On the Origin and Development of Classifiers in Jingpo*

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0. Compared to that of other Tibeto-Burman languages, the classifier system of Jingpo is not very developed, especially in terms of count-noun classifiers. When most nouns are counted, no classifier (CL) is necessary; the noun can be directly modified by a numeral. For example, 'four chickens' is expressed as ဗေူး၂ ဗေူး၁ ဗေူး၂ 'chicken' + 'four'; 'two shirts' is expressed as ပ၃၂ ဗေူး၁ ပ၃၂ ဗေူး ဗေူး၃၂ 'shirt' + 'two'. I described the basic synchronic characteristics of Jingpo noun classifiers in Xu 1987. The aim of this paper is to discuss the origin and development of Jingpo CLs through an analysis of the internal situation vis à vis CLs and a comparison with CLs in related languages.

1. The CLs of Jingpo developed gradually, in general along the following two paths:

1.1. Creating CLs from native lexical material.

1.1.1. Most of the CLs in Jingpo developed from native material, mainly through one of the following three methods: (1) using a noun to act as a CL; (2) combining two lexical items to create a compound CL; (3) using container nouns as ad hoc CLs. When a noun is used as a CL, the meaning of the CL is related to the attributes and shape of the referent named by the noun. CLs created in this way (there are about twenty common ones) are mainly count-noun CLs, such as ခေါင်း၃၁, which as a noun means 'body', but as a CL can be used with common animal names, melons, and fruits, and certain other objects:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{pig} & \quad \text{CL one} \\
\text{one pig} & \quad \text{cucumber} \quad \text{CL one} \\
\text{cucumber} & \quad \text{CL one}
\end{align*}
\]

As a noun, နော့၃၃ ခေါင်း၃၃ means 'circle, ring'; as a CL, it can be used to modify circular objects:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{flower} & \quad \text{CL one} \\
\text{one wreath of flowers} & \quad \text{CL one}
\end{align*}
\]

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As a noun, tʃeŋ\textsuperscript{33} has the meaning ‘fragment’; as a CL it is similar to English ‘slice’, ‘strip’, ‘half’, or ‘part’:

\begin{align*}
\text{kə}^55 \text{ wa}^55 \text{ tʃeŋ}^33 \text{ mji}^33 & \quad \text{ji}^755 \text{ tʃeŋ}^33 \text{ mji}^33 \\
\text{bamboo} & \text{ CL one} \quad \text{dry land} & \text{ CL one} \\
\text{‘one strip of bamboo’} & \text{‘one section of dry field’}
\end{align*}

ŋa\textsuperscript{33} tʃeŋ\textsuperscript{33} mji\textsuperscript{33}  
\text{cow} & \text{ CL one}  
\text{‘one side of beef (i.e. half of a cow’}

1.1.2. Native lexical items are also used in combination to create specialized CLs. Of these, some consist of two lexical items, usually a noun plus a prefix, verb, CL, adjective, or stative verb. Others are comprised of a root plus a prefix. These bimorphemic CLs include count-noun CLs, quantity/weight measures, and group CLs. There are about thirty of them. Ex.:

Noun + Noun > Classifier  
\text{ʃən}^31 \text{ ‘meat’} + \text{pə}^33 \text{ ‘head’} > \text{CL for hunted animals}  
\text{num}^31 \text{ ‘woman’} + \text{pə}^33 \text{ ‘head’} > \text{CL for wives}

Noun + Verb > Classifier  
\text{sɨ}^31 \text{ ‘cotton’} + \text{kə}^?31 \text{ ‘to separate’} > \text{‘boll (of cotton’}  
\text{thɨŋ}^31 \text{ ‘house’} + \text{nəp}^55 \text{ ‘to pad’} > \text{‘plank (of floorboard’}

Noun + Classifier > Classifier  
\text{kəi}^31 \text{ ‘bead’} + \text{təŋ}^33 \text{ ‘tube’} > \text{CL for cylindrical beads}  
\text{wa}^731 \text{ ‘bamboo’} + \text{phəŋ}^33 \text{ CL for trees} > \text{‘grove (of bamboo’}

Noun + Stative Verb > Classifier  
\text{ləŋ}^31 \text{ ‘hand’} + \text{kəŋ}^31 \text{ ‘shape of hand grabbing smth.’} > \text{‘handful’}  
\text{sɨ}^31 \text{ ‘cotton’} + \text{ləŋ}^31 \text{ ‘pile-shaped’} > \text{‘pile (of cotton’}

Prefix + Verb > Classifier  
\text{mə}^31 \text{ (prefix)} + \text{kəŋ}^33 \text{ ‘carry on back’} > \text{‘backload (of firewood’}  
\text{jɪn}^31 \text{ (prefix)} + \text{kəŋ}^31 \text{ ‘build’} > \text{‘floorboard (2nd floor and up’}

Prefix + Stative Verb > Classifier  
\text{sum}^31 \text{ (prefix)} + \text{pəŋ}^31 \text{ ‘string-shaped’} > \text{‘string (of meat, fish, fruit, etc.)’}

1.1.3. Ad hoc use of container nouns as CLs:

\begin{align*}
\text{phaŋ}^31 \text{ wəŋ}^33 \text{ mji}^31 & \quad \text{fat}^31 \text{ n}^31 \text{ kəŋ}^31 \text{ mji}^31 \\
rice gruel & \text{ bowl one} \quad \text{rice mouth} & \text{ one}
\end{align*}

‘a bowl of rice gruel’  
‘a mouthful of rice’

1.3. Ancient CLs. Aside from the above, there are about twenty specialized native CLs, of which more than ten are weight/measure or group CLs. There are two verb classifiers and nine count-noun classifiers. We can find no etymological relationship between these classifiers and items in other word classes, so it is possible that these developed very early in the history of Jingpo. Comparing these with CLs in related languages, we find no more than a few cognate sets. This suggests that these CLs developed in Jingpo after Jingpo had already become an independent language. (See appendix).

2. Jingpo CLs went through a process of development from nonexistence to existence, and from few to many. From the present situation vis-à-vis CLs in Jingpo, it is possible to find clues that reflect their development.

2.1. There are three situations with respect to the use or non-use of CLs:

2.1.1. A classifier must be used. When counting weights, measures, units of money, or groups, or when counting verbal actions, a CL must be used. Ex.:

- puŋ⁵⁵ sam⁵¹ tøŋ³³ mji³³ ‘cloth’ foot one ‘a foot of cloth’
- n³³ ku³³ taŋ³¹ mji³³ ‘rice’ basketful one ‘a basketful of rice’
- mä³¹ fə³¹ və³³ noŋ³³ mji³³ ‘person’ group one ‘a group of people’
- naŋ³¹ si³¹ kjin³³ mji³³ ‘fruit’ 1/2 kilo one ‘1/2 kilo of fruit’
- kum⁵¹ phʒo³¹ lap³¹ mji³³ ‘money’ yuan one ‘one yuan (unit of money)’
- laŋ⁵⁵ khoŋ⁵¹ laŋ³¹ sa³³ two CL go ‘go two times’
Aside from this, when counting animals that have been eaten or are going to be eaten, it is customary to use a CL:

\[
\text{wa}^{31}\text{ khum}^{31}\text{ mji}^{33}\text{ ja}^{55}\text{ kau}^{55}\text{ mä}^{33}-\text{ sai}^{33}
\]

pig CL one eat aspect sent. particle
'They) ate a (whole) pig.'

From the semantics of the CLs it is not difficult to see that most classifiers of this type were late developments historically. The former reflect the increased complexity of weights and measures; the latter reflect the need to clarify the measurement of individual referents.

Although a verbal CL must be used when counting actions, the system of verbal CLs is quite simple: there is only one specialized verbal CL, łaŋ\textsuperscript{31}. There is also an allomorph of this CL, kä\textsuperscript{31} łaŋ\textsuperscript{31}, which includes the meaning 'one', as in 'one time'. This form can only combine with mji\textsuperscript{33} 'one', and not with any other numerals. Borrowed verbal CLs are also very restricted in scope; generally only nouns which express a unit of time are borrowed as verbal CLs.

2.1.2. Situations where CLs are not used are basically of two types: (1) under normal circumstances, most count-nouns do not require the use of a CL (some nouns have CLs that could be used, some don’t have CLs at all). The NP can be directly modified by the numeral:

\[
\text{phun}^{55}\text{ mä}^{31}\text{ sum}^{33}
\]

tree three
'three trees'

\[
\text{sä}^{31}\text{ poi}^{55}\text{ lä}^{55}\text{ khoŋ}^{51}
\]

table two
'two tables'

\[
\text{sa}^{33}\text{ pja}^{33}\text{ mä}^{31}\text{ li}^{31}
\]

soap four
'four (cakes of) soap'

\[
\text{pau}^{31}\text{ lä}^{55}\text{ khoŋ}^{51}
\]

gong two
'two gongs'

(2) even though a noun may have a corresponding CL, the CL is not used when the number modifying the noun is a compound (i.e. higher than ten). Compare the following examples:

\[
\text{mä}^{33}\text{ ko}^{33}\text{ si}^{31}\text{ khum}^{31}\text{ mä}^{31}\text{ li}^{31}
\]

pear CL four
'four pears'

\[
\text{mä}^{33}\text{ ko}^{33}\text{ si}^{31}\text{ ji}^{33}\text{ lä}^{55}\text{ khoŋ}^{51}
\]

pear twelve
'twelve pears'

\[
\text{n}^{55}\text{ ta}^{51}\text{ thiŋ}^{31}\text{ ko}^{33}\text{ mji}^{33}
\]

family CL one
'one family'

\[
\text{n}^{55}\text{ ta}^{51}\text{ mä}^{31}\text{ na}^{33}\text{ ji}^{33}
\]

family fifty
'fifty families'
This is not to say that it is impossible to use a CL here. It would not be ungrammatical to use one, but customarily one would not be used.

2.1.3. There are also some count-nouns with which the use of a CL is optional. Although these nouns all have CLs, the CL will customarily be used only when needed for clarifying the unit of measurement. For example, 'one chopstick' is usually khoi³³ tse³¹ lā⁵⁵ nai¹⁵ mji³³ ('chopstick' + 'one'' + 'one'), without a CL, but to emphasize the unit of measurement, to show that it is not 'a pair', 'a bunch', etc., it is possible to add the CL khat⁵⁵, so 'one chopstick' would become khoi³³ tse³¹ khat⁵⁵ mji³³. Other examples:

\[\text{sum}³¹ \text{vum}³³ \text{si}³¹ \text{mā}³¹ \text{nā}³³ = \text{sum}³¹ \text{vum}³³ \text{si}³¹ \text{khum}³¹ \text{mā}³¹ \text{nā}³³\]

\[\text{peach} \quad \text{five} \quad \text{peach} \quad \text{CL} \quad \text{five}\]

\[\text{u}³¹ \text{ti}³¹ \text{kṣu}º⁵⁵ \quad = \quad \text{u}³¹ \text{ti}³¹ \text{khum}³¹ \text{kṣu}º⁵⁵\]

\[\text{egg} \quad \text{six} \quad \text{egg} \quad \text{CL} \quad \text{six}\]

Of the three situations discussed above, the first two are the most frequent, and the third is relatively rare. The fact that CLs are optional in Jingpo suggests that Jingpo CLs are in a transitional stage of development where their use has not yet stabilized. This phenomenon is a function of the need for increased complexity and accuracy, and is in accordance with the development of CLs from few to many.

2.2. The grammaticalization of CLs is uneven. In Jingpo, those CLs that are native and have completely grammaticalized are few. Most still retain a certain amount of their original (nominal) lexical meaning. According to the degree of grammaticalization, they can be divided into four types:

2.2.1. Those that have completely grammaticalized; we cannot determine what lexical items they developed from. There are about twenty of this type, not counting borrowed CLs. Aside from their function as CLs, they have no other use, and can only be ascribed to the class of CLs. Examples are mān³³ 'pair', kum³¹ tun³³ 'handspan (index finger to outstretched middle finger)', and tik⁵⁵ 'rectangular piece of land (for growing vegetables)'.

2.2.2. Those that are fairly grammaticalized, but we can still determine which nouns they developed from. When these are used as CLs, their lexical meaning is completely lost. There are only five or six of this type; two examples would be (a) lāp³³, which means 'leaf' as a noun, but 'sheet, slice' as a CL. It is used in counting pieces of paper, tree leaves, and other flat thin objects:

**In Jingpo there are two ways to express the meaning 'one': lā⁵⁵ nai¹⁵ and mji³³. Both are used when a noun is being modified, but only mji³³ can be used to modify a CL.
mai³¹ sau¹³¹ lap³¹ mji³³
paper CL one
‘one piece of paper’

phun⁵⁵ lap³¹ lap³¹ mji³³
leaf CL one
‘one (tree) leaf’

(b) tum³³ means ‘(fruit) pit, seed’ as a noun, but is used as a CL for small round objects:

sum³³ wum³³ su³¹ tum³³ mji³³
peach-pit CL one
‘one peach pit’

n³³ ku³³ tum³³ mji³³
rice CL one
‘one grain of rice’

2.2.3. Those that are not very grammaticalized; to varying degrees they retain their original lexical meaning. There are six or seven of these. Ex.:

(a) si³¹ khap⁵⁵ ‘bale [50 kg.] (of cotton)’ is a compound CL comprised of the root si³¹ ‘cotton’ and the noun khap⁵⁵ ‘bale’. It retains the lexical meaning of its morphemes, and can only be used for bales of cotton, as in

pa³¹ si³³ si³¹ khap⁵⁵ mji³³
cotton bale one
‘a bale of cotton’

(b) fin³¹ kjaŋ⁵⁵ has the lexical meaning of ‘ear (of grain)’. When used as a CL, it has the meaning of ‘spike (of grain), stem, branch’, etc., and is used in counting ears of wheat or other grains, flowers, etc. Ex.:

khau³¹ lan³¹ mam³³ siŋ³¹ kjaŋ⁵⁵ mji³³
wheat CL one
‘an ear of wheat’

2.2.4. Those least grammaticalized. There are about ten of this type. They retain their lexical meaning to such an extent that they preclude the cooccurrence of a noun either before or after the CL. One can only say

kok³¹ mji³³
CL (room) one
‘one room’

or kap³¹ mji³³
CL (dynasty) one
‘one dynasty’

but not

*kok³¹ kok³¹ mji³³
room CL (room) one

or

*kap³¹ kap³¹ mji³³
dynasty CL (dynasty) one

Yet these CLs are not the same as those count-nouns that can be directly modified by a numeral. There are two main differences: this type can only take the form mji³³ to express the meaning ‘one’, whereas nouns can take both mji³³ and la⁵⁵ nai⁵¹;
when used as CLs, their meanings are not exactly those of the original nouns. Compare the following:

sä³¹ poi⁵⁵ as a CL:
\[\text{jan}⁵⁵ \text{the}³³ \text{sä}³¹ \text{poi}⁵⁵ \text{mji}³³ \text{to}⁵⁵ \text{tjo}²³¹ \text{ma}²³¹ \text{ai}³³.\]
3pl table(banquet) one entertain give aux.part.
'They invited a tableful (of people) to a banquet.'

sä³¹ poi⁵⁵ as a noun:
\[\text{ŋai}³³ \text{sä}³¹ \text{poi}⁵⁵ \text{lää}⁶⁵ \text{ŋai}⁵¹ \text{mji}³³ \text{lu}³¹ \text{n³¹-ŋai}³³.\]
1sg table one one have aux.part.
'I have a table.'

This suggests that these CLs are the precursors of true noun CLs. Because their lexical meaning has not bleached away, and they are still concrete semantically, they haven't actually become true CLs; they have just begun the process of grammaticalization from noun to CL.

Among all those CLs that developed from nouns in the four types mentioned above, the level of grammaticalization (bleaching) is closely related to the flexibility of the use of the CLs. Generally, the more advanced the stage of grammaticalization, the more flexible the use will be. For example, niŋ³¹ the³¹ 'drop' is made up of the noun niŋ³¹ 'rain' and the verb the³¹ 'drip'. Because the meaning of 'rain' has been completely lost in this compound, niŋ³¹ the³¹ can be used not only for counting drops of rain, but also drops of oil, water, etc. On the other hand, kai³¹ lep³¹ 'slice (of ginger)' can only be used in counting slices of ginger, as the noun kai³¹ 'ginger' retains its lexical meaning.

The unevenness in the grammaticalization of Jingpo CLs shows that Jingpo CLs developed little by little because of the needs of production and daily life, and are going through a gradual process of bleaching and grammaticalization. This process is an important step in the development of Jingpo CLs.

2.3. There are many ways that CLs can combine with numerals and nouns. The scope of use of each type of combination is different.

2.3.1. Noun + Numeral. Used in counting count-nouns:

\[\text{n³¹ pa}⁵⁵ \text{lää}⁵⁵ \text{khoŋ}⁵¹ \text{po}³¹ \text{luŋ}⁵⁵ \text{ma}³¹ \text{sum}³³\]
quilt two ball three
'two quilts' 'three balls'

2.3.2. Noun + CL + Numeral. Used in counting units of weight, volume, money, group nouns and some count-nouns:
water cup one ‘one cup of water’

money dime one ‘one dime’

shoes pair one ‘one pair of shoes’

chicken CL one ‘one chicken’

2.3.3. CL + Numeral. Used only for the type of CL discussed in section 2.2.4, those where there has been little bleaching of lexical meaning, so no noun can appear with them:

CL (affair) one ‘one thing/affair’

CL (fireplace) one ‘one fireplace’

2.3.4. Numeral + CL or CL + Numeral. Used with very few words:

two CL (floorboard) ‘two floorboards’

two CL (steps) ‘two (stair) steps’

The four constructions above have the highest frequency of use. Of these, the first and second are used most often. The common characteristic of these two is that the numeral and the CL both appear after the head noun. The third type is of the same nature as the first, in that semantically the CL functions the same way as a noun. The fourth type, where the numeral can either precede or follow the CL, only holds for a few CLs.

According to the analysis presented above, the main order of numeral, CL, and noun is for the numeral and CL to follow the head noun. This is the same order we find in pre-Qin Old Chinese. It wasn’t until the North-South Dynasties period that CLs in Chinese moved to the position in front of the noun (Liu 1959). If we say that the post-nominal position for CLs is a relatively old feature of Sino-Tibetan, then we can determine that the genesis and development of CLs in Jingpo is still in a relatively early stage.

The diachronic development of a language is very often reflected in its synchronic characteristics. From an analysis of the complex features of the modern language we can find clues to the history and evolution of those features. The CLs of modern Jingpo provide evidence of this.
REFERENCES
