 'handle, hilt, shaft'	zla-ba 'moon; month'

(d) Feminine **-ma**:

This suffix sometimes functions as the feminine counterpart of agentive or nominalizing **-pa**, in such collocations as:

mthong-ma 'die Sehende' ⁷⁷ ("she who sees": mthong 'see')
chang-tshang-ma 'die Gastwirtin' ("barmaid": chang 'beer', tshang 'filled')
gnyis-ma 'die Zweite' ("the second one [fem.]": gnyis 'two')
rkang-gnyis-ma 'die Zweifüsslerin' ("two-legged woman": rkang 'leg')

(e) Meaningless bulk-providing **-ma**:

Finally, **-ma**, like **-pa**, is extremely common as an extender of nounroots, "generally put to the names of inanimate things, utensils, etc." [*Jäschke:408*]. No augmentative nuance seems to be present in these formations,⁷⁸ e.g.:

byang-ma 'inscription; label; tablet'⁷⁹

gra-ma 'fishbone'

grib-ma 'shadow'

grog-ma 'ant'

gzed-ma 'pannier; box-shaped basket'

phub-ma 'straw'

sog-ma 'straw'

sran-ma/srad-ma 'beans; legumes'

tsher-ma 'thorn'⁸⁰

Though it would be rash to claim that these meaningless formatives **-ma** and **-pa** are the remnants of an old gender-based system of noun categorization -- things never seem to have been as regular or systematized as that -- it does seem certain that these affixes are ultimately related to the concepts of *feminine* and *masculine*, respectively.

2.85 Karen⁸¹ and Burmese

A few remarks on digital and other augmentative compounds in Karenic and Burmese:

Karenic compound words for 'thumb' are composed of *hand* (or *finger*) plus the morpheme for *mother* or *main stem*; *trunk*:

E. Kayah **kən̄-m̄-du** ("finger's big mother")

/kən̄ 'finger', m̄ 'mother', du 'big'/

Kayaw **c̄y-m̄h-du** ("hand's big mother")⁸²

Pho **s̄u-m̄y** ("hand's trunk")

Sgaw **s̄y-m̄-d̄** ("big hand-stem" or "big finger")

/Sgaw s̄y-m̄ means 'finger' (i.e. "hand-stem"); d̄ 'big'/

This morpheme for 'trunk; mainstem' is (fortuitously?) homophonous in all these dialects with a morpheme for "sun".

In the Pa-o (Taungthu) dialect, the morphemes for 'trunk; mainstem' (**ʔəmə**) and 'sun' (**mə**) are also homophonous with a suffixal syllable (**-mə**) which looks like a variant of **mə** 'mother'), occurring with apparently augmentative meaning in compounds like:

náʔ-mə 'large knife; machete'	bə-mə 'rice plant'
cù-mə 'thumb'	kháŋ-mə 'big toe'.

In Burmese, the word **ʔəma** (apostrophe indicates creaky tone) 'female; mother'⁸³ has a clear augmentative sense in compounds, including the digitals: '*first, oldest among many, original; chief among many, main, principal*' [Judson 1893:734]:

lām-ma (+road)
'main road'
mruí-ma (+town)
'metropolis, capital, principal town'
ʔim-ma (+house)
'bâtiment principal' [Bernot XI.133]

lak-ma (+hand)	'thumb'
khre-ma (+foot)	'big toe'

2.86 Loloish: Akha and Lahu

Akha⁸⁴ has a feminine morpheme **-ma** (as in **à-ma** 'mother', **ð-ma** 'granddaughter'), which can also have augmentative force, as evidenced by the digital compounds **làq-ma** 'thumb' and **kí-ma** 'big toe' (cognate to the Burmese forms just cited). There are also compounds where the antonymous morpheme **-zà** 'child' occurs as a kind of diminutive suffix, e.g. **tɔq-zà** 'type of machete used in making small bamboo strips'.⁸⁵ The opposition is especially clear when the same root can take either suffix:

pí-ma 'priest'	pí-zà 'apprentice to a priest'
hím-ma 'main house'	hím-zà 'minor house'

/cf. Malay **rumah ibu**, Burmese **ʔim-na**/

Even more common is the use of **-ma** as a bleached bulk-provider, e.g. **bỹm-ma** 'taro', **gá-ma** 'road', **la-ma** 'moon (religious language)', **nó-ma** 'sun', **pàq-ma** 'elephant apple (tree)'. The same suffix serves sporadically to derive nouns from verbal roots, e.g. **dà-ma** 'decoy (fowl)' < **dà** (v.) 'use a decoy', **yè-ma** 'a saw' < **yè** (v.) 'to saw'.

Although the details are quite different in each language, **Lahu** resembles Tibetan in having a variety of interrelated morphemes involving gender or noun-categorization,⁸⁶ which often contribute a definite increment of lexical meaning or fulfill a clearcut grammatical function, but which sometimes simply serve as meaningless bulk-providing formatives. These Lahu morphemes include the feminines **-ma**, **-ma-pē**, and **-šē-ma**, and the masculines **-pā** and **-pa**.

(a) **-ma** (Mpfx)⁸⁷ 'human female; feminine derivational suffix' [*GL* 3.36, 6.13]

This morpheme is antonymically opposed to **-pā** (Mpfx) 'human male'. When preceded by the **ḁ-** prefix, they may stand as independent nouns: ^

fâʔ-thôʔ chi ḁ-pā lâ ḁ-ma lâ
'Is this squirrel a male or a female?'

Otherwise they are productive gender-marking suffixes:

qhâʔ-šē=ma	qhâʔ-šē(=pā)
'headman's wife'	'headman'
Lâhū-ma	Lâhū-pā
'Lahu woman'	'Lahu man'
chɔ-mô=ma	chɔ-mô=pā
'old woman'	'old man; old people'
chɔ-bḁ=ma	chɔ-bḁ=pā
'lazy woman'	'lazy man; lazy person'

In compounds like the last two, even though the second syllables are verbs (**mô** 'be old', **bḁ** 'be lazy'), the **-ma** is not deverbative (i.e. not a nominalizing verb-particle or Pv-

nom [*below (c)*], since the first two syllables *already* are noun-compounds of the [N-V]n type, e.g. **chɔ-bɔ̌** (N) 'a lazy person'.

(b) **-ma-pē** (Mpfx)⁸⁸ 'mother'⁸⁹; augmentative' [*DL 189, 959*]

In the zoological sense, this compound designates 'a female that has given birth (of certain birds and animals)', e.g. **ḡâʔ=ma-pē** 'mother hen'. More abstractly, it also occurs in several collocations (including the digital compounds) with the augmentative sense of 'most important part; dominant member of a set':

l àʔ=ma-pē (+hand) 'thumb'
khɛ=ma-pē (+foot) 'big toe'

phu=ma-pē (+money) 'one's capital; one's original investment'

/cf. Tibetan **ma-bu** 'capital and interest' ("mother-child"),
above 2.84 /

šo=ma-pē (+iron) 'magnet'

/cf. Thai **mêe-lɔ̌k**, *above 2.3 /*

l lʔ=ma-pē (+writing/letters) 'alphabet'

/cf. Hmong **niam ntavv**, *above 2.41 /*

(c) **ma** (Pv-nom) 'feminine agentive nominalizer' [*GL 6.13*]

The nominalizing verb-particle **pā** serves to convert the preceding clause into a noun of agent, e.g. **mêʔ mɔ̌ pā** 'someone who can see; someone who is not blind' (**mêʔ** 'eye', **mɔ̌** 'see'). Historically there is no doubt that this deverbative **pā** derives from the morpheme meaning 'male' ("the man who V's"; *see (a) above*). Like its male counterpart, **ma** may occasionally be used deverbatively in modern Lahu to convert a clause into a noun of feminine agent ("the female who V's"): **yâ hu vɛ** 'bear a child', **yâ hu ma** 'a pregnant woman'; **nā-pɔ̌ pɔ̌ vɛ** 'be deaf' ("ear-deaf"), **nā-pɔ̌ pɔ̌ ma** 'a deaf woman'.⁹⁰ However, **ma** is of quite restricted use in this construction. Parallelling similar developments in European languages that possess gender distinctions, the masculine morpheme **pā** has been generalized to the point where it may be used when the

specification of sex is irrelevant, or indeed even in contexts where one must interpret the sex of the agent as female:

ò-yâ hu pā a-šū lə'

Who is the one who is pregnant?

ha-pa-ò-lí cò pā mā cò lā

'Isn't there anybody who is menstruating?'

ò-phô šɿ tā pā lè mē-chô-ma qô? ve yò

'A person whose husband has died is called a widow.'

/the last syllable in **mē-chô-ma** 'widow' is the feminine derivational suffix (cf. **mē-chô-pā** 'widower')/

There is a further restriction on **ma** in its capacity as a nominalizer. It cannot nominalize a clause that is more than two or three syllables long. For this purpose a dissyllabic form

šē-ma [see (e) below] may be used instead, as in **yâ ġa ga pɔ pɿ šē-ma** 'midwife' (lit. "she who must help give birth").

(d) **-ma** (Bn) 'noun-formative; bulk-provider' [GL 61-2; DL 960]

At the semantically most bleached end of the spectrum, the **-ma** suffix occurs as a 'bound nominal morpheme' (Bn) with no particular meaning. A couple of dozen examples of meaningless **-ma** are offered in DL 960, but this formation is not productive, as e.g. in Tibetan or Akha.⁹¹ Words ending in this formative are divisible into several classes:

(1) where the **-ma** is added to noun-roots, either to enable them to occur as free words, or pleonastically to expand a noun which is already a free morpheme:

à-thò? ~ à-thò?-ma 'what?'

jù-ma 'cowrie shell'

ní-ma 'heart'

/this compound is paralleled in many other Loloish languages, e.g. Ahi **ní⁴⁴-no²²**, Lisu **ní²-na³**, Akha **nui-ma**, Bisu

nun-ba⁹² /

pē-ma 'honeybee'

pí-ma 'housefly'

bē-hē-ma 'trumpet'

mû-ma 'dwelling place; village (poetic)'

hí-kòʔ-ma 'ground civet'

ǵì-ma 'deity; divinity' [ǵì (N) 'god; great spirit']

ša-ma 'maize; corn'

(2) where the *-ma* has an augmentative meaning:⁹³

ò=ló-ma (a) giant (b) majority [

ló 'something big' < Shan]

ǵì-ma 'great river' [ǵì (N) 'water']

lò-ma 'great river' [lò (N) 'valley; river']

(3) where the *-ma* is added deverbatively to verbroots:

ha-ma 'winnowing basket'

< ha (V) 'winnow'

ǵàʔ-ma 'driving-comb of a loom'

< ǵàʔ (V) 'drive; chase'

tòʔ-ma 'poisonous thing'

< tòʔ (V) 'be poisonous; revolting'

vì=tòʔ-ma 'poisonous snake'

dê-ma 'stinging thing'

< dê (V) 'sting; scold'

ŋâ=dê-ma 'kind of stinging catfish'

nù-ma 'smelly thing'

< nù (V) 'stink'

jàʔ=nù-ma 'thorny plant with smelly leaves, eaten as a vegetable'

hó-ma 'fragrant thing'

< hó (V) 'smell good' (< Tai)

yî=hó-ma 'lemon-grass'

yì-ma 'long thing'

< yì (V) 'be long'

á-pòʔ=yì-ma 'long tunic'

mɛ-qê-ma 'bad luck in hunting; a person with such bad luck'

/mɛ does not occur as a verb in modern Lahu, but may once have meant 'be barren; sterile'; cf. ò-ma=mɛ 'barren female animal', chɔ-mɛ=p-a 'sterile man', chɔ-mɛ=ma 'barren woman'.

(4) after morphemes referring to colors; restricted to certain compounds, mostly designating plant or animal species

- nâʔ-ma** 'something black; a black variety of sthg'
mî=nâʔ-ma 'the earth (poetic)'
no-ma 'sthg blue; sthg green'
mû=no-ma 'the sky; the heavens'
phu-ma 'sthg white'
mùʔ=phu-ma 'velvet plant' [*Gynura cusimbua*]
phɿ-ma 'sthg pale, gray, purplish'
gû=phɿ-ma 'mountain imperial pigeon' [*Ducula badiā*]
š1-ma 'sthg yellow, orange, brown'
kʷêʔ-š1-ma 'cinnamon bitters' [*Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*]

(e) **šē-ma** [DL 1216]⁹⁴

The original meaning of (**ɔ̃=**) **šē-ma** seems to have been 'female proprietary spirit', e.g. the guardian spirit of a stream.⁹⁵ From there the meaning branched out in several directions. In composition with the morpheme **ɣè** 'house' (**ɣè=šē-ma**) it developed two separate meanings: (a) the more literal one, *lady of the house*, and (b) the more idiomatic one, *house lizard*, a harmless, ubiquitous creature that lives on the ceilings and walls of every house in SE Asia (called **cîŋcòk** in Thai). From (b) the meaning developed into 'bug; critter' in general (e.g. **pû=šē-ma** 'silkworm', **tí-têʔ=šē-ma** 'click beetle'), and very recently missionaries have encouraged a neologistic development into 'microbe, germ' (probably a calque on English, e.g. *a flu bug*). So far this is certainly not grammaticalization, but merely *glissement sémantique*, metaphor, idiomatization.

Taking another tack in semantic space, the notion 'female proprietary spirit' developed into 'female owner in general', and (in the direction of inalienable possession) into 'the female body' (Lahu has a separate word **ɔ̃=šē-phâ** 'the male body'): **ɣŝ ɔ̃=šē-ma dâʔ jâ** 'Her body is beautiful.' From there it was only a small further step to two thoroughly grammaticalized usages:

(a) *feminine reflexive*

ʔᵛ ᵛ-šē-ma kán chí qha pè-è ǵa tē
 ve ʔᵛ

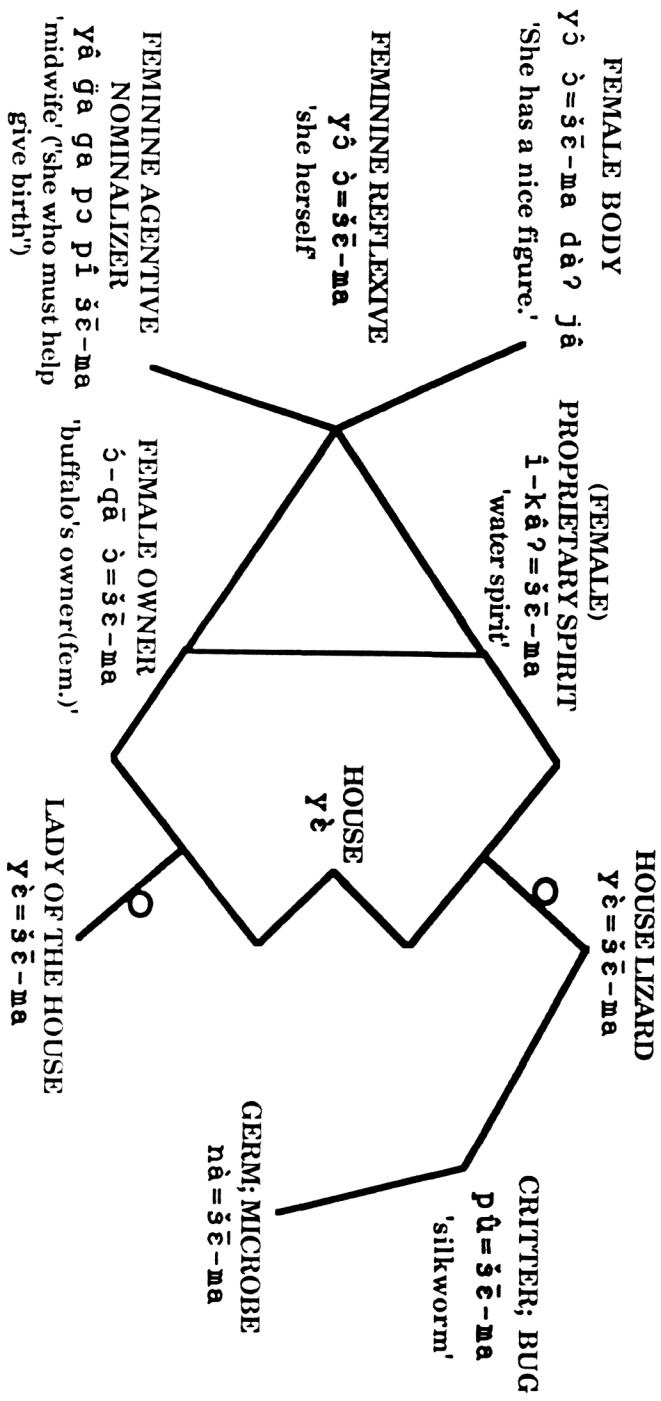
'She has to do this work all by herself.'⁹⁶

(b) *feminine agentive nominalizer*

ʔâ ǵa ga pɔ pɪ šē-ma 'midwife'
 ("she who must help give birth")

This is a striking example of the same lexeme developing both highly concrete and highly abstract senses. [Please see Figure 2, page 331].

FIGURE 2. Semantic development of Lahu šē-ma



III. Conclusions: universal vs. areal tendencies in metaphor, grammaticalization, and compound formation

What emerges from this profusion of facts? The chief (and undoubtedly utopian) task of comparative/historical semantics, as I see it, is to unravel the threads of semantic association and evolution in each language, language family, or linguistic area, in order to determine which tendencies are universal to human language and thought, and which are due to areal, genetic, or idiosyncratic factors.

In compound formation, for example, many combinations of concepts are found throughout the world, due to the very nature of things:

eye + water > tears
foot + finger > toe
cabbage + flower > cauliflower
penis + head > glans penis
ground + bean/nut > peanut
hot + head > impetuous person
fire + mountain > volcano

On the other hand, certain pairings of constituents are peculiar to or especially characteristic of a given linguistic area, like the following which are widely attested in East and Southeast Asia:⁹⁷

eye + foot > ankle
pig + crazy/illness > epilepsy
fly + shit > mole; freckle
tooth + insect > dental caries

Conversely, we have noted certain semantic associations in Western languages that are quite alien to E/SE Asia, e.g. *mother > scum on liquid/fermenting slime*. The long history of mutual calquing that causes languages which share an areal heritage to be so "intertranslatable", has a negative as well as a positive aspect: certain metaphors or conceptual associations seem never to take hold in a given linguistic area. Areal differences are detectible even in the case of neologisms invented worldwide for the same technological artifact. East

Asian languages are nearly unanimous in calling a **railroad train** a "fire-cart" (e.g. Indonesian **kereta api**, Thai **ród-faj**, Burmese **mī-yəthā**, Lahu **à-mī-lḥ**, Chinese **huǒchē**), while Western languages seem universally to have avoided formations like **voiture de feu* or **Feuerwagen*.

Thus while the general semantic association between *mother* and *big/main/principal* is apparently universal, the use of *mother* in compounds referring to the principal digits seems to be localized in certain particular areas of the world, including East/SE Asia⁹⁸ and Mesoamerica.⁹⁹

This study leads us to propose certain crosslinguistic generalizations about the metaphorical evolution and grammaticalization of morphemes for *mother*, *child*, and *father*:

mother

1. **mother** (literal female parent)
2. **female** humans in general and/or female of animals
- 3a. **origin/source/matrix** ("ORIGINATIVE")¹⁰⁰ and/or
- 3b. **big/main/most important** (AUGMENTATIVE)
4. **object** in general; noun-marker (**bulk-providing** marker for nounroots); **nominalizer** of verbroots

child

1. **child** (literal biological offspring)
- 2a. **dependent** thing; product (DERIVATIVE) and/or
- 2b. **little** thing; (cute) roundish thing (DIMINUTIVE)
3. **object** in general; bleached **bulk-provider**

father

1. **father** (literal male parent)
2. **male** person in general; male in general
3. **person** in general
4. **object** in general; **bulk-provider** for nounroots; **nominalizer** of verbs

All but the final stage of each development seem to reflect universal metaphorical tendencies, unlocalizable areally or genetically, i.e. 1 > 2 > 3 for *mother*; 1 > 2 for *child*; 1 > 2 > 3 for *father*.¹⁰¹ The first stage of grammaticalization for a

mothermorph is reached when it is no longer restricted in reference to females ($2 > 3$).¹⁰²

Languages like Malay/Indonesian and Thai show a metaphorical opposition between *mother* 3b (AUGMENTATIVE) and *child* 2b (DIMINUTIVE) overtly and synchronically, but sporadically (not crosscutting the whole lexicon) by preposing the usual words for *mother* and *child* (**ibu/anak; mēe/lôuk**) to the same root. Vietnamese has generalized such an opposition (**cá1/con**) through much of the noun-lexicon, but has bleached it of semantic content in most contexts. The augmentative/diminutive situation in Tibeto-Burman is less obvious. Some TB languages like Akha [above 2.86] have a few contrasting pairs of compounds based on *mother* (< *-ma) vs. *child* (< *-za).¹⁰³, but such an opposition has not yet been found to be productive anywhere in the family.

On the other hand, the Sino-Tibetan languages seems to have gone much further than the other languages of E/SE Asia in the degree of grammaticalization and semantic bleaching which these kin terms have undergone. Mandarin Chinese has undergone a $2 > 3$ development with *child*, so that -zǐ and -ě'r have become mere bulk-providers. Many Tibeto-Burman languages (e.g. Tibetan, Lahu, Akha, Chang Naga) have a suffixal element phonologically identical to a form for *mother* and/or *father*, but from which any sense of PARENT has usually been bleached, as well as any other metaphorical extensions (e.g. *matrix*, *bigger part*, *source*), so that all that is left is an abstract BULK-PROVIDER or a completely grammaticalized functor that is more inflectional than derivational (e.g. a NOMINALIZER). It is interesting that in Sino-Tibetan all three kin concepts are bleachable to this ultimate point (*mother* $3 > 4$; *child* $2 > 3$; *father* $3 > 4$), so they become roughly homonymous and interchangeable. Indo-European languages seem never to go this far. On the other hand, East Asian languages never develop thoroughgoing gender classifications for inanimate nouns that subdivide the entire lexicon into a small number of classes that control concord phenomena, in the manner of Indo-European, Semitic, or Bantu.

Notes

- ¹ The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao
 The Name that can be named is not the eternal Name
 The Nameless is the beginning of Heaven and Earth
 The Named is the **Mother of Ten Thousand Things**.

²This paper was originally presented at the First Annual Meeting of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society (SEALS) at Wayne State University, Detroit (May 9-11, 1991), shortly before Mother's Day (May 12), under the title: "The mother of all morphemes: *big mama* in Sino-Tibetan and elsewhere." In slightly revised form it was later given at the 24th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics (Chiang Mai, Thailand, Oct. 10, 1991), under the title "*Mother and child: augmentatives and diminutives in areal and universal perspective*." My thanks to Stephen Baron, Ariel Bloch, James Bosson, Lon Diehl, Annie Jaisser, Terrence Kaufman, Alan Kaye, Yakov Malkiel, Susan Matisoff, Ngo Thanh Nhan, Martha Ratliff, Laurent Sagart, Teo Kok Seong, David Solnit, Jackson Tianshin Sun, Amin Sweeney, Vu The Thach, and Norman Zide for many helpful examples and comments on the previous versions.

³On the phonological level, I feel that the most successful coinages are alliterative, involving objects of genitive *of* that begin with *m*-. Thus, *mother of all midterms* works much better than *mother of all finals*; one can easily imagine Johnny Carson giving *the mother of all monologues*; a recent flash of bright light in the Pennsylvania sky was quickly dubbed *the mother of all meteors*.

⁴Thanks to Ariel Bloch for elucidating the relevant pages of several of these dictionaries.

⁵This word is probably derived from the root ʔwq 'bring bad luck'.

⁶Hebrew sometimes uses a semantically opposite construct noun, **ben** 'son of/child of', to indicate the possession of a salient characteristic by an animal, e.g. ʔayil **ben-qarnayim** 'ram with horns' (lit. "ram son-of horns").

⁷The definitions, quotations, and collocations with *mother* in this section are selected from the compact two-volume edition of the OED (1971), pp. 1857-9.

⁸"These thre woordes, the *matrix*, the *mother*, and the *wombe* do sygnyfie but one thyng." [Thomas Raynalde (1545) *Byrth of Mankynde, otherwyse called the womans booke*, p. 9]

Until relatively recently, hysteria was supposed to be caused by an upward "displacement of the mother": Oh how **this Mother** swels yp toward my heart! / *Hysterica passio*, downe thou climbing sorrow, / Thy element's below. [Shakespeare (1605), *King Lear* II.iv.56]

In present-day English both *matrix* and *mother* are obsolete in the sense of 'womb', with *matrix* (Lat. 'womb') surviving and thriving in a variety of learned metaphorical contexts, e.g.: (a) a place or medium in which something is bred, produced, or developed (b) an embedding or enclosing mass (c) a mould in which something is cast or shaped (d) (*Math.*) a rectangular arrangement of quantities or symbols.

⁹Besides 'native language' this expression once had the meaning of 'original language in which something was written'.

¹⁰This expression was also used as an exclamation: "**Mother a pearle**, woman, shew your husband the cause!" [Rowley (1632), *A New Wonder, A Woman Never Vexd: a pleasant conceited comedy*, I.1]. This was undoubtedly a euphemism for "Mother of God!" (cf. Spanish *madre de Dios!*).

¹¹This same metaphor is used in the Romance languages (It., Sp. **madre**; Fr. **mère de vinaigre**).

¹²Yet the possibilities of pejoration are unpredictable and ever-present, as witness modern expressions like *He's a mean mother*. Since this usage is now patently gender-inappropriate on the surface, its transformational history seems to have involved object ellipsis. It is hard to believe that this new nuance of meaning was entirely absent from the minds of those who thought up the name *The Mothers of Invention* for a certain group of rock musicians.

¹³The data in this section are from Echols and Shadily 1961/1963, and personal communications from Teo Kok Seong and Amin Sweeney.

¹⁴*Mother* and *father* are occasionally opposed in metaphorical compounds as well, e.g. **ibu ayam** 'madam (in brothel)' ('mother chicken') / **bapak ayam** 'pimp' ('father chicken').

¹⁵The first position in a Malay/Indonesian noun-noun compound is generally occupied by the head, while the second noun is attributive, e.g. **mata hari** 'sun' ("eye of day"), **mata kaki** 'anklebone' ("eye of foot").

¹⁶The notation (+X) indicates that "*mother*'s co-constituent in the compound means X". Thus **bahasa** means 'language', **rumah** means 'house', etc.

¹⁷This compound generally has a male referent, showing that *ibu* has been bleached somewhat from its female connotation. Cf. similar cases with Thai **mêe**, below.

¹⁸Compare Thai **mêe-kuncêe** 'lock', **kuncêe** 'key', with etymologically identical second element, ultimately < Portuguese. (Cf. Latin **cūneus** 'quoin, key, wedge'.) See note 33.

¹⁹Cf. Japanese **kookuu-bokan** [below 2.7].

²⁰In *Cham*, an Austronesian language of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Hainan, the word for 'mother', **inō**, besides its literal meaning (as in **monuk inō** 'brood hen; mother hen', has a similar metaphorical range, appearing in compounds like the following (including the digitals):

inō taŋin	(+hand)	'thumb'
inō takai	(+foot)	'big toe'
inō saŋ	(+house)	'ridge of roof'
inō kajaŋ	(+thatching)	'ridgepole'

[Aymonier/Cabaton 1906, p. 30]

The geographically far distant *Nepali*, an Indo-European language spoken in the Himalayish portion of the South/Southeast Asian linguistic area, has virtually identical digitals:

buRi 'old, elderly (woman)';

buRo 'old, elderly (man)'

buRi aũlaa 'thumb' ("old-lady finger")

khuTTako buRi aũlaa 'big toe' ("old-lady finger of foot") [Schmidt 1991, pp. 77, 465]

²¹Sometimes there is a collocation with *anak*, but no corresponding one with *ibu*. Thus, **anak ida** ("child-tongue") means 'uvula', but 'tongue' itself is simply *ida*, not **ibu ida*.

²²The data in this section are from Haas 1964 :411-3, 487-9; and So Sethaputra 1965/1972: 716-8, 827-30.

²³The semantic development here is a bit obscure, but in any event one might call this a shining example of *mother-hood*.

²⁴Here the **mêe** acts merely as a redundant reinforcer of the meaning of **bèep**, which can occur by itself as a free noun with a meaning already intrinsically referring to the mother-like concept of 'mould; matrix; plan'.

²⁵The mothermorph also appears in the names of certain rivers (e.g. **mêe-khōŋ** 'Mekong'), as well as in innumerable potamonymic place names like **mêehōŋsōn** 'Maehongson', **mêesariaŋ** 'Maesariang', **mêesūaj** 'Maesui', **mêesāaj** 'Maesai', etc.

²⁶So Sethaputra (p.716) adds an interesting specialized subsense of **mêe**: 'one of the classes of Thai vocables determined by the final consonant in the spelling', e.g. **mêe-kòk** 'syllables with final -k'; **mêe-kom** 'syllables with final -m', etc. Cf. collocations like Lahu **lìʔ-ma-pē** 'alphabet' ('mother of letters'), *below* 2.86(b).

²⁷In the Kadai language of Hainan known as Li or Hlai, distantly related to Siamese, *thumb* is expressed by *mother* + *finger*: 'mother' **pai³** (Baoding dialect), **mei³** (Zhongsha dialect); 'finger' **zi:ŋ²** (both dialects); 'thumb' **pai³-zi:ŋ²** (BD), **mei³-zi:ŋ²** (ZS) [Ouyang 1983:451, 476].

²⁸As in **mêe-tháp hũa-dam** 'General Schwarzkopf' ['mother-army-head-black']. The morpheme 'army' is borrowed from Khmer **dáp** [tɔəp] (see Varasarin 1984:194).

²⁹The definitions and examples in this section are from Haas (487-9) and So Sethaputra (827-30).

³⁰Note that Thai contrasts **lûuk** 'one's own child' with **dèk** 'child (in general)':

mii lûuk kii khon khráp

'How many children do you have?'

mii dèk kii khon khráp

'How many children are there?'

³¹Cf. Latin **musculus** 'muscle' (lit. "little mouse"). Is the Thai compound a 19th century calque on Western medical terminology, or an independent indigenous Thai formation?

³²Unlike the Malay opposition **ibu panah** 'bow'/'**anak panah** 'arrow', Thai has no compound with 'mother' to designate the 'mother bow' as opposed to the 'child arrow'. Instead, Thai has **khan-sǝn** 'bow' (rod + arrow).

³³As mentioned above (note 18) this pair is exactly parallel to Malay **ibu kuntji** / **anak kuntji** (above), bespeaking a common calquing from Portuguese.

³⁴For an interesting account of the Northern Thai calendrical cycle, see Thawi Swangpanyangkoon 1991.

³⁵Data from Bertrais 1964:176-8, with glosses translated from French.

³⁶As Bertrais puts it, conveying the "*idée de grand, gros, important*". Martha Ratliff observes that prefixed **niag** can also have pejorative meaning (rather reminiscent of the vulgar English *mothering*): e.g. **niag zaj** 'damned old dragon', **niag tsov** 'damn tiger', **niag txee txias** 'goddam refrigerator'.

³⁷Feminine equivalents also exist for these compounds: **ntxhais kawm**, **ntxhais ntawv** 'female student' ("daughter of studying/writings"). It is interesting to note that the compound **tub ntawv** is antonymic with **niag ntawv** 'Mother of Writing', a respectful epithet for a remarkable Hmong man, Shong Lue Yang (Soob Lwj Yaj), who invented several Hmong alphabets [see Smalley *et al* 1990:165; my thanks to Annie Jaisser for calling my attention to this book]. The applicability of this epithet to a male is evidence of the semantic bleaching **niag** has undergone.

³⁸Data from Lyman 1974:196. For his tone-mark + we substitute ˉ; for his **slashed-c** we substitute ɕ.

³⁹The female of animals is expressed in this dialect by the morpheme **māu**, as in **māu klě** 'bitch'.

⁴⁰This metaphor is reminiscent of the "male" and "female" plugs of English-speaking electricians. The Gta? language (Munda branch of Austroasiatic) has a mother-child (rather than female-male) pair for the names of these objects: **ɬɔŋ-bwar** 'mortar' ("mother-stone") / **hũ-bwar** or **ɔʔn-bwar** 'pestle' ("child-stone") [pers. comm., Norman Zide].

⁴¹Data from Lombard 1968:17, 25, 160, 243, 266. This dictionary is distinguished by its "challenging" orthography, motivated by easy typability, but including such non-mnemonic symbols as **J** = /c/ 'voiceless palatal stop', **E** = /ñ/ 'voiced palatal nasal'.

⁴²The data in this section are from Emeneau 1951:94, 102-3, 117-8; Nguyen Dinh-hoa 1959:30 and 1967:49,63; Thompson 1965:192-5, and personal communications by Vu The Thach and Ngo Thanh Nhan.

⁴³The ordinary kinship term for mother, **mẹ**, does not seem to play much of a role in metaphoric compounds, except perhaps for **tiếng mẹ đẻ** 'mother tongue' (+language).

⁴⁴This abstract **cái** is defined as 'object, thing; classifier for most nouns denoting inanimate things and some nouns denoting small insects; classifier for single actions, strokes, blows' (Nguyen Dinh-hoa 1967:49). "Of the 471 classified nouns in the basic vocabulary, 173 are classified with **cái**. It is by a long way the most common of the classifiers that classify nouns denoting nonliving things, and it classifies no nouns that denote living beings. It seems to encroach on the other more special classifiers that denote nonliving things, occurring optionally instead of them in many instances..." (Emeneau 1951:103).

⁴⁵This same morpheme 'youngest child' occurs in the digital compounds for 'little finger' (**ngón tay út**) and 'little toe' (**ngón chân út**).

⁴⁶This is very similar to a use we have noted of Thai **phố** 'father' and **mẹ** 'mother' (e.g. **phố-kháo** 'male merchant', **mẹ-kháo** 'female merchant') [*above* 2.3]. Note that Thai picks a parent-metaphor for the plyer of a craft, while Vietnamese picks the child-metaphor.

⁴⁷Still other **con**-initial collocations involving human or higher beings resist easy classification, e.g. **con tin** 'hostage' (pejorative, but not necessarily female); **con Tạo** 'the Creator' [*literary*] (neither pejorative nor necessarily female).

⁴⁸In this usage it is correlative to the masculine morpheme **thằng** (e.g. **thằng bé** 'little boy'), and can also be

prefixed pejoratively to words specifically designating males: **thăng đều** 'rascal', **thăng hề** 'clown', **thăng nhỏ** 'little houseboy'.

⁴⁹Evidence for the linguistic infantilization of womankind is of course to be found everywhere. The usual polite terms in Yiddish for 'Jewish woman (of any age)' are *yidishe tokhter* (lit. "Jewish daughter") or *yidish kind* (lit. "Jewish child"). The latter expression can never refer to an adult male.

⁵⁰Pre-literate Chinese children are not fooled by this graphological trick. Jackson Tianshin Sun reveals that when he was little he firmly believed that **mũ-zhĩ** meant "mama-finger" [p.c. April 1991]. In Japanese the hand-radical is often omitted from this character [see note 57].

⁵¹This latter suffix is realized in Pekinese as retroflexion (often with concomitant quality change) on the preceding vowel. A liberal use of these retroflexed forms is considered a hallmark of the Beijing dialect.

⁵²I have suggested that **zĩ** and **ěr** are actually co-allofams of the same etymon, underlying a "diminutive Sino-Tibetan palatal suffix" [Matisoff 1990a]. Since then I have collected hundreds of Mandarin compounds ending in **zĩ**, and am in the process of subclassifying them semantically.

⁵³Steve Baron reports [p.c., May 1991] that in certain Mandarin dialects **-zi** and **-ér** are now opposable after the same noun as augmentative vs. diminutive, respectively, e.g. **dāozi** 'big knife' / **dāor** 'little knife'. This would seem to be a particularly striking illustration of Bréal's (1897) "principle of repartition", that wherever a language offers an option between two originally synonymous items, a semantic distinction will eventually develop between them.

⁵⁴Mandarin now commonly uses different metaphors for these concepts: **yuán-yīn** 'vowel' ("source sound") vs. **fǔ-yīn** 'consonant' ("helping sound").

⁵⁵In these words, *ko* is sometimes written with the character for 'child' (Mand. **zĩ**), but usually with the character for 'little' 小 (Mand. **xiǎo**). There is no doubt that this is merely a graphic repartition; the native Japanese morpheme *ko* means either 'child' or 'little'.

⁵⁶In slang, *oyayubi* can mean 'boss, bigshot' (cf. *oyabun*, *oyadama*).

⁵⁷Watch out for all these homophones transcribed as *boshi* :

(a) SJ for 'thumb' 拇指 or 母指 (MOTHER + FINGER: Mand. **mǔzhǐ**)

(b) SJ for 'mother and child' or 'principal and interest'

母子 (MOTHER + CHILD: Mand. **mǔzi**)

(c) native Japanese morphophonemic variant of 星

hoshi 'star'.

⁵⁸**oya-** also appears in many other compounds, where there are no correlates with **ko-** in common use, though these could readily be coined if necessary, and would certainly be understandable in context, e.g.: **oya-bone** 'outer rib (of a fan)' < *hone* 'bone'; **oya-ginkoo** 'parent bank'; **oya-hikooki** 'mother plane'; **oya-ne** 'taproot' (cf. Vietnamese **rễ cǎi**); **oya-kagi** 'master key' (cf. one sense of Malay **ibu kuntji**); **oya-kyookai** 'mother church'; **oya-shooken** 'master insurance policy'; **oya-waza** 'basic technique (in *aikido*)'; **oya-zato** 'home town'.

⁵⁹This root is quite distinct from the etymon ***(m)-na** set up in STC (p.187) on the basis of Written Tibetan **mna-ma** 'daughter-in-law', Murmi **na-na**, Vayu **nu-nu** (< **na-na*), Jg. **na**, Chang Naga **a-no** < **-na* 'older sister', Byangsi **na** 'mother', **pu-na** 'aunt', Miri **a-na** 'mother' (Abor 'grandmother'), Lakher **i-na** 'mother'. STC [*ibid.*] identifies Chinese 女 **nǚ** 'woman' ***nǚo/nǚwo** [GSR #94a-e] with PTB ***m-na**, though it could go equally well with our new ***nu**.

⁶⁰This Jingpho form **letáʔ** has always caused puzzlement. Benedict accounts for it in terms of a proto-cluster ***gl-** [STC, pp. 32, 42], but a more general explanation in terms of "deltacism of laterals" has also been suggested (Matisoff 1990b).

⁶¹The Jingpho word for 'child', **mà**, which occurs in compounds like **jòŋ-mà** 'student' (**jòŋ** 'school'), does not yet have an established etymology. Its resemblance to the TB 'female/mother' morpheme ***ma** [below] seems totally coincidental.

⁶²The Naga data in this section are from the Chang, Rengma, and Yimchunger dictionaries put out by the Nagaland Bhasha Parishad (cited in Matisoff 1980), and from Weidert 1981.

⁶³The forms in brackets are from Weidert 1981:36.

⁶⁴Although the lexical data is scanty for most Naga languages, occasional forms keep showing up with this suffix, e.g. *Rengma* (S. Naga) **shye-nyū** 'star'. For an antonymic formation for 'star', with a *child-* rather than a *mother-* suffix, cf. the Sani form [note 85].

⁶⁵The second syllable of Liangmai *cha-hiu* (data from Nagaland Bhasha Parishad) was identified with this suffix in Matisoff 1980, but Weidert (1981, p.23) records for another Liangmai dialect the variants *ka-liu* and *ka-hiu*, demonstrating that *liu/hiu* are not a suffix, but rather reflect the *root* for 'moon' *s-(g)la [STC #144].

⁶⁶Another reflex of this ***nu** etymon might be the 2nd syllable of Lahu **ḥ-nū-ma ~ ḥ-nū-ma**, which means (1) 'sibling's daughter; niece' or (2) 'female ward of an elder brother or maternal uncle'. If cognate, this Lahu morpheme has apparently undergone a semantic flipflop to *junior* (rather than senior) *female kin*.

⁶⁷With the constituents in opposite order, and **-nu** in attributive position, **fa-nu** means 'daughter' (as opposed to **fa-pa** 'son').

⁶⁸Cf. the metaphorical extensions of Tibetan **ma-bu** 'mother and child', *below* 2.84.

⁶⁹Cf. Japanese **oyaboshi / koboshi**, *above* 2.7.

⁷⁰I believe this morpheme to be cognate to the last syllable of the Lahu feminine suffix **ma-pē** [*below* 2.86(b)] .

⁷¹Cf. Malay **rumah ibu** [*above* 2.1] and Akha **ñm-ma** [*below* 2.86].

⁷²Suffixal **-mo** also occurs as a bulk-provider after nouns referring to inanimate objects, e.g. **pus-mo/pis-mo** 'knee', **ba-mo** 'hoarfrost', **ri-mo** 'painting', occasionally perhaps adding an augmentative shade of meaning (e.g. **gzu-mo** 'bow (for arrows)', **rtse-mo** 'top; peak; summit', **ston-mo** 'feast; banquet').

⁷³Wolfenden (1929) says nothing about the PTB **-ma** and **-pa** suffixes, perhaps because he considered them merely derivational and of little interest compared to the C + shwa prefixes and the dental suffixes **/-n -t -s/**.

⁷⁴The suffix appears as /ba/ after verb roots ending in a vowel or with -ng, -r, -l; otherwise as /pa/.

⁷⁵For a discussion of the propensity of Tibeto-Burman languages to nominalize clauses even when they are not embedded in any larger structure, see Matisoff 1973b.

⁷⁶The morphophonemic conditioning for the voicing of this suffix is not the same as after verbroots. While we still get -ba after a vowel, -pa appears after ng-; after liquids both variants seem to occur, e.g. sbal-pa 'frog' but sol-ba 'coal'.

⁷⁷These examples are from Hahn 1974:30.

⁷⁸The WT word for *thumb*, the-bo ~ mthe-bo, contains neither of our putative mothermorphs, -ma or -mo, but rather the elusive -bo, still another "affix to designate some words as nouns" [Jäschke:371].

⁷⁹This word also occurs in the form byang-bu, with the second syllable meaning 'child'. This is the only WT example I have found of a possible augmentative/diminutive contrast after the same root.

⁸⁰Even the loanword pad-ma 'lotus' (< Skt.) looks like it has been metanalyzed in terms of this suffix, since pad occurs by itself in many collocations, e.g. pad-dkar 'white lotus'.

⁸¹This Karenic data is courtesy of David Solnit.

⁸²The -h in the second syllable stands for breathy voice.

⁸³This form still means 'mother' in Central Burmese dialects; in Rangoon the usual words for 'mother' are ?əmi', ?ənei, or ?əme.

⁸⁴Examples are from Lewis 1989, but in something close to the phonemic transcription of Egerod and Hansson.

⁸⁵A similar diminutive suffix has apparently developed from the morpheme zv³¹ 'child' in Sani Yi, as in tɕɛ³³-zv³¹ 'star' [Wu Zili et al., 1984:170-1, 227]. This star-compound is thus antonymous in semantic structure with the Rengma form cited above (note 64).

⁸⁶The Lahu data is from Matisoff 1973/1982 (abbreviated "GL") and Matisoff 1988 ("DL").

⁸⁷A prefixable morpheme, or "Mpx", is one that can be preceded by the bulk-providing noun-prefix ɔ̌-.

⁸⁸For the last syllable, cf. the Lushai cognate pui.

⁸⁹The Lahu word for '(human) mother' itself (**e**, **ò-e**) is from a root ***(ɣ)ay** [Matisoff 1985:38], and plays no metaphorical or grammatical roles in the language.

⁹⁰This is very similar to the Tibetan construction discussed above, 2.84(d).

⁹¹Lahu has another meaningless bulk-provider **-pa** (mid-tone) [GL 62, DL 803], evidently related to the word for 'father' (**pa**, **ò-pa**), as well as to the noun **ò-pā** 'male' and the masculine nominalizing particle **pā** (very-low tone; see above). Unlike the situation in Tibetan, however, where both meaningless **-ma** and **-pa** are extremely common, Lahu **-pa** is quite rare, the following list being close to exhaustive for Black Lahu: **ha-pa** 'moon' (cf. WT **zla-ba**, etc.), **ò-ne-pa** 'gristle', **ǵòʔ-pa** 'wall', **lò-pa** 'moon (poetic)'.

⁹²***m**, like all nasals, regularly denasalizes in Bisu.

⁹³Augmentative **-ma** is very rare in Lahu. The productive augmentative is now **-lò**

(< Shan; cf. Thai **lūaŋ** 'great; main; principal') [DL 1378], with a correspondingly productive diminutive **-é** (from a morpheme meaning 'child, baby', < PLB ***ʔya-k**), e.g.:

ò-ǵù-téʔ=lò 'large intestine' / **ò-ǵù-téʔ=é** 'small intestine'

vì-lò 'big snake' / **vì-é** 'little snake'

⁹⁴This morpheme is interesting from the viewpoint of "degrees of grammaticalization". Much of the discussion in this section is taken from Section 2.14 of Matisoff 1991.

⁹⁵The syllable **šē** is probably from the same etymon as **qhâʔ-šē** 'village headman', **šē** (V) 'to lead' < PLB ***sin¹** x ***sin²** or ***sin¹** x ***sin²** (cf. WB **sañ**, **ʔesañ** 'owner; proprietor').

⁹⁶One could point to many similar grammaticalizations in the Southeast Asian linguistic area -- e.g. Thai **tua** 'body', **tua eej** 'by oneself' -- but this is more universal than areal (cf. Eng. *somebody*, *anybody*).

⁹⁷These examples are from Purtle 1971 (quoted in Matisoff 1978:70).

⁹⁸My colleague James Bosson points out that the Old Mongolian word **erekei** 'thumb; big toe' derives not from 'mother; female', but rather from **er-e** 'male'. However the word **eke** 'mother' does underlie the "originative" notion of **eki** 'head; source' [see Lessing 1960 :305-6; 321-2]. English does have colloquial expressions like *baby finger* and *baby toe* for the smallest digits, but no corresponding **mama finger* for *thumb*, even in babytalk.

⁹⁹Terrence Kaufman points out that throughout the Mayan family, *thumb* is "mother of hand", and *finger* is "child of hand" (the latter metaphor seems alien to SE Asia), e.g. Tzeltal **ak'ab** 'your hand', **smeʔ** 'its mother', **smeʔak'ab** 'your thumb' ("its mother your hand"); **yal** 'its child', **yalak'ab** 'your finger' ("its child your hand") [p.c., Dec. 1991].

¹⁰⁰David Solnit correctly points out that a crucial component of the SOURCE meaning is the notion of an *undifferentiated mass*, of which the derived entities are individuations. Thus, Thai **thiim** 'team' (< Eng.; see above 2.3) is the abstract collective entity of which the **lûuk-thiim** 'team members' ("team-children") are the instantiations. (It will be recalled that it is **lûuk** which is used as a classifier for individual objects, not **mêe**.) By the same token, Lahu **màʔ-yá** 'soldier' ("war-child") is the concrete embodiment of **màʔ** 'war'. Similarly, Classical Chinese **tiān-zī** 'emperor' ("son of heaven"), implies that the Emperor is the earthly instantiation of the abstract cosmos.

Many peoples choose as their autonym a collocation that means "child(ren) of X", e.g. Hebrew **bney Yisrael** ("children of Israel; Israelites"), Lahu **Láhū-yá** ("children of Lahu"). The first syllable **lak-** of the name of the Kadai people called *Lakkia* means 'child' (cognate to Thai **lûuk**) and is also the classifier for people.

¹⁰¹Of course not every language provides synchronic attestation for every single stage, even in the case of those developments that are not localizable areally, e.g. our limited Mien Yao data [above 2.43] shows evidence only for *mother* 2 > 3, not for *mother* 1 > 2.

¹⁰²The English word *guy* is now undergoing the passage from 2 > 3, as it comes increasingly to be gender-neutral.

¹⁰³In languages like Lahu and Burmese, it can be demonstrated that this fully syllabic morpheme for 'son/child' was eventually reduced to a simple yod [Matisoff 1990a].

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