Hayashi Norihiko and Ikeda Takumi (eds.)
Grammatical Phenomena of Sino-Tibetan Languages 5: 261–276, 2022
Diversity of Negation

Negation patterns in Meche*

Kiryu Kazuyuki

Mimasaka University

Summary

This paper discusses the negation structure of Meche, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the southeastern part of Nepal. The negation marker in Meche is not cognate with the Proto-Tibeto-Burman negation prefix **ma-*, but is suffixal, as observed in other TB languages of North East India. The Meche negation suffixes are not simple negation markers attached to the verb in affirmative clauses, but rather constitute a paradigm contrasting with affirmative suffixes with respect to tense-aspect-modality (habitual *-ə* vs. *-a*, future *-nai* vs. *-a*, past *-aʔ* vs. *-yi*, recent past/perfect *-bai* vs. *-akəi*, continuous/perfect *-dəŋ* vs. *-akəi*). In negative clauses, negation suffixes occur instead of corresponding affirmative verbal suffixes. There is, however, one negative prefix: the prohibitive marker *da-*, which is cognate with the PTB-negative imperative marker **da/ta*. Meche has a negation suffix that signals a change of situation into a negative state, *-le*. The negation in subordinate clauses is based on finite negation markers, but the patterns are slightly different. The nominalized clause is formed by one of the two nominalizers, *-gra* and *-nai*, for affirmative nominalized clauses. However, there is only one negative nominalizer *-yi*. For temporal-conditional adverbial clauses, the finite negative suffixes are used, while for other types of adverbial clauses, which are based on nominalization, the negative nominalizer *-yi* is always used. Finally, the paper speculates regarding a possible origin of one of the negative suffixes in Meche based on Wood (2008) and a piece of data from Tani (Post 2015). The negative suffix *-a* might have originated from the Proto-Bodo-Garo prohibitive **ta*, which is cognate with PTB **da/ta*, and which for some reason might have been employed as a regular negative marker. A possible phonological change would be *ta* > *ca* > *ja* > *ya* > *a* in Boro and Meche.

Key words: affirmative/negative paradigm, nominalizers, finite/nonfinite negations, origin of negative suffix

*I would like to thank my main consultant, Mr. Santa Lal Meche, who has given me plentiful time for elicitation and discussion of the negation patterns in Meche since I started to work on this language. This paper is partially supported by JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 18H05219 (Takumi Ikeda) and 24520485 (Kazuyuki Kiryu).

1. Introduction

Dryer (2008) discusses the order of negative morphemes with respect to the verb in Tibeto-Burman languages. There are two patterns: VNeg and NegV. His data show that the VNeg order is mainly observed in languages in southeast Nepal and northeast India (most Bodo-Garo, Tani, and Kuki-Chin languages), while the NegV order is more dominant in the other areas. His data contain an example from Bodo of VNeg order, as in (1).

(1) ^{2}aŋ-^{1}ō ^{2}ga^{2}mi-^{3}aw ^{1}thaŋ-^{0}a
1SG-SUBJDEF village-LOC go-NEG.NONPAST

'I do not go to the village.' (Bhattacharya 1977: 191)

In Bodo, the negative marker in (1) is -*a*, which is a suffix.

Many Tibeto-Burman languages have a cognate negative morpheme with bilabial nasal consonant onset, **ma*. However, the Bodo languages do not have such negative morphemes. I will illustrate this point by taking up a Bodo language spoken in Nepal, called Meche. I will extensively discuss certain morpho-syntactic patterns of negation observed in Meche, including the negation patterns in main clauses and subordinate clauses. Meche also has a negative existential verb.

Section 2 provides a brief outline of this language. Section 3 discusses the negation patterns in matrix clauses, and Section 4 discusses those in subordinate clauses. In Section 5, the possible origin of one of the negative suffixes is discussed. Finally, Section 6 concludes the paper.

2. A brief introduction to the Meche language

Meche is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the southeastern districts of Nepal, mainly in the Jhapa District.

Figure 1 A map of Nepal and the location of Meche settlements

Meches belong to the Bodo people from an ethnological point of view. Meche falls within the Bodo group of the Bodo-Garo branch among Tibeto-Burman languages. According to Joseph and Burling (2006: 1–2), the Bodo group has four sub-groups: a) Garo, b) Koch, Rabha, Wanang, Atong, and Ruga, c) Boro (Boro, Kokborok, Tiwa), and d) Deuri. "Boro" is used as a hyper-denomination of the subgroup and as the name of the language spoken in Assam. Meche is a close variety of Boro. Boro was once referred to as Kachari in the 19th century, but since the Boro people call themselves Boro, it is appropriate to use the self-designation as the name of the language. Likewise, "Meche" is an exonym, and Meches call themselves Boḍo [boɖo] in their language. It would be more appropriate to call the language "Bodo," but the Meches in Nepal prefer not to use their self-denomination and identify themselves as Meches in official documents. Thus, I maintain the name "Meche" for the people and the language. Based on this fact, J&B's Boro sub-group shall contain Boro-Mech, Kokborok, and Tiwa instead.

Boro-Mech consists of mutually intelligible dialects. Based on phonological and grammatical differences, Kiryu (2012) discusses two major dialectal groups, the western dialectal group, which consists of Meche and North Bengal Boro, and the eastern dialectal group consisting of Boro dialects spoken in Assam. This division is based on phonological and grammatical differences. For example, the Western varieties have the affricate consonant /c/ (transcribed as *ch*), while the Eastern varieties do not, and /c/ is replaced by /s/. For

example, the number ‘1’ in the Western varieties is /ce/. However, in Assam varieties, it is /se/. In the Western varieties, ‘to wash’ is /cu/ and ‘to stab’ is /su/, but the two words are rendered in the Eastern varieties as /su/ although they are different in tone.

The phonemes in Meche are simple.[1] There are six vowels, /ə, a, i, u, e, o/ and diphthongs /əi, əu, ai, au, iu, eu/.

Meche has the following inventory of consonants:

p	t			k	
b	d			g	
m	n			ŋ	
		s [s/ɕ]			h
		j [z/ʑ]			
		c [ts/tɕ]			
w	l r [ɾ]		y [j]		

Stops have no contrast in terms of aspiration. The voiceless stops /p/, /t/, /k/ (transcribed as *ph, th, kh* respectively) are aspirated in syllable-initial position. The velar nasal appears only in the coda position. The consonants /c/, /j/, and /s/ are palatalized when followed by the vowels /i/ and /e/.

From a typological perspective, Meche shows an agglutinative morphology except for TAM verbal suffixes, which are fusional. The word orders in this language are SV, AVO, AN/NA, GN, and RelN. It also has a rich system of numeral classifiers, in which the classifier precedes the number (ClfNum).

3. Negation in predicate clauses

3.1 Declarative clauses

In Meche, negation is marked by suffixes of verbs. The negation strategy is asymmetric in terms of the affirmative/negative dichotomy. Unlike other Tibeto-Burman languages, Meche does not have a simple negative marker. All the negative markers, except the pro-

[1] Boro is often said to be a tonal language with high and low tones. Although I have not yet performed any acoustic analyses, it seems that the tonal distinction is not simply a matter of the pitch of a tone-bearing unit; a high tone is either associated with a glottal stop or a high pitch on the syllable of the following element. For example, in the cases of *ja*^{H} ‘eat’ and *ja*^{L} ‘become’. When the high-tone word is pronounced alone, /ja/ is accompanied by a glottal check, as in /jaʔ/, while the low-tone word shows no glottal check. When followed by a TAM suffix, for example, -*bai* (a perfect marker), no glottal feature occurs on the high-tone word, but a high pitch is marked on the suffix, as in /ja^{33}-bai^{44}/. Conversely, the pitch falls sharply in the case of the low-tone counterpart, as in /ja^{33}-bai^{11}/. Meche shows the same pattern for high-tone words, but low tone words show no sharp pitch falling on the suffix, as in /ja^{33}-bai^{33}/. This difference in tonal quality gives a clear impression that the two languages Boro and Meche sound different.

hibitive marker (see Section 3.4), are suffixes. The cognate negative prefix with the onset consonant bilabial nasal /m/ is found in many TB languages, but Meche has no negative affix with this consonant.

Table 1 shows the paradigm of the finite verbal suffixes in terms of affirmative and negative clauses.

Table 1 Finite verbal suffixes

	Affirmative	Negative
Habitual	-ə	-a
Future	-nai	-a
Past	-aʔ	-yi
Recent past/Perfect	-bai	-akhəi
Continuous/Perfect	-dəŋ	-akhəi

The negative suffixes *-ə*, *-a*, *-yi*, and *-akhəi* take an epenthetic consonant when they are attached to the verb, depending on the preceding phoneme, as in (2).

(2) a. -ya: after front vowels /a/, /i/, /e/ — jaʔ-ya — 'do not eat'
b. -ŋa: after velar consonants /k/, /g/, /ŋ/ — ləŋ-ŋa — 'do not drink'
c. -ma: after bilabial consonants /p/, /b/, /m/ — gum-ma — 'do not graze'
d. -na: after dental consonants /t/, /d/, /n/ — dən-na — 'do not put'
e. otherwise no epenthetic consonant is inserted

In matrix clauses, verbs inflect for tense, aspect, and modality in both affirmative and negative clauses. The inflectional suffixes are fusional, including tense, aspect, modality, and negation. As shown in Table 1, there are five different suffixes in the affirmative series, while there are three suffixes in the negative series. The temporal distinction between habitual and future is not observed in the negative, and there are two types of affirmative perfect suffixes with only one negative counterpart.

The affirmative habitual suffix *-ə* corresponds to *-a* in the negative clause, as in (4).

(3) bodo = a — oma? — bidod — jaʔ-yə.
Meches=NOM — pig — meat — eat-HAB

'Meches eat pork.'

(4) bodo = a — məsəu — bidod — jaʔ-ya.
Meches=NOM — cow — meat — eat-NEG.NPST

'Meches do not eat beef.'

Future situations are marked by the suffix *-nai*, and its negation is marked by the same suffix as the habitual negative, *-a*.

(5) “nəŋ gabən thaŋʔ-nai?” “əhə, aŋ thaŋʔ-a.”
2SG tomorrow go-FUT No 1SG go-NPST.NEG

“Are you leaving tomorrow?” “No, I’m not leaving.”

The tense distinction is dissolved between habitual (or present) and future. Thus, the negative suffix is considered to be non-past in terms of the tense.

Past situations are marked by *-aʔ* for affirmative and *-yi* for negative. They are often followed by the temporal remoteness marker, *mən*.

(6) dakhali aŋ hathai=au thaŋʔ-aʔ mən.
the.other.day 1SG market=LOC go-PST TRMT

‘The other day I went to the market.’

(7) dakhali aŋ hathai=au thaŋʔ-yi mən.
the.other.day 1SG market=LOC go-PST.NEG TRMT

‘The other day I didn’t go to the market.’

Past situations, especially the recent past, can be marked by the suffix *-bai*. The negation of the *-bai* verb corresponds to the verb with *-akhəi*.

(8) nəŋ əŋkham jaʔ-bai na jaʔ-akhəi?
2SG cooked.rice eat-PFCT or eat-NEG.PFCT

‘Did you eat rice or not?’ (FT: ‘Have you eaten yet?’)

Etymologically, the negative suffix *-akhəi* can be considered a combination of the non-past negative suffix *-a* plus *khəi*, whose meaning is unclear.

Progressive situations are marked by the continuous aspect marker *-dəŋ*. The corresponding negation marker is *-akhəi*.

(9) nəŋ=neu hai nokha ha-dəŋ na ha-akhəi?
2SG=GEN.LOC toward rain fall-CONT or fall-NEG.PFCT

‘Is it raining or not in your place?’

Meche has an equational copular verb *əŋ*. In affirmative contexts, noun predicate clauses are

often a simple juxtaposition of the subject NP and the predicate NP without the copula, unless emphasis or a modality sense is involved. When negated, the copular verb is also required.

(10) be rentha=ni noʔ.
this Rentha=GEN house

'This is Rentha's house.'

(11) be rentha=ni noʔ əŋ-thar.
this Rentha=GEN house COP-definitely

'This is definitely Rentha's house.'

(12) be rentha=ni noʔ əŋ=daŋ.
this Rentha=GEN house COP=maybe

'This might be Rentha's house.'

(13) be rentha=ni noʔ əŋ-a.
this Rentha=GEN house COP-NEG.NPST

'This is not Rentha's house.'

The negative suffix follows a modality suffix and precedes a modality clitic.

(14) be rentha=ni noʔ əŋ-thar-a.
this Rentha=GEN house COP-definitely-NEG.NPST

'This is definitely not Rentha's house.'

(15) be rentha=ni noʔ əŋ-a=daŋ.
this Rentha=GEN house COP-NEG.NPST=maybe

'This may not be Rentha's house.'

The copular verb can take the non-past negative suffix *-a* and the past negative suffix *-yi*, but it does not take the suffix *-akhəi*. This is because the copular clause is free from aspectual distinctions.

(16) rentha=ya roja əŋ-yi=mən, da roja kha.
Rentha=NOM sherman COP-NEG.PST=TRMT now sherman really

'Rentha was not a sherman, but now he IS a sherman.'

In Meche, the adjectival predicate clause also does not need a copula in affirmative contexts. Like the noun predicate clause, it requires the copular verb in negation.

(17) mia gusu mən, dənəi gusu əŋ-a.
yesterday cold TRMT today cold COP-NEG.NPST

'It was cold yesterday, but it's not cold today.'

3.2 The negation of future events

One interesting strategy in negation is the use of the negative copula *əŋ-a*. The negative copula can be added to the sentence-final position to give it a sense of 'It is not that'.

(18) bi lum ja-nanəi phəi-yi əŋ-a, ba-nanəi phəi-yi.
3SG fever happen-CP come-NEG.PST COP-NEG.NPST be.bored-CP come-NEG.PST

'It was not that he didn't come because he had a fever, but that he didn't come because he was bored.'

When it is attached to the future marker *-nai*, it expresses a similar meaning.

(19) bi mia thaŋʔ-nai əŋ-a mən, theu bi thaŋʔ-dəŋ.
3SG yesterday go-FUT COP-NEG.NPST TRMT but 3SG go-PFCT

'It was not that he would go, but he has gone.'

However, the *-nai* plus *əŋ-a* complex is reanalyzed as a single future negation marker and phonologically reduced to *neŋa*. This phonologically reduced form is used only for clauses with a third-person subject with a slight emphatic overtone.

(20) əhə, isa ha-neŋa
no that.way be.possible-NEG.NPST

'It is NOT possible that way.'

The suffix *-nai* was originally a nominalizer. In the pattern *-nai* plus *əŋ-a*, it is often understood as a future event, but when a different temporal interpretation is forced by an overt temporal expression, the *-nai* suffix is simply understood as a nominalizer, becoming atemporal itself. The tense interpretation depends on the overt temporal expression. In the following example, the temporal adverbial *da* 'now' forces the interpretation of the nominalized verb *mau-nai* 'working' as a present progressive situation.

(21) da bi haba mau-nai əŋ-a, unduglaŋ-dəŋ.
now 3SG work move-NMLZR COP-NEG.NPST take.nap-CONT

'He isn't working now, but he's taking a nap.'

This temporal coercion does not occur when the reduced-form *neŋa* is used. In (22), the adverbial *da* is reinterpreted as near future.

(22) da bi thaŋʔ-neŋa.
little.later 3SG go-NEG.FUT

'He's NOT going a little later.'

3.3 The existential verb

Meche has an affirmative existential verb *doŋ*. This verb does not take any of the negative suffixes in Table 1, but the negative existence is expressed by the negative verb *gəi*. The negative verb takes only the non-past and past negative markers. Here are some examples.

(23) bi=ne hahu doŋ, aŋ=ne hahu gəi-ya.
3SG=GEN land exist.NPST 1SG=GEN land not.exist-NPST

'He has land, but I don't have land.'

In (23), the affirmative existential verb *doŋ* does not take any TAM suffixes, but the negative existential verb *gəi* takes tense suffixes.

(24) expresses a habitual situation. In this case, the negative existential takes the non-past negative suffix and the marker *mən*, indicating temporal remoteness.

(24) sigaŋ=au bəŋdəŋ-phra gəi-ya mən.
before=LOC Parbate.Hindu-PL.NOM not.exist-NEG.PST TRMT

'A long ago, there were no Parbate Hindus.'

Compare this with (25), a case of a particular past situation.

(25) mia bahan bi gəi-yi mən.
yesterday here 3SG not.exist-PST TRMT

'He was not here yesterday.'

3.4 Imperative clauses

Imperative clauses in Meche involve the stem form of verbs. The negative imperative, or

prohibitive, is expressed by adding the prohibitive prefix *da-* to the verb.

(26) əŋkham ja?.
cooked.rice eat.IMP

'Eat the rice.'

(27) əŋkham da-ja?.
cooked.rice PROH-eat.IMP

'Don't eat the rice.'

This was the only negative prefix in Meche. The prohibitive prefix is a clear cognate with the PTB-negative imperative **da/*ta* (Matisoff 2003).

3.5 Change of situation into a negative state

Meche has two markers that indicate situational changes (Kiryu 2008). One is *=chəi,* and the other is the negative suffix *-le*.

The clitic *=chəi* can be attached to any type of sentence, denoting that the situation described is new.

(28) aŋ bə thaŋ?-nai.
1SG too go-FUT

'I'm going too.'

(29) aŋ bə thaŋ?-nai=chəi.
1SG too go-FUT-CS

'I'll go too.' (Implying that I won't stay anymore.)

In the past, *=chəi* is attached to *-akhəi*, and as a whole, it is pronounced *-akhəchəi*. It carries the sense 'after all', implying that the expected situation has not been attained.

(30) mia rentha=ya phəi-akhə=chəi.
yesterday Rentha=NOM come-NEG.PFCT-CS

'Rentha didn't come after all.'

For non-past situations, *=chəi* is not attached to the negation marker; rather, Meche has an independent non-past negative marker for situational change, *-le*, which carries the sense 'anymore'.

(31) aŋ bi=khəu ham ja-le.
1SG that=ACC affection become-NEG.NPST.CS

'I don't like that anymore.'

(32) da thə-bai. aŋ laʔ-le.
now be.enough-PFCT 1SG take-NEG.NPST.CS

'I've had enough. I won't take (refill of rice) anymore.'

The existential verb *doŋ* does not take -*le*, but the negative existential verb *gəi* does.

(33) da aŋ=ha phəisa gəi-le.
now 1SG=COM money not.exist-ANYMORE.NPST

'I don't have money anymore.'

4. Negation in subordinate constructions

The negation patterns in subordinate clauses are slightly different from negation in matrix clauses. Despite having the same suffixes, not all are employed. There are at least two types of subordination in Meche: nominalized clauses and adverbial clauses.

4.1 Nominalized constructions

Meche has two grammatical nominalizers: -*gra* and -*nai*. The nominalizer -*gra* corresponds to the habitual suffix in the matrix clause, and the nominalizer -*nai* corresponds to everything else.[2]

[2] Shibatani (2017, 2018) discusses two types of nominalization and two functions. One type of nominalization is "argument nominalization," wherein an argument of an event is denoted. The other type of nominalization is "event nominalization," where an event itself is denoted. Shibatani considers nominalization a grammatical process that metonymically evokes a denotation closely associated with the nominalized structure. Shibatani further argues that the nominalization structure has two functions: an NP-use, traditionally understood as a complement clause, and a modification-use, traditionally understood as a noun complement clause and a relative clause. In this paper, I adopt this approach to nominalization and do not use the term "relative clauses." Further, Shibatani does not consider "nominalized clauses" to be clauses because the function of a clause is predication, whereas the function of a nominalization structure is denotation. He defines "clause" in terms of its function rather than its internal structure. His approach has a significant advantage in explaining under a single concept of nominalization a wide range of phenomena that are traditionally discussed as different grammatical constructions and those that are not effectively treated, such as Japanese noun-modifying constructions that cannot be understood as relative clauses. See Shibatani's works for details.

(34) thaŋkhu chəb-mə.
tobacco suck-HAB

'[He] smokes tobacco.'

(35) thaŋkhu chəb-gra (mansi)
tobacco suck-NMLZR (man)

'the one who smokes' or 'smoker'

(36) aŋ = khəu goga mən-bai.
1SG=ACC cold befall-PFCT

'I've got a cold.'

(37) aŋ = khəu [goga mən-nai] = ya sajai-bai.
1SG=ACC cold befall-NMLZR=NOM bother-PFCT

'It bothers me that I've got a cold.'

In the nominalized structures, the tense distinction disappears. The distinction implied by the two nominalizers is that of individual vs. stage-level situations. The nominalizer *-gra* signifies an individual-level situation, while the nominalizer *-nai* signifies a stage-level situation, as in (35) and (37).

When it comes to negation, even this distinction is dismissed, and only the negative nominalizing suffix *-yi* is used. This suffix is obviously cognate with the past negative suffix.

(38) bi mansi = ya thaŋkhu chəb-ma.
that person=NOM tobacco suck-NEG.NPST

'That person does not smoke tobacco.'

(39) [thaŋkhu chəb-myi (mansi)] = ya bi nə.
tobacco suck-NEG.NMLZR (man) =NOM that FOC

'The man/one who does/did not smoke tobacco is that one.'

4.2 Adverbial constructions

Meche has several adverbial constructions. Adverbial constructions are clause-like structures that modify the matrix predicate, expressing reasons, temporal relations, etc. In these constructions, nominalized structures are mainly used, especially when the sense of nega-

tion is expressed. Some examples are illustrated in the following.

4.2.1 Reasons

Reasons are expressed by the *(=ni) gunin* construction, which takes a verb nominalized by *-nai* or *-yi*.

(40) gabaŋin haba ja-nai = ni gunin bi olmol = au gəgləi-bai.
much task happen-NMLZR=GEN reason.EMP 3SG stall=LOC fall-PFCT

'He got stuck up because a lot of tasks occurred to him.'

(41) rentha phəi-yi gunin renthi = ya bərab-dəŋ.
Rentha come-NEG.NMLZR reason.EMP Renthi=NOM be.angry-CONT

'Since Rentha didn't come, Renthi is angry.'

Another expression for reason is the *khai* construction.

(42) jəŋ = ne bisa gəi-yi khai jəŋ chintha tha-dəŋ.
1PL=GEN child not.exist-NEG.NMLZR sake 1PL sorrow stay-CONT

'Since we don't have any children, we are in a sorrow.'

4.2.2 Conditional and Temporal

In Meche, conditional and temporal adverbial constructions are marked by *=bla* or *=la*. In affirmative clauses, the verb may take a finite suffix, but it is optional. When it is negated, finite negative markers are used.

(43) bi thaŋʔ-(nai) = bla aŋ bə thaŋʔ-nai
3SG go-(FUT)=if 1SG too go-FUT

'If he goes, I will go, too.'

(44) bi thaŋʔ-a = bla aŋ thaŋʔ-nai.
3SG go-NEG.NPST=when/if 1SG go-FUT

'If he does not go, I will go.'

4.2.3 Other Temporals

There are several temporal expressions. The *ja-che* and *mani* expressions indicate a simultaneous situation.

(45) nokha ha-yi ja-che jəŋ gele-ni.
rain fall-NEG.NMLZR happen-CONV 1PL play-HOR

'Let's play while it does not rain.'

(46) bi əŋkham jaʔ-yi mani phuŋ=niphra hor=sim phərai-yaʔ.
3SG cooked.rice eat-NEG.NMLZR while morning=from night=until study-PST

'He studied from morning till night without eating.'

5. A possible origin of the negative suffix

The historical origin of the negative suffixes is highly unclear in Meche and Boro. Unlike other Tibeto-Burman languages, which share reflexes of the PTB negative markers, Meche does not except for the prohibitive prefix *da-*. From a synchronic point of view, many TB languages in northeast India often have negative suffixes cognate with the PTB negative marker. However, Bodo-Garo languages do not. Wood (2008) discusses negative suffixes in Bodo-Garo languages, as shown in the following table.

Table 2 PBG Negative Suffix (Wood 2008: 85)

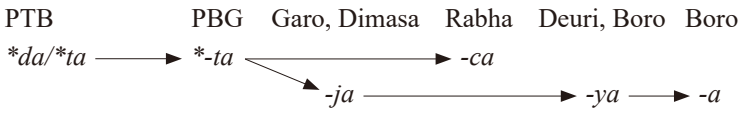
Garo	Bodo	Rabha	Deuri	Dimasa	*PBG
-ja	-a ~ -ya ~ -wa	-ca	-ya	-ja	-*ya

He reconstructs -**ya* as the negative suffix in the Proto-Bodo-Garo language, which also lacks bilabial consonants. This reconstruction shows the possibility that Bodo-Garo languages had already lost the PTB negative **ma* at the proto-language stage. The origin of the reconstructed -**ya* is unclear.

One interesting piece of data comes from the Tani languages spoken in the state adjacent to Assam. Post (2015: 441) illustrates the Tani negation markers. The regular verbal negation marker in Tani is *maa*, which is a clear cognate of the PTB negative marker. Contrariwise, the prohibitive marker *-jóo* does not seem to be cognate with the PTB prohibitive, **da/*ta* (Matisoff 2003: 660). However, it is phonologically very similar to the Garo and Dimasa negative suffix *-ja*. If **da/*ta* was weakened phonologically and changed to *joo*, this would be a case of lenition. If this is the case, one possible source of the Bodo-Garo negative suffix would be lenition of the prohibitive marker **da/*ta* (Matisoff 2003: 586), rather than fortition, as suggested by Wood (2008). This is just a mere possibility without further evidence. Nonetheless, if so, the PTB prohibitive marker was employed as a regular negation marker instead of the **ma*-related negation marker in PBG. Wood reconstructed the PBG prohibitive as **ta-*. A possible change would be, as in (47), that **ta* underwent lenition and became **ca*, which is retained in Rabha, that it changed into **ja* in

Garo and Dimasa, and further changed into -*ya* in Boro and Deuri, and that -*ya* in Bodo has gone further in phonological reduction, resulting in the consonant /y/ being retained in a certain environment but not in other environments.

(47)



6. Conclusion

This study discusses the negation structure of Meche. The sense of negation is expressed on the verb. The negation suffixes are asymmetrical and fused into a single morpheme with tense-aspect senses. Meche also has a PTB cognate negative imperative prefix. I have also illustrated the negation patterns in subordination structures. In subordination, whether affirmative or negative, the nominalization structure comes into play. Although the historical origin of the negative suffix is yet to be clarified, one possible scenario has been presented based on the internal data from Boro-Garo and external data from Tani.

Abbreviations

ACC	accusative	LOC	locative
CONT	continuous	NEG	negation
CONV	converbial	NMLZR	nominalizer
COP	copula	NOM	nominative
CP	conjunctive participle	NPST	non-past
CS	change of situation	PFCT	perfect
EMP	emphatic	PL	plural
FT	free translation	PST	past
HAB	habitual	SG	singular
HOR	hortative	TRMT	temporal remoteness

References

Bhattacharya, Pramod Chandra

1977 *A Descriptive Analysis of the Boro Language*. Gauhati, Assam: Department of Publication, Gauhati University.

Dryer, Matthew S.

2008 Word order in Tibeto-Burman languages, *Linguistics of Tibeto-Burman Area* 31.1: 1–83.

Joseph, U. V. and Robbins Burling

2006 *The Comparative Phonology of the Boro-Garo Languages*. Mysore: Central Institute of Indian Languages.

Kiryu, Kazuyiki（桐生和幸）

2008 An outline of the Meche language—a Grammar, Text and Vocabulary. Report for 2007 Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (No. 17720093) granted by the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture, Tsuyama: Mimasaka University.

2012 Western Boro dialects in Nepal and Northern West Bengal. 『美作大学・美作大学短期大学部紀要』57: 9–18.

Shibatani, Masayoshi（柴谷方良）

2017 Nominalization. Chapter 8. In Masayoshi Shibatani, Shigeru Miyagawa, and Hisashi Noda (eds.) *Handbook of Japanese Syntax*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter: 217–332.

2018 Nominalization in crosslinguistic perspective. In Prashant Pardeshi and Taro Kageyama (eds.) *Handbook of Japanese Contrastive Linguistics*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter: 345–410.

Matisoff, James A.

2003 *Handbook of Proto-Tibeto-Burman: System and Philosophy of Sino-Tibetan Reconstruction*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Post, Mark

2015 Sino-Tibetan Negation and the Case of Galo: Explaining a Distributional Oddity in Diachronic Terms. *Language and Linguistics* 16.3: 431–464.

Wood, Daniel Cody

2008 An Initial Reconstruction of Proto-Boro-Garo. MA thesis, the University of Oregon.