RELATIVE CLAUSES IN XONG (MIAO-YAO)

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Abstract
This paper provides an overview of relative clause constructions in Xong (Miao-Yao). Xong features an unusual number of distinct relative clause types, including some that obligatorily precede their head noun, others that obligatorily follow it, and still others that occur in either position. They occur with zero, one, or two relative clause markers. These formal variations are often accompanied by varying restrictions on possible roles of the head noun. Typologically rare aspects of Xong relative clauses – including pre-head relative clauses in a VO language, and pre-head relative clauses marked with an initial relativizing particle – are also discussed.
Key words: Xong; Xiangxi Miao; Miao-Yao; Hmong-Mien; relative clause.
ISO 639–3 language codes: mmr, muq, dju, mww, cmn, hmd, hea, jpn, tha, vie, lao, khm, yue, hak, bca, ami, hin, wbp

1. Introduction

The primary aim of this paper is to provide a preliminary description of relative clause constructions in Xong ([ɕõ]), a Miao-Yao (Hmong-Mien) language of south-central China with close to a million speakers. Xong features an unusually large number of distinct relative clause types, at least in comparison with many other isolating languages of southern China and Southeast Asia (cf. Yue-Hashimoto 1993: 227–253; Yaowapat and Prasithrathsint 2008). Some Xong relative clause constructions obligatorily precede their head noun, others obligatorily follow it, and still others can occur in either position. They may occur with zero, one, or two relative clause markers. These positional and formal variations are often accompanied by varying restrictions on the role of the head noun within the relative clause as well. (For the purposes of this paper, a relative clause is any subordinate clause which has a noun as its semantic head and which serves to restrict the reference of that noun. Strictly speaking this definition excludes "headless" constructions which formally resemble relative clauses but lack a head noun, though some such constructions are still discussed in sections 3.3 and 4.2 for the sake of completeness.)

While the sheer diversity of relative clause structures in Xong is noteworthy in and of itself, some of these structures are especially interesting due to the crosslinguistically unusual properties they display. For instance, pre-head relative clauses are exceedingly rare in VO languages outside of Sinitic (Comrie 2008, Dryer 2011). However, a number of Xong relative clause types are either optionally or obligatorily pre-head, despite the fact that Xong is both non-Sinitic and VO (of course, Sinitic influence may well have played a role in the development of these typologically unusual relative clauses; see section 6 for discussion). Furthermore, some Xong relative clause types occur with initial relative clause markers, even though these particular relative clauses either can or must occur in pre-head position (see sections 3.1 and 3.2). Pre-head relative clauses with initial markers are extremely rare; the only other cases known to the author are found in certain Semitic languages spoken in Ethiopia (Tosco 1998) and in Sare, a Sepik language of New Guinea (Matthew Dryer p.c. 2012; see also section 6).

It is worth noting that this paper is the first English-language publication to deal primarily with Xong, although the language has been the subject of numerous studies by Chinese scholars (see section 2). It is also one of the few publications to focus on relative clauses in a Miao-Yao language; the only others known to the author are Riddle (1993) and (1994), both of which deal solely with Hmong. The data presented in this paper may thus be of particular interest to scholars specializing in the Miao-Yao family, as well as to those interested in linguistic typology more generally.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 presents background information on Xong and describes the sources and presentation of the data found in subsequent sections. Sections 3 and 4 describe marked relative clauses, each named according to their marker: *max* and *naond/nangd*. Section 3

first surveys the various types of '*max* relative clause' found in the language, among which are the pre-head relative clauses with initial markers mentioned above. Section 4 then discusses '*naond/nangd* relative clauses,' which greatly resemble Sinitic (especially Mandarin) relative clauses in both function and structure. Section 5 describes 'unmarked relative clauses,' or those relative clauses which contain no overt marker of their relative clause status. Section 6 concludes the paper with a summary of Xong relative clause types and a discussion of some of their typologically significant properties.

2. Background

Xong clearly belongs to the Miao branch of the Miao-Yao family, although its exact position within the branch is still not entirely certain.[1] The vast majority of the language's 900,000-plus speakers live in a mountainous, more or less geographically contiguous area that straddles the Hunan-Guizhou border in southern China (Yang 2004: 1–3). In the author's experience, most Xong speakers refer to their own language as 'Xong,' and this paper follows their example.

The reader should be aware that the terms 'Xiangxi Miao' (lit. 'West Hunan Miao') and 'Northern Miao,' which are synonymous with each other, are sometimes conflated with Xong in the English-language literature. However, strictly speaking Xiangxi/Northern Miao encompasses several closely related but mutually unintelligible Miao varieties (Yang 2004: 42) that are perhaps best considered independent languages. Thus, in this paper, the terms 'Xong' and 'Xiangxi Miao' are *not* equivalent; rather, 'Xong' refers to a particular Xiangxi Miao language (i.e. a particular set of mutually intelligible Xiangxi Miao dialects). 'Xong' in this narrow sense corresponds to what both Yang (2004) and the Ethnologue refer to as 'Western Xiangxi Miao' (ISO 639–3 code *mmr*), while the other Xiangxi Miao languages are collectively referred to as 'Eastern Xiangxi Miao' (ISO 639–3 code *muq*) in both of these sources.

Much of the data in this paper are taken from one of three sources: Xiang (1999), Yang (2004), and Luo (2005). Xiang (1999) is a description of the variety of Xong spoken in the village of Jiwei in western Hunan. Yang (2004) is a dialectal survey of the entire Xiangxi Miao-speaking region, covering both Xong and other Xiangxi Miao languages. All examples that cite Yang (2004) as their source have been taken from the brief Jiwei Xong text found in the book. Finally, Luo (2005) describes the Xong variety spoken in Songtao County in eastern Guizhou.[2]

The following sections also contain a number of examples taken from the author's fieldnotes. The author spent a month in the summer of 2010 performing fieldwork in Aikan, a village of about 700 people located in Fenghuang County in western Hunan.[3] Xong is the first language of all but a handful of Aikan's inhabitants, and Aikan Xong is reported to be mutually intelligible with both Jiwei and Songtao Xong. The author is not aware of any publications that discuss Aikan Xong in particular, but He (2009) contains phonological and lexical information on certain other varieties of Xong spoken in Fenghuang County.

Regardless of their origin, all Xong examples below are given in a Latin-based practical orthography. In the case of examples from published sources, this is simply the standard Xong orthography used in Xong-language publications, which was developed based on the Jiwei variety of Xong in the 1950s (Yang 2004: 22). The phonological systems of Jiwei Xong and Songtao Xong are similar enough that the same orthography can be used to represent both with relatively little difficulty. However, there are significant phonological differences between those two varieties and the variety of Xong spoken in Aikan. These differences make the standard orthography a very poor fit for Aikan Xong, and so all examples taken from fieldnotes are presented in a modified orthography developed by the author.[4]

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[1] While the details are too complex to go into here, the received view in the Chinese literature is that several of the most well-known Miao languages with the largest speaker populations – including Xong as well as Hmong, Ahmao, and Hmu – are all relatively closely related to each other within the Miao branch of Miao-Yao. This view can be seen in, for instance, Chen (1998: 154) and Mao and Li (2007: 233). However, there is a fair amount of evidence to suggest that Xong may in fact have been one of the very first languages to split off from the main stock of Miao, meaning that Xong would then be only very distantly related to these other Miao languages within the branch (Martha Ratliff p.c. 2010; see also Ratliff 2010: 24, 25, 122, 130).

[2] Shortly after submitting the first draft of this paper, the author became aware of the publication of Yu (2011), a reference grammar (written in Chinese) of the Xong variety spoken in Aizhai Town in western Hunan. Yu devotes relatively little attention to Xong relative clauses, and her analyses of them do not differ significantly from those presented in previous studies of Xong like Xiang (1999), Yang (2004), and Luo (2005). Because of this, no examples from Yu (2011) have been included in this paper, although readers interested in other aspects of Xong grammar are certainly encouraged to consult Yu's book.

[3] This fieldwork was supported in part by a summer research grant from the Linguistics Department of the University at Buffalo, which the author hereby gratefully acknowledges.

[4] In both orthographies, tones are represented by letters appended to the end of each syllable. The seven tones of Aikan Xong are represented with *-b* (modal low falling), *-x* (high falling), *-d* (mid falling), *-l* (breathy low falling), *-t* (high rising-falling), *-s* (low level), and *-k* (low rising). The six tones of Jiwei and Songtao Xong are represented with *-b*, *-x*, *-d*, *-l*, *-t*, and *-s* (the *-k* and *-d* tones have merged in these two varieties). For information

In gross typological terms, Xong is a typical example of a southern Chinese or mainland Southeast Asian language (see Enfield 2005). Most varieties of Xong have very large consonant and vowel inventories, as well as six or seven contrastive tones (the exact number varies depending on the variety). Xong morphology is highly isolating, with a near 1:1 ratio between morphemes and syllables, no inflectional morphology, and little derivational morphology, although compounding is fairly productive.

Nouns in Xong are not obligatorily marked for any grammatical categories (number, gender, definiteness, etc.), although they are often preceded by a numeral-classifier phrase of the type familiar to scholars of East and Southeast Asian languages. Possessors precede their possessed nouns, while demonstratives occur NP-finally. Semantic adjectives (e.g. *liox* 'big,' *nqint/nqit* 'red,' *nzod* 'early') are a subclass of verbs in Xong; these follow their head nouns when serving an attributive function, although it will be argued in section 5 that such attributive adjectives are perhaps best analyzed as a type of relative clause.

By far the most common constituent orders in Xong clauses are SVO, VO, and SV, although VS order is often seen with adjectival verbs and verbs of appearance or arrival. Like nouns, Xong verbs are not obligatorily marked for any grammatical categories, including TAM. Verb serialization is extremely common and serves a wide variety of functions. Ellipsis of contextually retrievable arguments and topicalization (i.e. left dislocation) are widespread.

3. *Max* relative clauses

3.1. Overview

Two types of Xong relative clause are collectively referred to as '*max* relative clauses,' as each of them is obligatorily preceded (never followed) by the invariant relative clause marker *max*. These two relative clause constructions have a number of additional grammatical properties in common, but they can be distinguished from one another by restrictions on their position relative to the head noun and by the presence or absence of additional relative clause markers.

In the first type of *max* relative clause, the particle *max* itself is the only overt marker of relative clause status. Accordingly, these are referred to as '*max*-only relative clauses.' Relative clauses of this type can appear either before or after their head nouns. The term 'pre-head *max*-only relative clause' is used when it is necessary to refer specifically to those *max*-only relative clauses that happen to appear before their head nouns; similarly, the term 'post-head *max*-only relative clause' is used to refer specifically to those that follow their head nouns.

Examples of pre-head *max*-only relative clauses can be found in (1–3). Note that in these and all other examples, each relative clause has been enclosed within brackets.[5]

(1)　　*Wud　nis　　[max rut]　　nex.*
　　　　3SG　COP　[REL good] person
　　　　'He's a good person.' (Xiang 1999: 102)

(2)　　*[max beut.ngguaib]　　　dab-yul*
　　　　[REL sleep]　　　　　　AN-cow
　　　　'the cow that's sleeping' (fieldnotes)

(3)　　*[max nonx hlit]　　　　miex*
　　　　[REL eat　　cooked.rice] person
　　　　'the person who's eating rice' (fieldnotes)

Examples of post-head *max*-only relative clauses are found in (4–6).

5　　The following glossing conventions are used in this paper: 1/2/3SG = first/second/third-person singular pronoun; 1PL = first-person plural pronoun; AN = animal prefix; ASSOC = associative marker; CLS = the generic numeral classifier *leb*; CLS:X = numeral classifier for X; COP = copula; DIM = diminutive prefix; FRT = prefix used with nouns referring to fruits and other small and/or round objects; ML = male prefix; NEG = negative marker; NOM = nominalizing prefix *or* general (i.e. most semantically underspecified) nominal prefix; PFV = perfective marker; PN = proper name; REL = relative clause marker.

(4) *ndeud [max ghueub]*
     paper [REL white]
     'white paper' (Xiang 1999: 76)

(5) *Miex   [max mex bib] wel   yanb.*
     person   [REL exist hair] 1SG   like
     'I like people who have hair.' (i.e. who are not bald) (fieldnotes)

(6) *dab-yul   [max nonx ob-ncoud]*
     AN-cow   [REL eat   NOM-grass]
     'the cow that's eating grass' (fieldnotes)

The second type of *max* relative clause is the '*max-naond/nangd* relative clause.' Like *max*-only relative clauses, these *max-naond/nangd* relative clauses are obligatorily preceded by *max*. However, they differ from *max*-only relative clauses in two respects. First, *max-naond/nangd* relative clauses only occur preceding (never following) their head nouns. Second, they are followed by an additional invariant marker, which has the form *naond* in Aikan Xong and *nangd* in Jiwei and Songtao Xong.
     Examples of *max-naond/nangd* relative clauses can be seen in (7–9).

(7) *[max liox   naond]   bioud*
     [REL big   ASSOC]   home
     'a big home' (fieldnotes)

(8) *[Max nqit   nangd]   eud   rut   yangs.*
     [REL red   ASSOC]   clothing   good appearance
     'Red clothing looks nice.' (Xiang 1999: 102)

(9) *[max nonx niax   naond]   dab-yul*
     [REL eat   meat ASSOC]   AN-cow
     'a meat-eating cow' (fieldnotes)

It so far appears to be the case that any example of any type of *max* relative clause – whether pre-head *max*-only, post-head *max*-only, or *max-naond/nangd* – can be rephrased as any other type of *max* relative clause with no discernible change in meaning or pragmatics. Thus, for instance, the pre-head *max*-only relative clause in example (3) (repeated as example (10) below) can be rephrased as a post-head *max*-only relative clause (as in example (11)) or as a *max-naond/nangd* relative clause (as in example (12)).

(10) *[max nonx hlit]   miex*
     [REL eat   cooked.rice] person
     'the person who's eating rice' (fieldnotes)

(11) *miex   [max nonx hlit]*
     person   [REL eat   cooked.rice]
     'the person who's eating rice' (fieldnotes)

(12) *[max nonx hlit   naond]   miex*
     [REL eat   cooked.rice ASSOC]   person
     'the person who's eating rice' (fieldnotes)

The same appears to be true for all other *max* relative clauses encountered so far. This naturally raises questions about whether the various types of *max* relative clause should be analyzed as two or three distinct constructions or as a single construction with variable form and flexible positioning. The approach taken in this paper is to refer to *max-naond/nangd* and *max*-only relative clauses as two distinct relative clause constructions since the former differ from the latter in terms of both formal marking (*max* and *naond/nangd*

vs. *max* alone) and positional restrictions (obligatorily pre-head vs. either pre-head or post-head). In contrast, pre-head and post-head *max*-only relative clauses differ from each other solely in terms of positioning (pre-head vs. post-head), and so they are referred to as subtypes of a single construction.

3.2. Common characteristics

Among the properties shared by all *max* relative clauses are the location of the head noun with respect to the relative clause (i.e. internal vs. external) and the location of the relative clause itself with respect to the main clause. As was seen above in examples (1–12), the head noun is always located externally to the relative clause rather than internally (but see section 3.3 for examples of headless constructions with *max*). Furthermore, the *max* relative clause as a whole will always occur embedded in its main clause rather than adjoined to it. This can be seen in examples (13) and (14) below, where *max* relative clauses occur clearly located inside their main clauses rather than in any adjoined right or left position.

(13) *Miex*   *[max hneb-hneb   hauk jud]*   *wel jix yanb.*
     person   [REL CLS:day-CLS:day drink alcohol]   1SG NEG like
     'I don't like people who drink alcohol every day.' (fieldnotes)

(14) *Beul nis   [max jix   hauk jud   jix   nonx hlit]   miex.*
     3SG COP [REL NEG drink alcohol   NEG eat   cooked.rice] person
     'He is a person who doesn't drink alcohol or eat rice.' (fieldnotes)

The role of the head noun within a *max* relative clause is always indicated by gapping, rather than by any relative or resumptive pronoun. In examples (15–17) below, the gaps "left behind" by the head nouns have been indicated.

(15) *[max Ø   nonx niax naond]   dab-yul*
     [REL   eat   meat ASSOC]   AN-cow
     'a meat-eating cow' (fieldnotes)

(16) *Miex   [max Ø   jix   mex bib] wel yanb.*
     person   [REL   NEG exist hair] 1SG like
     'I like bald people.' (fieldnotes) (cf. example (5) above)

(17) *Ad-bangd   deb.deb   goud-nhangs   mex ad-leb   [max Ø   big] child*
     one-CLS:group   child   place-inside   exist one-CLS   [REL   liox] deb.deb.
     'In the group of children there was one big child.' (Xiang 1999: 189)

Max itself is simply an invariant relative clause marker. It never serves as a marker of possession or clausal complementation, it never occurs as an independent nominal or pronominal form, and it never marks any grammatical properties of its head noun such as number, person, or grammatical role. The *naond/nangd* found in *max-naond/nangd* relative clauses is similar to *max* in that it never occurs as a nominal or pronominal form and does not mark any grammatical properties of its head noun. However, while *max* solely functions as a relative clause marker, *naond/nangd* is a more general associative marker that occurs in a very wide range of constructions, several of which are discussed in section 4.3 below.

It is perhaps worth mentioning here that Chinese scholars of Xong typically refer to *max* as a "nominalizing" particle or marker rather than as a relative clause marker (e.g. Xiang 1999: 75, 82; Yang 2004: 135). However, the discussion and examples provided by these scholars suggest that this is more indicative of a difference in terminology than in analysis.

Aside from the presence of the relative clause marker(s) and the gap left by the head noun, *max* relative clauses have the same grammatical structure as main clauses. There is no difference in verb finiteness, and none of the verbs in the relative clause bear any relativizing or nominalizing morphology. While *max* itself often appears immediately before a verb, examples (13), (14), and (16) demonstrate that it can occur immediately before non-verbal material as well. This clearly shows that *max* is serving to mark the relative clause as a whole, rather than any particular verb within it.

There are significant restrictions on the grammatical roles which the head noun of a *max* relative clause can have within the relative clause (see Keenan and Comrie 1977). Subjects can clearly be relativized

upon, as examples (1–17) above demonstrate. In contrast, examples (18–20) show that it is impossible to relativize upon direct objects.

(18) * *[max   dab-yul   nonx   naond]   ob-ncoud*
      [REL   AN-cow   eat   ASSOC]   NOM-grass
      (intended: 'the grass that the cow is eating') (fieldnotes)

(19) * *dab-yul   [max wel   nkhed]*
      AN-cow   [REL 1SG   see]
      (intended: 'the cow that I see') (fieldnotes)

(20) * *haink   [max wel   chauk]*
      chair   [REL 1SG   make]
      (intended: 'the chair that I made') (fieldnotes)

Attempts to elicit examples in which the head noun had the role of indirect object, oblique, or object of comparison were similarly unsuccessful. Somewhat surprisingly, though, it may be possible to relativize upon possessors. In examples (21–23), the head noun of each relative clause is (semantically, at least) the possessor of the sole noun found within that relative clause.

(21) *dab-yul   [max Ø   bid-deud   ndaux]*
      AN-cow   [REL   FRT-tail   long]
      'the cow whose tail is long' (fieldnotes)

(22) *[max Ø   bib   gueb] miex*
      [REL   hair   black]person
      'the person whose hair is black' (fieldnotes)

(23) *[Max Ø   bib   gueb naond]   miex   wel   yanb*
      [REL   hair   black ASSOC]   person   1SG   like
      [max Ø   bib   guainx   naond]   miex   wel   jix   yanb.
      [REL   hair   yellow   ASSOC]   person   1SG   NEG   like
      'I like people whose hair is black; I don't like people whose hair is yellow.' (fieldnotes)

Note that in examples (21–23) the gap left behind by each head noun has been marked for clarity. This gap is always immediately prior to the possessed noun, since possessors precede their possessed nouns in Xong (see section 4.3 for more on possession).

While it may simply be the case that *max* relative clauses only allow relativization upon subjects and possessors, there may also be an alternate explanation for examples (21–23): the sequences *bib gueb* [hair black], *bib guainx* [hair yellow], and *bid-deud ndaux* [FRT-tail long] may in fact be single-word compound predicates rather than multi-word subject-predicate sequences. This would mean that the noun *dab-yul* 'cow' in example (21) would not be the *possessor* of the noun *bid-deud* 'tail,' with *bid-deud* in turn serving as the subject of the adjectival verb *ndaux* 'long.' Instead, *dab-yul* 'cow' would be serving as the *subject* of the single-word compound predicate *bid-deud-ndaux* [FRT-tail-long] 'long-tailed.'

In other words, the correct analysis of the utterance first presented in example (21) may actually be the one given in (24) below:

(24) *dab-yul   [max Ø   bid-deud-ndaux]*
      AN-cow   [REL   FRT-tail-long]
      'the cow which is long-tailed' (cf. example (21): 'the cow whose tail is long')

Similarly, under this analysis the several occurrences of the noun *miex* 'person' in examples (22) and (23) would not be serving as possessors of the noun *bib* 'hair.' Instead, *miex* would in each case be serving as the subject of one of two compound predicates, either *bib-gueb* 'black-haired' and *bib-guainx* 'yellow-haired.'

If this alternate analysis is the correct one, then Xong *max* relative clauses would allow relativization only on subjects, rather than on both subjects and possessors. Still, it is impossible to decide between these two analyses on the basis of the data currently available to the author, and so further research is needed.

3.3. Headless constructions with max

Many of the example sentences given in Xiang (1999) and Luo (2005) contain instances of "headless" *max* constructions, which are marked with an initial *max* but are neither preceded nor followed by any head noun. Impressionistically, such headless constructions seem to be very common in ordinary Xong discourse as well. Examples can be seen in (25–28) below.

(25) *[max ndangt   hlaot nangd]*
     [REL hammer   iron   ASSOC]
     'the one who's hammering iron' (Xiang 1999: 77)

(26) *[max nhangs   wud pud dut]*
     [REL with   3SG say   speech]
     'the one who's speaking with him' (Luo 2005: 128)

(27) *[Max nqint] ghead rut.*
     [REL red]   more good
     'The red one is better.' (Luo 2005: 126)

(28) *Mex [max kod] mex [max liot].*
     exist [REL poor] exist [REL wealthy]
     '(The United States) has poor (people, and it) has wealthy (people).' (fieldnotes)

Aside from the absence of a head noun, these headless *max* constructions seem to obey the same general structural constraints as headed *max* constructions. They are obligatorily marked with an initial *max*, and they may be optionally marked with a final *naond/nangd* as well. Just as with headed *max* relative clauses, there is no discernible difference in meaning or function between headless constructions with *max* alone and those with both *max* and *naond/nangd*:

(29) *[max heut boub chud ted]*
     [REL help 1PL   make food]
     'the one who's helping us cook' (Luo 2005: 128)

(30) *[max heut boub chud ted   nangd]*
     [REL help 1PL   make food ASSOC]
     'the one who's helping us cook' (same as (29)) (Luo 2005: 129)

Again, just as with headed *max* clauses, the clause following the initial *max* particle in a headless construction may contain direct objects and other arguments, but never a subject. The subject is the target of relativization in all examples observed to date. It is not yet clear whether headless *max* constructions can contain possessed nominal arguments.

Headless *max* constructions are quite different from their headed counterparts in terms of function, however. While headed *max* relative clauses are used to modify (i.e. restrict the reference of) some nominal argument, headless *max* constructions are used for two major functions. Either they serve as nominal arguments themselves, or they follow the copular verb *nis* and serve to express some property of the copula's subject. Instances of the former can be seen in examples (27) and (28) above; instances of the latter are in (31) and (32) below.

(31) *Ob-naind   jix   nis [max gueb].*
     NOM-this   NEG COP [REL black]
     'This isn't black.' (fieldnotes)

(32) *Zhet-zhet*   *sat*   *nis*   *[max xod   nangd]*.
      CLS:bowl-CLS:bowl   all   COP   [REL hot   ASSOC]
      'All the bowls are hot.' (Xiang 1999: 36)

4. *Naond/nangd* relative clauses

4.1. Overview

Naond/nangd relative clauses occur only in pre-head position. Each such relative clause is obligatorily followed by an associative particle, which takes the form *naond* in Aikan Xong and *nangd* in Jiwei and Songtao Xong. *Naond* and *nangd* are clearly cognate, and they appear to have identical grammatical properties. Aside from the presence of *naond/nangd*, these relative clauses bear no other overt marker of their relative clause status.

(33) *[Wel chauk naond]*   *haink jix   raut.*
      [1SG make ASSOC]   chair NEG good
      'The chair that I made was no good.' (fieldnotes)

(34) *[liox naond]*   *bioud*
      [big   ASSOC]   home
      'a big home' (fieldnotes)

(35) *[Moux   pud   nangd]*   *dut*   *wel njanb   jul.*
      [2SG   say   ASSOC]   speech   1SG understand PFV
      'I understand what you said.' (Xiang 1999: 120)

Naond/nangd relative clauses share many basic properties with *max* relative clauses. They are always externally rather than internally headed, and they are always embedded within their main clause rather than adjoined to it. Both of these properties can be seen in examples (36) and (37) below.

(36) *Zoux mex ad-leb*   *[mes njoud nangd]*   *nex.*
      meet exist one-CLS   [sell salt ASSOC]   person
      '(The girl) met a salt merchant.' (Xiang 1999: 176)

(37) *Ad-zhoud   beix   dab-nzhongb   nis   wud nangd   ad-leb*
      one-CLS:flower   flower   place-middle   COP 3SG ASSOC   one-CLS
      [yad peib yad   rut   nangd]   *deb-npad.*
      [also pretty also good ASSOC]   DIM-woman
      'The flower in the middle was his kind and beautiful daughter.' (Xiang 1999: 195)[6]

Just like *max* relative clauses, *naond/nangd* relative clauses show more or less the same grammatical structure as main clauses: they display no difference in verb finiteness, and their verbs do not bear any nominalizing or relativizing morphology. The only method used to signal the role of the head noun in a *naond/nangd* relative clause is gapping.[7] This can be seen in examples (38) and (39), where null symbols are used to indicate the gaps in which the head noun would ordinarily occur.

(38) *[Ø   ngheub   sead nangd]*   *nex*
      [sing   song ASSOC]   person
      'a singer' (Xiang 1999: 75)

(39) *[Goud-nhangs   longl-gongd   nongx   Ø   nangd]*
      [place-inside   dragon-palace   eat   ASSOC]

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6   The first *nangd* in this example is serving to mark a possessive construction rather than a relative clause; see
    section 4.3 for more information.
7   But see examples (46–48) and accompanying discussion below.

hliet	*nis*	*ghaob-ngongx*	*ghaob-nkieb.*
cooked.rice	COP	NOM-silver	NOM-gold

'The food eaten in the dragon king's palace is silver and gold.' (Xiang 1999: 192)

Naond/nangd is an invariant form; like the relative clause marker *max*, it never varies for any grammatical properties of its head noun and it never serves as an independent noun or pronoun.

Naond/nangd relative clauses show significantly fewer restrictions on the possible grammatical roles of their head nouns than do *max* relative clauses (see section 3.2). For instance, both subjects and direct objects can easily be relativized upon. Examples of relativization upon subjects are in examples (40) and (41) below; examples of relativization upon direct objects are in (42) and (43). (See also previous examples in this section.)

(40) *[nonx hlit naond]*   *miex*
     [eat   cooked.rice ASSOC]   person
     'a person who's eating rice' (fieldnotes)

(41) *[yad liox yad shanb nangd]*   *ghaob-ndut*
     [also   big   also   tall   ASSOC]   NOM-tree
     'a tree that's both big and tall' (Xiang 1999: 104)

(42) *[wel nieus naond]*   *daid*
     [1SG buy   ASSOC]   bean
     'the beans that I bought' (fieldnotes)

(43) *[Wel hauk naond]*   *jud*   *jix*   *raut.*
     [1SG drink ASSOC]   alcohol   NEG   good
     'The alcohol that I'm drinking is no good.' (fieldnotes)

No examples have yet been found in which the head noun of a *naond/nangd* relative clause has the role of indirect object, oblique, or object of comparison within the relative clause (see Keenan and Comrie 1977). Attempts to elicit relative clauses of this sort were unsuccessful, as they generally resulted in periphrastic constructions (e.g. attempting to elicit an utterance like *The man whom I gave money to ran away* would usually yield an utterance like *I gave money to the man, then he ran away*). Further research is needed to determine whether this represents a real grammatical constraint on the heads of *naond/nangd* relative clauses or whether it is merely a sign of the pragmatic oddness of the constructions in question.

Several instances of a head noun seemingly taking the role of possessor within a *naond/nangd* relative clause were elicited by the author in the course of his fieldwork, although the caveats discussed in section 3.2 apply to these as well.

(44) *[bid-deud ndaux naond]*   *dab-yul*
     [FRT-tail   long   ASSOC]   AN-cow
     'the cow whose tail is long' (fieldnotes)

(45) *[bib gueb naond]*   *miex*
     [hair   black ASSOC]   person
     'the person whose hair is black' (fieldnotes)

Finally, the head nouns of some *naond/nangd* relative clauses have no grammatical role within the relative clause itself. These nouns typically refer to abstract concepts, like 'time,' 'matter, affair,' or 'kindness,' as in examples (46–48) below. Naturally, there will be no gap marking the role of such a head noun within the relative clause.[8]

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8   See Li and Thompson (1981: 582–587) and Comrie (1998: 68–70) for discussion of similar constructions in Standard Mandarin and Japanese, respectively.

(46) *[Boul pud   ad-banb   dut   nend nangd]   ghob-ngangx…*
      [3SG say   one-CLS:a.few   speech   this ASSOC]   NOM-time
      'While he was saying these things...' (Yang 2004: 201)

(47) *Geud [nib Lit.Gout.Renl   bloud   ghans   npad-rongx   nangd]   sib*
      hold [at   PN   home   see   woman-dragon   ASSOC]   matter

      beat baod nzanl-zhut.
      speak tell wealth-master
      '(The servants) told their master about seeing the dragon woman at Li Gou Ren's home.' (Xiang 1999: 202)

(48) *[Moux   gioub   wel   deb-npad   nangd]   zeil*
      [2SG   save   1SG   DIM-woman   ASSOC]   kindness

      nas   gheul   shanb   nas   ub   dob.
      as   mountain   tall   as   water   deep
      'Your kindness in saving my daughter was as tall as the mountains, as deep as the sea.' (Xiang 1999: 193)

Despite these unusual characteristics, constructions of the type shown in examples (46–48) are still relative clauses under the definition provided at the beginning of this paper, as they are subordinate clauses which have a noun as their semantic head and which serve to restrict the reference of that noun.

Naond/nangd relative clauses are strikingly similar to Sinitic (especially Standard Mandarin) relative clauses in that they are obligatorily pre-head, occur with a final relative clause marker, and have relatively few restrictions on the roles of their head nouns. It is of course quite possible that contact with Sinitic varieties played some role in the development of these Xong relative clauses; see section 6 for discussion.

4.2. Headless constructions with **naond/nangd**

Naond/nangd is also used to mark constructions which are not accompanied by any head noun. Aside from this lack of a head noun, these headless *naond/nangd* constructions have the same basic structural properties as headed *naond/nangd* relative clauses: they are obligatorily marked by a clause-final *naond/nangd*, and none of their verbs bear any nominalizing or relativizing morphology.

Functionally, headless *naond/nangd* constructions are very similar to headless constructions with *max* (see section 3.3). They can either serve as nominal arguments themselves, or they can follow the copular verb *nis* to express some property of the copula's subject. Examples of the former are in (49) and (50); examples of the latter are in (51) and (52).

(49) *[Wel nious nangd]   nis   deab-lad.*
      [3SG buy   ASSOC]   COP   AN-rabbit
      'What he bought was a rabbit.' (Luo 2005: 120)

(50) *[Wud jangs nangd]   nis   ndut-lid   ndut-ghueax.*
      [3SG plant ASSOC]   COP   tree-plum   tree-peach
      'What he planted were plum trees and peach trees.' (Xiang 1999: 93)

(51) *Ad-hongd   senb nend nis   [gib gheat Bex.gid   nangd].*
      one-CLS:letter   letter this COP   [send go.to Beijing   ASSOC]
      'This letter is to be sent to Beijing.' (Xiang 1999: 101)

(52) *Ghaob-wanl ghaob-jaot   gaot ghaob-kaod ad-hant   nend*
      NOM-pot   NOM-cauldron   and   NOM-hoe   one-CLS:a.few   this
      sat   nis   [hlaot daob janx   nangd].
      all   COP   [iron cast become   ASSOC]
      'Pots, cauldrons, and hoes, these are all made of cast iron.' (Xiang 1999: 111)

4.3. Other functions of **naond/nangd**

The associative marker *naond/nangd* is an extremely versatile form. Unlike *max*, which functions solely as a marker of relative clauses and certain headless constructions, *naond/nangd* is also used to mark possessive and adverbial constructions, and it can serve as an utterance-final emphatic particle as well.[9] Each of these additional functions is briefly exemplified below. It should be noted that this section is not intended to provide a comprehensive description of *naond/nangd* and all of its grammatical properties; it is merely intended to give some idea of the particle's wide functional range in modern Xong.

To mark possession, *naond/nangd* appears immediately after the possessor and before the possessum. As examples (53–56) demonstrate, *naond/nangd* is obligatory with non-pronominal possessors, but optional with pronominal ones.

(53) *dab-guoud   naond   zhoux.mioux*
      AN-dog   ASSOC   ear
      'the dog's ear' (fieldnotes)

(54) *longl-wangl nangd   deb-npad*
      dragon-king ASSOC   DIM-woman
      'the dragon king's daughter' (Xiang 1999: 193)

(55) *beul (naond)   chek*
      3SG (ASSOC)   car
      'his car' (fieldnotes)

(56) *monx (naond)   npaok*
      2SG (ASSOC)   woman
      'your wife' (fieldnotes)

Headless possessive constructions are common. Like headed possessive constructions, these essentially function as nominal arguments. *Naond/nangd* is obligatory in these headless constructions, as in examples (57) and (58).

(57) *Ob-naind   nis   wel   naond.*
      NOM-this   COP   1SG ASSOC
      'This is mine.' (fieldnotes)

(58) *Wud nangd   zhot nib   lot-jid.bex.*
      3SG ASSOC   put   at   top-table
      'Put his on top of the table.' (Xiang 1999: 75)

Naond/nangd is also frequently encountered in Xong texts as a marker of pre-head manner adverbials, as in examples (59) and (60) below.

(59) *Head   gheb head   mes nangd   jongt nib   ead.*
      descend   eye descend   face ASSOC   sit   at   that
      '(He) sat there dejectedly.' (Xiang 1999: 203)

(60) *Bad-niex   doub beit.zheit.bad.zhangs   nangd   huet goud jul.*
      ML-water.buffalo then lumbering   ASSOC   walk road PFV
      'Then the water buffalo began lumbering around.' (Xiang 1999: 206)

It has been observed functioning as a marker of post-head adverbials as well.

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9   While all instances of *naond/nangd* in this paper are glossed as 'ASSOC' regardless of function, at this preliminary stage it is not yet clear whether the form's apparent multi-functionality should be described as monosemy, polysemy, or ambiguity (see Gil 2004).

(61) *Monx   xox   naond   shaont   guaot.*
    2SG   learn   ASSOC   quick   pass
    'You learn very quickly.' (fieldnotes)

Finally, Xiang (1999: 78, 79) reports that naond/nangd can occur following a main clause to express certainty or emphasis. Judging by the examples in Xiang's book, this appears to be particularly common with main clauses whose predicates consist of reduplicated adjectival verbs (as in example (62)) or an adjectival verb followed by an ideophone (as in (63)), though examples like (64) show that this function of naond/nangd is not restricted to such clauses.

(62) *Ad-hant   bid-ghueax nend xub   xub   nangd.*
    one-CLS:a.few   FRT-peach   this   small small ASSOC
    'These peaches are tiny.' (Xiang 1999: 65)

(63) *Ad-jel   jangb.mel   nend mlob zhad.zhad   nangd.*
    one-CLS:field   wheat   this   green verdant   ASSOC
    'This field of wheat is verdant green.' (Xiang 1999: 91)

(64) *Jex   guant nangd!*
    NEG care   ASSOC
    '(I) don't care!' (Xiang 1999: 201)

5. Unmarked relative clauses

Unmarked relative clauses are those which do not carry any overt (i.e. phonological) marker of their relative clause status. In addition to this lack of an overt relativizing particle, there are two other properties which distinguish these relative clauses from all other types discussed in this paper. First, unmarked relative clauses always occur with an accompanying head noun. In other words, these constructions have no "headless" counterparts like those discussed in sections 3.3 and 4.2. Second, they only occur following their head nouns, never preceding them. This latter fact alone is sufficient to justify analyzing unmarked relative clauses as a distinct construction type within Xong, rather than simply analyzing them as *max* or *naond/nangd* relative clauses whose relativizing particles have been elided.

Relative clauses of this type very frequently consist of nothing more than a single adjectival verb, as in examples (65–68) below.

(65) *ub   [zanl]*
    water [cold]
    'cold water' (Xiang 1999: 65)

(66) *laos   [khad]*
    field   [dry]
    'dry (agricultural) field' (fieldnotes)

(67) *Ghans   mex ad-ngongl   deb-nenb   [ghueub].*
    see   exist one-CLS:animal   DIM-snake [white]
    '(We) saw there was a little white snake.' (Xiang 1999: 189)

(68) *Wel   jex   yanb nongx nieax [zhangs].*
    1SG   NEG like   eat   meat [fat]
    'I don't like eating fatty meat.' (Xiang 1999: 102)

Note that the so-called adjectival verbs, like those in examples (65–68), do clearly constitute a subclass of verbs in Xong, since they share a number of defining properties with more canonical verbs: they can be directly negated, they can take aspectual-modal marking, and they can serve as the head of a *max* relative clause (see section 3). Given their clearly verbal nature and the fact that they appear in immediate

post-nominal position when serving an attributive function (just like other unmarked relative clauses), there does not appear to be any non-arbitrary way of distinguishing unmarked relative clauses composed solely of a single adjectival verb from the various other types of unmarked relative clause discussed below. The position taken in this paper is thus that all post-nominal adjectival verbs serving an attributive function in Xong are in fact unmarked relative clauses, rather than (for example) members of noun-adjective compounds.[10]

Unmarked relative clauses composed solely of a single *non*-adjectival verb are less common than those composed of a single adjectival verb, but they do occur.

(69)　*miex*　　　*[zhok]*　　　*naind*
person　　　[laugh]　　　this
'this laughing person' (fieldnotes)

(70)　*roub　[rol]*
stone　[grind]
'millstone' (Xiang 1999: 20)

(71)　*Wud　nghet ad-zheib　　　kaod　[peub].*
3SG　carry　one-CLS:tool　　hoe　[dig]
'He's carrying a digging hoe.' (Xiang 1999: 105)

Unmarked relative clauses can contain object arguments as well.

(72)　*benx*　　　*[nteat　　hneb]*
flower　　　[support　sun]
'sunflower' (Luo 2005: 37)

(73)　*ad-leb　　daonb　　[soud　　　mioul]　　naind*
one-CLS　　pool　　[raise　　fish]　　　this
'this fish-raising pool' (fieldnotes)

(74)　*Nex*　　　*[mes njoud]*　　*maox.huab jul.*
person　　　[sell salt]　　confused　PFV
'The salt merchant was confused.' (Xiang 1999: 176) (cf. example (36) above)

(75)　*Moux geud beix　[nzad mes]　meb　lol.*
2SG　hold　basin　[wash face]　take　come
'Bring the washbasin (lit. 'face-washing basin') over here.' (Xiang 1999: 105)

It is not difficult to elicit unmarked relative clauses containing negated verbs, as in examples (76) and (77), or containing multiple verbs, as in (78) and (79).

(76)　*Monx nis　miex　　[jix　zhok].*
2SG　COP　person　　[NEG laugh]
'You're a person who doesn't laugh.' (fieldnotes)

(77)　*Beul nis　miex　　　[jix　hauk jud].*
3SG　COP　person　　　[NEG drink alcohol]
'He's a teetotaler.' (fieldnotes)

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[10] See Yaowapat and Prasithrathsint (2006) for discussion of similar constructions in Thai and Vietnamese.

(78) *miex*   *[yanb zhok] naind*
      person   [like   laugh]this
      'this person who's always laughing' (fieldnotes)

(79) *miex*   *[yanb hauk jud]*   *naind*
      person   [like drink alcohol]   this
      'this person who's always drinking' (fieldnotes)

However, more complex unmarked relative clauses of the sort seen in examples (76–79) are rarely offered by consultants without prompting, and none have been encountered in any published texts. Though this is only a tentative hypothesis, there may be a general tendency – if not necessarily a strict grammatical rule – for Xong relative clauses exceeding a certain length or complexity to be expressed with either *max* or *naond/nangd*, rather than in unmarked form. The following example, in which the same head noun is modified by both an unmarked relative clause and a *naond/nangd* relative clause, may offer further evidence for this.

(80) *[jangx*   *plaob yul   nangd]*   *nex*   *[bangd*   *nus]*
      [love   blow cow ASSOC]   person   [shoot   bird]
      'the bird hunter who loved to brag' (Yang 2004: 200)

Note that the unmarked relative clause in example (80) consists of merely a verb and its object, while the *naond/nangd* relative clause in the same example involves multiple verbs as well as an object. (*Plaob yul* – literally 'blow cow,' meaning 'to brag' – is presumably a calque of the Mandarin idiom *chuī niú* or a similar idiom from some other Sinitic variety.)

Despite the differences already discussed in this section, unmarked relative clauses do have many properties in common with other types of Xong relative clauses. They are always externally rather than internally headed, and their verbs do not carry any nominalizing or relativizing morphology or show any difference in terms of finiteness. In addition, unmarked relative clauses always occur embedded within their main clauses rather than adjoined to them, as can be seen from examples (74) and (75) above.

It is clear from the examples given earlier in this section that it is possible to relativize upon subjects using an unmarked relative clause – see, for instance, examples (65–69) and (76–79). In all such cases, the grammatical role of the head noun is indicated by gapping, as shown in the examples below.

(81) *ub* *[Ø*   *zanl]*
      water [cold]
      'cold water' (Xiang 1999: 65)

(82) *Monx nis   miex*   *[Ø   jix   zhok]*.
      2SG   COP person   [NEG laugh]
      'You're a person who doesn't laugh.' (fieldnotes)

Just as with *max* relative clauses (see section 3), though, it is impossible to relativize upon direct objects:

(83) * *miex*   *[wel yanb] naind*
        person   [1SG like]   this
        (intended: 'this person that I like') (fieldnotes)

It has so far proven impossible to relativize upon an indirect object or object of comparison using these relative clauses, and it is not yet known whether relativization upon possessors is possible. However, a number of unmarked relative clauses have been found in which the head noun refers to the location in which the action expressed by the relative clause is carried out, or the instrument with which it is carried out. Instances of the former can be seen in example (73) above and example (84) below; instances of the latter are in (70, 71, 75) above and in (85) below.

(84) *Ob-naind   nis   leuk.bex   [nonx hlit   [nzod]].*
     NOM-this   COP   table   [eat   cooked.rice   [early]]
     'This is the breakfast table.' (fieldnotes)[11]

(85) *ob-bail   [hauk jud]*
     NOM-cup   [drink alcohol]
     'a cup for drinking alcohol' (fieldnotes)

In semantic terms, at least, the head nouns of the unmarked relative clauses in these examples seem to be serving as oblique arguments within their relative clauses, as they express canonically oblique notions like location and instrument. Interestingly, though, these relative clauses lack the oblique verbs that are typically used to mark oblique arguments in Xong, like *nib* 'at, be at' for obliques expressing location and *geud* 'use, hold' for obliques expressing instrument. It is not yet known whether the head nouns in (84), (85), and similar examples are indeed serving as oblique arguments in a grammatical (as opposed to merely semantic) sense, or whether they are perhaps serving some more general role like topic.[12]

6. Summary and discussion

Table 1 summarizes the differing formal and grammatical properties of the relative clause constructions discussed in this paper.

Table 1. Summary of Xong relative clause constructions.

Relative clause type	Relative clause marker(s)	Position	Possible roles of head noun	Equivalent headless construction?
Max-only	Initial *max*	Pre- or post-head	Subject; possibly possessor	Yes
Max-naond/nangd	Initial *max* and final *naond/nangd*	Pre-head only	Subject; possibly possessor	Yes
Naond/nangd	Final *naond/nangd*	Pre-head only	Subject; object; possibly possessor; none (abstract)	Yes
Unmarked	None	Post-head only	Subject; possibly oblique (location; instrument)	No

Despite the differences presented in Table 1, there are still a number of properties shared by all Xong relative clauses. They are always externally rather than internally headed, and they always occur embedded within their main clause rather than adjoined to it. The role of the head noun is always marked by gapping (if it is marked at all), rather than by a relative or resumptive pronoun. Finally, all Xong relative clauses resemble main clauses in that their verbs do not bear any relativizing or nominal morphology or show any differences in terms of verb finiteness.

As was mentioned earlier in this paper, several aspects of Xong relative clauses are somewhat remarkable when considered in an areal, genetic, or general typological context. The most obvious of these is simply the sheer variety of distinct relative constructions in the language. At least in terms of positioning relative to the head noun and formal marking of relative clause status, Xong's relative clauses display

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[11] Note that *nzod* 'early' is itself an unmarked relative clause in this example, with *hlit* 'cooked rice' as its head noun. *Hlit nzod* 'breakfast' in turn serves as direct object within the larger unmarked relative clause.

[12] An anonymous reviewer suggests that the unmarked relative clauses in question here might be primarily serving to express the purpose or function of their head nouns. If this is indeed the case, then the head nouns in these examples would have no grammatical role within their respective relative clauses, as was true for the *naond/nangd* relative clauses in examples (46–48). This would in turn explain why no oblique verbs occur in these unmarked relative clauses. On the basis of the examples presented in section 5, this same reviewer also suggests that there might be a general restriction on Xong's unmarked relative clauses such that they can only be used to express what are more or less permanent attributes of their head nouns, rather than temporary states or activities. The author finds both of these proposed analyses very plausible, although additional research would be needed to confirm them.

significantly greater variety than do those of many of the typologically similar languages of mainland Southeast Asia. For instance, all of the Thai, Lao, Vietnamese, and Cambodian relative clause constructions described in Yaowapat and Prasithrathsint (2008) occur only in post-head position, and they occur with either an initial relative clause marker or none at all. The same is true of relative clauses in Hmong (Riddle 1993, 1994), which like Xong is a member of the Miao branch of the Miao-Yao family.[13]

In contrast to relative clauses in these languages, some Xong relative clause constructions are obligatorily pre-head, others are obligatorily post-head, and some can occur in either position (see Table 1). Some Xong relative clauses are marked with an initial relativizing particle (*max*-only relative clauses), some marked with a final particle (*naond/nangd* relative clauses), others marked with both (*max-naond/nangd* relative clauses), and still others marked with neither (unmarked relative clauses).

Similarly, Xong displays more structural variation in its relative clauses than many Sinitic varieties, most of which are also fairly similar to Xong in typological terms and some of which have had significant historical contact with the language. For instance, relative clauses in Standard Mandarin occur only in pre-head position with a final relative clause marker (Li and Thompson 1981: 579–585), and the same is true of relative clauses in Cantonese (Matthews and Yip 1994: 109–114). Yue-Hashimoto (1993: 227–253) surveys relative clause constructions in a number of other Sinitic varieties, and although none of these varieties are described in great detail, none of them seem to approach Xong in terms of degree of structural variation.

Xong relative clauses are also unusual in that they would likely be considered predominantly pre-head according to standard criteria used in word order typology (see, e.g., Dryer 2007: 73–78). While both pre- and post-head relative clause constructions are found in Xong, two such constructions (namely *naond/nangd* and *max-naond/nangd* relative clauses) obligatorily occur in pre-head position, while only one (unmarked relative clauses) obligatorily occurs in post-head position and one (*max*-only relative clauses) can occur in either position. Furthermore, the relative clause construction with the fewest restrictions on the grammatical role of its head noun (namely *naond/nangd* relative clauses) obligatorily occurs in pre-head position. And finally, all occurrences of *max*-only relative clauses in the Xong texts included in Xiang (1999: 172–218) are in pre-head rather than post-head position.

While it is not at all uncommon for an OV language to have predominantly pre-head relative clauses, their presence in a VO language like Xong (see section 2) is quite unusual. Of the 879 languages for which Dryer (2011) compares the order of verb and object and the order of relative clause and head noun, only five – Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, Bai, and Amis – show both predominantly VO order and predominantly pre-head relative clauses.

Since three of these five languages (namely Mandarin, Cantonese, and Hakka) are Sinitic, and a fourth (Bai) is either Sinitic itself or has been heavily influenced by Sinitic (Comrie 2008), the predominance of pre-head relative clauses in Xong might not present any great mystery. There is considerable evidence that Xong speakers have been in contact with speakers of Sinitic varieties for a very long time, perhaps even millennia (Yang 2004: 138–160; see also Ratliff 2010: 225–234), and so the predominance of (and indeed mere presence of) these typologically unusual relative clauses in Xong might simply be due to language contact. Still, while this hypothesis is a plausible one, at this point it remains only a hypothesis, and more evidence is needed before a definitive conclusion can be reached.

Finally, from a general typological perspective perhaps the most remarkable Xong relative clauses are those marked with *max* (see section 3), since these carry an initial relative clause marker and, depending on the presence or absence of a final *naond/nangd*, either can or must occur in pre-head position. Pre-head relative clauses with initial relative clause markers are extremely rare among the languages of the world.[14] Several crosslinguistic surveys of relative clauses have reported that they are unattested (Lehmann 1984: 161, 162; De Vries 2005: 148, 155), although Tosco (1998) shows that they do in fact occur in several Semitic languages spoken in Ethiopia. Matthew Dryer (p.c. 2012) has informed the author that such relative clauses are also attested in Sare, a Sepik language of New Guinea described in Sumbuk (2002).[15] Still, to the best of the author's knowledge, Xong is so far the only attested case of an Asian language in which such relative clauses are found. Accordingly, while the existence of pre-head relative clauses in Xong in general might perhaps be ascribable to language contact, the origins of these initially-marked pre-head relative clauses are at present quite opaque.

Of course, there are still many other unanswered questions surrounding Xong relative clauses in addition to these historical ones. For instance, more information is still needed about possible grammatical roles of the head noun in each type of relative clause, as is information about the co-occurrence possibilities

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[13] It must be said, though, that relative clauses in all five of these Southeast Asian languages – Thai, Lao, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Hmong – allow relativization upon a greater number of grammatical roles than most Xong relative clauses do, and many of them allow or require resumptive pronouns as well.

[14] Note that this does not include relative clauses that occur outside their main clause rather than embedded within it, such as those found in Hindi (Kachru 2006: 220–223), Warlpiri (Hale 1976), and other languages.

[15] Unfortunately, the author has not yet had an opportunity to consult Sumbuk (2002) himself.

of different relative clause constructions within a single noun phrase. Furthermore, it is still largely unknown what factors might influence a Xong speaker's decision to use one particular type of relative clause in a given utterance rather than another. Still, it is hoped that this paper will at least serve as a useful starting point for future research on Xong, and perhaps as a model for similar studies of other Miao-Yao languages.

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