**The far Northwest of Southeast Asia - the languages of Myanmar**

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Treatments of the Southeast Asian linguistic area are usually restricted to the Mainland area roughly covering present day Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand, with southwestern and southern China, as well as the peninsular and insular regions seen as partly belonging to the area (e.g. Bisang 1992; Enfield 2005). Modern Myanmar, i.e. the region from the Salween to the Irrawaddy and Chindwin valleys, is not usually covered in studies of Southeast Asia, or treated as a marginal or transit area. This may have different reasons, including the dearth of reliable data from this region, and the surface structure of verb-final Tibeto-Burman languages dominant in the area, which is superficially radically different from the verb-medial languages of core Southeast Asia. The languages of Myanmar indeed seem to have more in common with languages of northeast India. On the other hand, languages such as verb-medial Mon, Palaung and Shan basically are well integrated in the SEA area, while at the same time sharing many features with their neighboring languages. With intensive language contact for several centuries, it is not surprising that also Tibeto-Burman languages of the region show similarities with languages of SEA. Karenic varieties, which changed from verb-final to verb-medial, are probably only the most extreme outcome of this contact, but smaller scale contact phenomena can be observed in many places.

Based on published sources and original material collected during numerous field trips to Myanmar over the past more than ten years, the present study looks at the presence and absence of a number of common features of SEA languages (Comrie 2007; Enfield 2005) in a sample of languages spoken in present-day Myanmar. The main languages used in this study are Burmese varieties, Mon, and Shan, representing the three major language families of the area, namely Tibeto-Burman, Austroasiatic, and Tai-Kadai, respectively. Additional data will be adduced from Karenic languages, as well as other languages where data are available and relevant to the argument.

One of the striking features of Southeast Asian languages is the grammatical use of verbs, usually called serial verbs or secondary verbs (V2). These V2s range in function from modal to directional and aspectual, and also express secondary concepts such as manner, attitude, and more. Very often these V2s are difficult, if not impossible, to capture in traditional grammatical terms. One case in point is the verb 'get', which occurs in either pre-verbal or post-verbal position in many languages of SEA, with different functions. Post-verbal 'get' usually expresses general ability or the absence of obstacles, while in pre-verbal position it indicates that an event occurs because of some prior event (see Enfield 2003), often translated as 'get to' or 'have a chance to', or analyzed as past tense. This second function seems to be closely related to the use of (mostly pre-verbal) 'give' to express permissive and/or jussive causative function, present in the majority of languages of SEA and spreading into Myanmar. In verb-final Burmese, where auxiliaries are commonly placed after the main verb, 'get' occurs only post-verbally, though with different syntactic behavior for the meanings 'can, be able' and 'have to, get to; have done'. The former, corresponding to SEA post-verbal 'get' is a free auxiliary, the latter, which corresponds to SEA pre-verbal 'get', is a bound morpheme (see Jenny 2009). This example shows that the similarity of expression is often hidden behind differences in syntax, especially in languages with diverging basic word order.

The aim of this study is to show to what extent Burmese, including its dialects, and other languages of Myanmar are part of the SEA linguistic area, thereby extending the notion of SEA to the northwest, beyond the Salween.

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