



**University of  
Zurich<sup>UZH</sup>**

# **In search of Austro-Asiatic I: Relative clauses**

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**Mathias Jenny**

**[jenny@spw.uzh.ch](mailto:jenny@spw.uzh.ch)**

## 1. Preliminaries - what are we looking for?

### **Cross-linguistic comparability** (Croft 2003:14)

- (i) Determine a particular semantic(-pragmatic) structure/situation type
- (ii) Examine morphosyntactic constructions or strategies used to encode it
- (iii) Search for dependencies between the constructions and other linguistic factors (other structural features, other functions encoded by construction)

### **Cross-linguistic identification** (Stassen 2011)

*External criteria (function, meaning)*

*Formal criteria (form of encoding)*



***Mixed functional-formal definitions***

## 2. Relative clauses

“A relative clause (RC) is a subordinate clause which delimits the reference of an NP by specifying the role of the referent of that NP in the situation described by the RC.” (Andrews 2007:206)

**Types of RC** (Andrews 2007:208ff):

Embedded Rcs

*External Rcs (preceding NP, following NP, variable)*

*Internal RCs (NP inside RC)*

*Free RCs (no NP head)*

Adjoined RCs (RC outside the NP)

## **Canonical Relative Clause Construction** (Dixon 2010:314)

- a. The construction involves a main clause (MC) and a relative clause (RC)
- b. Common argument (CA) shared by MC and RC
- c. RC functions a syntactic and semantic modifier of CA in MC
- d. RC must have the structure of a clause (predicate, required arguments)

RC may lack marking for some grammatical categories marked in MC

“It is important to distinguish between an RC - which has the structure of a clause [...] - and a participle - which is an adjective derived from a verb [...]. [...] In Russian and German, participles can take objects [...] [b]ut an RC shows subject agreement on the same principles as an MC, whereas a participle agrees in number and gender with the head noun [...]. And while RCs allow the same tense choices as as MCs, participles have only past and present forms (no future).” (Dixon 2010:316)

“At the level of surface realization, the CA may be stated in it’s fullest form within the MC, or within the RC, or in both, or in neither. Irrespective of which of these applies in a particular language, within a canonical relative clause construction the RC is always a modifier to the CA in the MC (even if this occurrence of the CA has zero realization).”

(Dixon 2010:317)

“Detailed studies of the grammars of a wide range of languages do suggest that each one has something which can be recognized as a relative clause construction, in terms of the characterizations presented above.”

(Dixon 2010:316)

**Accessibility hierarchy** (for relativised function of CA)

(Comrie 1989:156; Song 2001:223)

**SBJ > DO > IO > [OBL >] GEN [> OCOMP]**

### 3. The Austro-Asiatic languages

*Munda*

- Western

*Khasic*  
*Palaungic*  
*Khmuic*

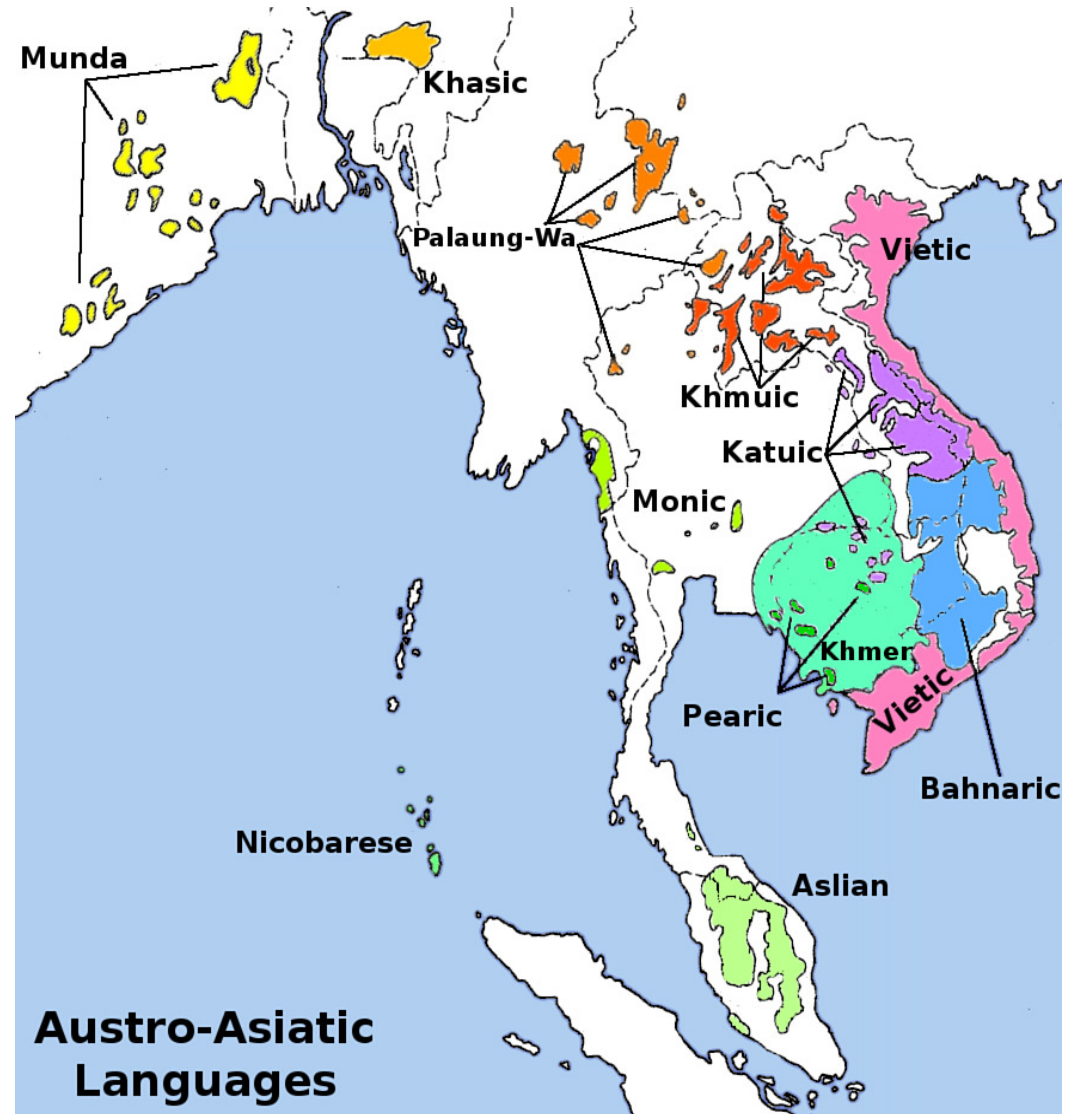
Northern

*Vietic*  
*Katuic*  
*Bahnaric*  
*Pearic*  
*Khmer*

Eastern

*Monic*  
*Aslian*  
*Nicobarese*

Southern



## Data available for Austro-Asiatic languages (morphosyntactic)

	<i>Grammars</i>	<i>Texts</i>	<i>Spec. topics</i>	<i>Dict.</i>
Munda	good	some	good	good
Khasic	some	few	some	some
Palaungic	few	few	few	some
Khmuic	few	few	few	some
Vietic	good	good	good	good
Katuic	some	some	some	some
Bahnaric	few	few	few	some
Pearic	few	few	few	some
Khmer	good	good	good	good
Monic	some	good	some	good
Aslian	good	some	some	few
Nicobarese	few	few	few	some

## 4. Relative clauses in Austro-Asiatic languages

### 4.1 Munda

#### Kharia (Peterson 2008)

- (01) *ho=ki [ho=kaʔ=te yo=qʉʔ]<sub>RC</sub> dinu somtoʔ aw=ki.*  
that=PL that=SG.HUM=OBJ see=PART day Monday COP=M.PST  
'The day they saw him on was a Monday.'
- (02) *[iʔ=aʔ likha]<sub>RC</sub> phonten=te kuy=oʔj.*  
1SG=GEN write pen=OBJ find=A.PST.1SG  
'I found the pen I had written with.'
- (03) *[biru deb=na-deb=na baʔ.ruŋkuʔb roʔ=ki]<sub>RC</sub> kay=e=bar.*  
mountain ascend=INF-RDPL rice spill=M.PST lift=A.IRR=2HON  
'Pick up the rice which spilled while you were walking up the hill.'

**Form:** [**RC-PART**] NP<sub>MAT</sub>; [**RC**] NP<sub>MAT</sub>; [**<NP<sub>MAT</sub>> RC**]  
± Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>

**Relativised functions:** SBJ, DO, IO, OBL (+ other functions ?)



## Santali (Ghosh 2008)

(04) *[jãhã kɔlɔm-tɛ-m ɔl-akad-a]RC ona dɔ oka-rɛ.*  
any pen-INSTR-2SG.SBJ write-PERF.A-FIN that TOP which-LOC  
'Where is the pen which you have written with?'

(05) *[jãhã dare-rɛ-m dec'-len-a]RC on-rɛ mit'-taŋ*  
any tree-LOC-2SG.SBJ climb-PLUP.M-FIN that-LOC one-CL  
*tɛrɔm.cak mena-k'-a.*  
honey.comb exist-M-FIN  
'here is a honey-comb in the tree which you climbed.'

**Form:** [**CREL**<**NP<sub>MAT</sub>**> **RC**] **RSUM** (TOP)  
- **Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>, Correlative construction**

**Relativised functions:** **SBJ, DO, (IO ?), OBL** (+ other functions?)

## 4.2 Northern AA

### 4.2.1 Khasic

Khasi (Subbarao and Temsen 2009)

(06) *ka-mē'd* (ha-ka) [*ba*] *u-lam* *u-bō?*  
F.S-table LOC-3F.S ADJR (REL) M.S-Lam 3M.S-put

*ya-ka-kət*]<sub>RC</sub> *ka-laʔ-kd'aʔ.*  
ACC-F.S-book 3F.S-PERF-break

'The table on which Lam put the book is broken.'

(07) *ka-khinnaʔ* [*ba*] *u-ban* *u-ya-šwʔ*]<sub>RC</sub> *ke-dɛi*  
F.S-child ADJR (REL) M.S-Ban 3S.M-V<sub>REC</sub>-meet 3F.S-be

*ka-paralək* *jɔŋ-ŋa.*  
F.S-friend GEN-1S

'The girl Ban is fighting with is my friend.'

**Form:** NP<sub>MAT</sub> (CASE-REF) [**REL RC**] (ADJR = REL = SUB; V<sub>RC</sub> marked for OBL)  
**Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>**

**Relativised functions: SBJ, DO, IO, OBL, GEN**

## 4.2.2 Palaungic

### Ta'ang (Milne 1921)

(08) *[h̄.dīn pē hwōi yū kan.nyōm dyăt]RC* *l̄n ka.bē.*  
yesterday 2PL finish see child small 3 be.ill

*or*

*kwōn kan.nyōm [pē p̄n mēn h̄.dīn]RC* *l̄n ka.bē.*  
child child 2PL REL lok.at yesterday 3 be.ill  
'The child you saw yesterday is ill.'

(09) *[aṅāū ga? yām]RC* *i.l̄r hā dīn ū tō.*  
cat bite die fowl place that one CL

*or*

*i.l̄r [p̄n ga? aṅāū]RC* *gwāī hā dīn.*  
fowl REL bite cat stay place that  
'The fowl that the cat killed is there.'

**Form:** [**<NP<sub>MAT</sub>> RC**] RSUM; [**RC**] NP<sub>MAT</sub>; NP<sub>MAT</sub> [**RC <REL>**] RSUM; NP<sub>MAT</sub> [**(REL) RC**]  
**±Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>**

**Relativised functions: SBJ, DO, POSS (+ other functions?)**

### 4.2.3 Khmuic

**Mlabri** (Rischel 1995)

- (10) *kheep* *[mɣm maʔ ʔoh ʔa noŋ]<sub>RC</sub>* *ʔa tac.*  
slipper father give 1SG PERF finish PERF break  
'The slippers father gave me are used up (they broke).'

**Form:** NP<sub>MAT</sub> [RC]  
Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>

**Relativised functions:** DO (+ other functions?)

## 4.3 Eastern AA

### 4.3.1 Vietic

Vietnamese (Thompson 1987, Miller 1976)

(11) *Tôi đã tìm thấy quyển sách [mà anh nói hôm.nọ]<sub>RC</sub>.*  
1SG ANT seek see book SUB 2SG speak other.day  
'I found the book you were talking [about] the other day.'

(12) *Đứa con [(đứa) (mà) tôi sẽ cho một cái áo]<sub>RC</sub> (thì)  
CL child CL SUB 1SG FUT give one CL dress LNK  
là học.sinh.  
be student  
'The child to whom I'm going to give a dress is a student.'*

**Form:** NP<sub>MAT</sub> [(CL)+(SUB) RC] (LNK)  
**Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>**

**Relativised functions: SBJ, DO, IO (+ other functions?)**

### 4.3.2 Katuic

#### Pacoh (Alves 2006)

- (13) *ʔa.cɔ:* *[ʔən po:k ʔa.ɲa:ʔ]*<sub>RC</sub> *ʔŋ.kɪ:*  
dog REL go quickly POSS.1SG  
'The dog that goes fast is mine.'

- (14) *ʔm.bar* *[ʔən dɔ: pləj]*<sub>RC</sub> *kɪ:* *li:* *ʔiŋ.*  
the.one REL 3SG buy 1SG very want  
'I really want the one that he bought.'

**Form:** NP<sub>MAT</sub> [REL RC]  
**Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>**

**Relativised functions: SBJ, DO (+ other functions?)**

### 4.3.3 Bahnaric (n. a.)

### 4.3.4 Pearic (n.a.)

### 4.3.5 Khmer

Old Khmer (Jenner and Sidwell 2010, Jenner 2009)

(15) *oy ta ʔji yeñ [ta jmaḥ teñ som]<sub>RC</sub>*  
give LNK ancestor 1PL LNK name *teñ* S.

*[ta kvan teñ pavitra]<sub>RC</sub>.*  
LNK child *teñ* P.

‘[He] gave [it] to a forebear of ours named *teñ* Som, daughter of the *teñ* Pavitra.’

(16) *khñum [maḥ chloñ prāṇa oy ta vraḥ kamtateñ ʔañ]<sub>RC</sub>*  
slave sub *chloñ* P. give lnk holy master 1sg  
‘slaves whom the *chloñ* Prāṇa has given to My Holy High Lord’

**Form:** NP<sub>MAT</sub> [LNK RC]; NP<sub>MAT</sub> [REL RC]  
**Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>**

**Relativised functions: SBJ, DO (+ other functions?)**

## Modern Khmer (Jacob 1968)

- (17) *khnom khɔːn mənùs(s) nùh [dael lò:k-krù:*  
1SG see man that REL teacher  
*ba:n nìyì:əy pì:msɔl/RC.*  
GET speak yesterday  
'I see the man about whom the teacher spoke yesterday.'

**Form:** NP<sub>MAT</sub> [REL RC]  
Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>

**Relativised functions:** SBJ, DO, IO, OBL (+ other functions?)



## 4.4 Southern AA

### 4.4.1 Monic

Old Mon - Middle Mon - Spoken Mon (Shorto 1971, Jenny 2005)

(18) OM     *pun*     *dān*     *[ma smiñ pa]<sub>RC</sub>*  
merit     donation     REL king     do  
‘the acts of merit and charity which the king performed’

(19) MM     *galān*     *[smiñ ma həm]<sub>RC</sub>*  
word     kinh     REL speak  
‘the words which the king spoke’

(20) SM     *ʔarè*     *[dɛh həm]<sub>RC</sub>*     *kòh*  
language     3     speak     MEDL  
‘the words he said’

Form: NP<sub>MAT</sub> [REL RC] → NP<sub>MAT</sub> [RC <REL>] → NP<sub>MAT</sub> [RC] (TOP)

Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>

Relativised functions: SBJ, DO (+ other functions?)

## 4.4.2 Aslian

### Semelai (Kruspe 2004)

(21) *jkəs*            *[mə=ki=jəl*            *la=cə]*<sub>RC</sub>            *paloh.*  
porcupine    REL=3A=bark            A=dog            flee  
'The porcupine that the dog barked at fled.'

(22) *gvrvm*    *[mə=de=cəl]*<sub>RC</sub>            *ki=lek*    *haʔ paraʔ.*  
salt            REL=3PL.A=pronounce    3A=lick    AT    rack  
'Salt, that they called (it), he licked on the rack.'

**Form: NP<sub>MAT</sub> [REL=RC]**  
**Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>**

**Relativised functions: SBJ, DO (+ other functions ?)**

### 4.4.3 Nicobarese

#### Nancowry (De Roepstorff 1884, Man 1889)

(23) *io de tenmæla baiūhōōāl [doch-ne wē gñi*  
want LNK mirror magic able-? do house

*doch-ne wē tiong doch-ne wē hifūe]*<sub>RC</sub>.  
able-? do ship able-? do boat

‘I want a magic looking-glass that can produce houses, ships, and boats.’

(24) *[ka homkwòm meñ pōwah ten chüa]*<sub>RC</sub> *shīna leät dähnga.*  
REL give 2SG paddle to 1SG CREL finish break

‘The paddle you gave me is broken.’

**Form:** NP<sub>MAT</sub> [(LNK) RC]; [REL <NP<sub>MAT</sub>> RC] CREL (REL = INTER; CREL = RSUM)  
±Gap in RC for NP<sub>MAT</sub>

**Relativised functions:** SBJ, DO (+ other functions ?)

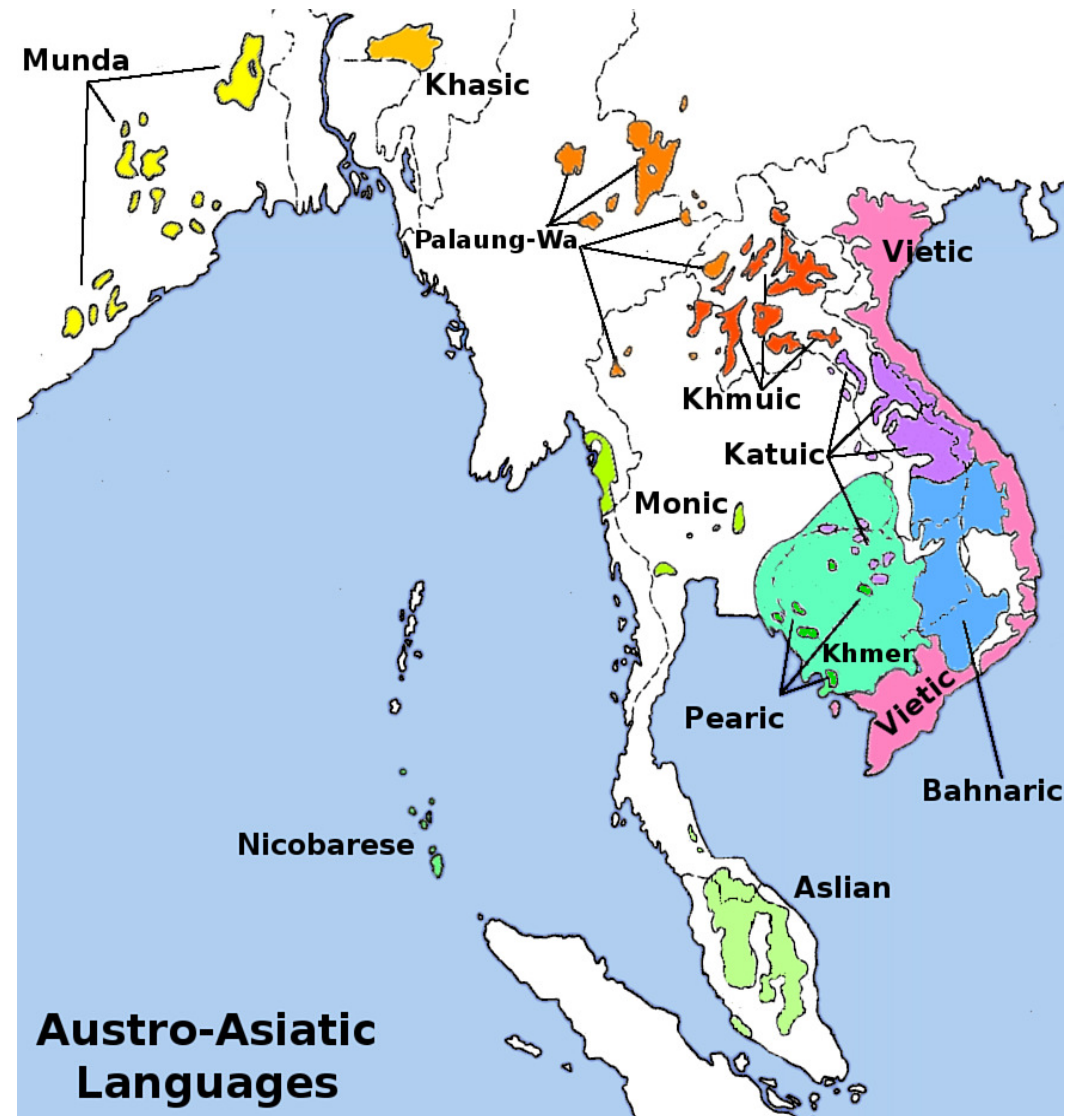
## 5. Summary

### 5.1 Types of RC found in AA languages:

1	a.	<b>[&lt;NP<sub>MAT</sub>&gt; RC]</b> (RSUM)	<b>RC&lt;NP&gt;</b>	<b>-Gap</b>
	b.	<b>[&lt;REL &lt;NP<sub>MAT</sub>&gt; RC]</b> RSUM (TOP)	<b>RC&lt;NP&gt;</b>	<b>-Gap</b>
<hr/>				
2	a.	<b>[RC-PART] NP<sub>MAT</sub></b>	<b>RC-NP</b>	<b>+Gap</b>
	b.	<b>[RC] NP<sub>MAT</sub></b>	<b>RC-NP</b>	<b>+Gap</b>
<hr/>				
3	a.	<b>NP<sub>MAT</sub> (CASE-REF) [REL RC]</b>	<b>NP-RC</b>	<b>+Gap</b>
	b.	<b>NP<sub>MAT</sub> [(REL) RC]; NP<sub>MAT</sub> [REL=RC]</b>	<b>NP-RC</b>	<b>+Gap</b>
	c.	<b>NP<sub>MAT</sub> [(CL)+(SUB) RC] (LNK)</b>	<b>NP-RC</b>	<b>+Gap</b>
	d.	<b>NP<sub>MAT</sub> [(LNK) RC]</b>	<b>NP-RC</b>	<b>+Gap</b>
	e.	<b>NP<sub>MAT</sub> [RC] (TOP)</b>	<b>NP-RC</b>	<b>+Gap</b>
	f.	<b>NP<sub>MAT</sub> [RC &lt;REL&gt;] (RSUM)</b>	<b>NP-RC</b>	<b>+Gap</b>

## 5.2 Distribution of RC types

<b>Munda</b>	1a, b; 2a, b
<b>Khasic</b>	3a
<b>Palaungic</b>	1a; 2b; 3b, f
<b>Khmuic</b>	3e
<b>Vietic</b>	3c
<b>Katuic</b>	3b
<i>Bahnaric</i>	<i>n.a.</i>
<i>Pearic</i>	<i>n.a.</i>
<b>Khmer</b>	3b, d → 3b
<b>Monic</b>	3b → 3f → 3e; 3b
<b>Aslian</b>	3b
<b>Nicobarese</b>	1b; 3d



## 6. Emerging picture / Outlook

- ▶ **Pre-NP RCs in Munda, Palaungic (participle, unmarked)**
- ▶ **Internally headed RCs in Munda, Palaungic, Nicobarese (CREL)**
- ▶ **Eastern languages RCs consistently post-NP**
- ▶ **Relativiser within RC in Palaungic, Monic ( $\rightarrow \emptyset$  in spoken Mon)**
- ▶ **RC-initial relativiser often general subordinator/linker**
- ▶ **Data on possible relativised functions deficient for most languages**

### **Urgently needed:**

- ▶ **Reliable data of many languages:  
Palaungic, Khmuic, Bahnaric, Pearic, Nicobarese**

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