

TIME ORDINALS IN TIBETO-BURMAN

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WHAT ARE TIME ORDINALS?

In all languages, there are ways to refer to the present day, previous days and following days, also other present, past and future time units: weeks, months, years etc.

<i>yesterday</i>	<i>last week</i>	<i>last month</i>	<i>last year</i>
<i>today</i>	<i>this week</i>	<i>this month</i>	<i>this year</i>
<i>tomorrow</i>	<i>next week</i>	<i>next month</i>	<i>next year</i>

LEXICALISATION OF TIME ORDINALS

The time units lexicalised and the number of steps of lexicalisation prior to compositional forms differs between languages

English lexicalises the unit of days, for the present day, the previous day and the next day

Beyond that, and for other units, the forms are compositional and recursive to some degree, or formed with numerals

day before yesterday/2 days ago

day before day before yesterday/3 days ago

?day before day before day before yesterday/4 days ago

INSTABILITY OF TIME ORDINALS

In many languages, time ordinals undergo rapid change:

Irregular sound changes due to their compound status: *this day* > *today*

Lexical replacement

Semantic shift: *yesterday* vs. *yesteryear*

Conservative forms alongside innovative forms:

auction this day

COGNACY IN TIME ORDINALS

Due to such rapid changes, even very closely related languages may have different time ordinal forms

Thai, Northern Thai, Lao

tomorrow, day after tomorrow

HISTORICAL PROCESSES IN TIME ORDINALS

This means that time ordinals are NOT usually included in reconstructed vocabulary

Nouns, Verbs, etc. are more stable and show regular sound correspondences

Time ordinals do not

TIBETO-BURMAN TIME ORDINALS

Most Tibeto-Burman (TB) languages have lexicalised time ordinals for days and years (but not usually months, weeks, etc.)

These may differentiate up to 8 steps in the past and in the future (Chepang, central Nepal)

Note that for some Chepang words there are several alternative forms

CHEPANG DAY AND YEAR ORDINALS (Caughley 2000)

day	wah.ram.ʔe	year	jat.ʔaŋ
8 days ago	nik.nəm/nip.nəm	8 years ago	jat.koʔ rjoh
7 days ago	sik.nəm/sip.nəm	7 years ago	jat.koʔ khjoh
6 days ago	k ^h ik.nəm/gip.nəm/bik.nəm	6 years ago	jat.koʔ sjoh
5 days ago	ʔik.nəm/ŋi.nəm/rak.nəm	5 years ago	jat.koʔ tjoh
4 days ago	k ^h uk.nəm/gak.nəm/pu.nəm	4 years ago	jat.koʔ dzjoh
3 days ago	kyam.nəm/ʔak.nəm	3 years ago	jat.koʔ ts ^h joh
2 days ago	tsit.nəm/bar.nəm	2 years ago	jat.koʔ teh
yesterday	joh	last year	teh
today	ten	this year	nek
tomorrow	sjaŋ	next year	ŋam.pu/ŋam.p ^h u
2 days hence	tsit.səj/tis.sə	2 years hence	k ^h ak.pu
3 days hence	kjam.səj/lik.nəm	3 years hence	ʔik.pu
4 days hence	k ^h uk.səj/rik.nəm/pu.sə	4 years hence	k ^h ik.pu/bik.pu
5 days hence	ʔik.səj/ʔuk.nəm/ŋi.səj	5 years hence	lik.pu
6 days hence	k ^h ik.səj/bik.səj	6 years hence	gik.pu
7 days hence	sik.səj/tsij.səj	7 years hence	sik.pu
8 days hence	nik.səj	8 years hence	nik.pu

STABILITY OF FORMS WITHIN TB TIME ORDINALS

In many TB languages, the lexicalised time ordinals contain TB cognate forms for *day* and *year* which have been replaced in the normal term for *day* or *year*

In Chepang, even the innovative *day* and *year* forms have now been replaced by dominant-language loanwords

INNOVATION IN ORDINALS

CHEPANG

	Archaic words (no longer used)	Modern words (Nepali loans)	Cognate
day	wah.ram.ʔe	din	nəm
year	jat.ʔaŋ	bər.sə	nik

Note that forms with TB cognates occur in SOME time ordinal forms
and archaic Chepang forms occur in SOME time ordinal forms

DATA ON TIBETO-BURMAN TIME ORDINALS

In many sources on TB languages compiled by speakers of languages with smaller inventories of lexical time ordinals, the full range of time ordinals is not included (Bradley 2007)

TB DAY AND YEAR COGNATES

General TB Eastern TB

DAY *nəy *nəy

YEAR *s-niŋ *s-nik OR *Ckuk

NUMERALS IN TB TIME ORDINALS

In some TB languages, numerals occur in time ordinals

Some of these are more conservative than the modern numeral forms, and some show irregular phonological innovations

See Michailovsky (2003: 240-244) for extensive data from Kiranti languages (eastern Nepal) showing time ordinals up to 6 days/years

BURMIC TIBETO-BURMAN

Part of Eastern TB

Burmish languages such as Burmese

Ngwi languages such as Lisu, Lahu, etc.

Gong language

INNOVATIONS IN BURMESE TIME ORDINALS

Burmese has been written for over 900 years,
during which time time ordinals have
undergone various changes

Some modern Literary Burmese forms reflect an
earlier stage of the system

Forms combine demonstratives, time adverbs
and *day* or *year* in various ways

BURMESE DAYS

	Oldest Literary		Modern Literary		Modern Spoken	
this	ဤ	ʔi ²²	သည်	θi ²²	ဒီ	di ²²
day	နေ့	ne ⁴⁴	နေ့	ne ⁴⁴	နေ့	ne ⁴⁴
year	နှစ်	ɲi ⁵⁵	နှစ်	ɲi ⁵⁵	နှစ်	ɲi ⁵⁵
now	ယခု	jək ^{hu} ⁴⁴	ယခု	jək ^{hu} ⁴⁴	အခု	ək ^{hu} ⁴⁴
morning	နံနက်	nã ²² ne ⁵⁵	မနက်	mənɛ ⁵⁵		

Judson dictionary (1820-1850)

yesterday	ယမန်နေ့	ယမန်နေ့က	မနေ့က
today	ယနေ့	ဒီနေ့	
tomorrow	နံနက်	မနက်	မနက်ဖြန်
last year	ယမန်နှစ်		
this year	သည်နှစ်	ဒီနှစ်	
next year	not cited		

Judson forms

yesterday jəmã²²ne⁴⁴ jəmã²²ne⁴⁴ga⁴⁴ mənɛ⁴⁴ga⁴⁴

today jənɛ⁴⁴ di²²ne⁴⁴

tomorrow nã²²nɛ⁷⁵⁵ mənɛ⁷⁵⁵ mənɛ⁷⁵⁵phjã²²

last year jəmã²²ŋi⁷⁵⁵

this year ði²²ŋi⁷⁵⁵ di²²ŋi⁷⁵⁵

next year not cited

former jəmã²² ~ jə

Myanmar Language Commission

yesterday	ယမန်နေ့	မနေ့		
today	ယနေ့	ဂနေ့	ဒီနေ့	
tomorrow	မနက်ဖြန်	မနက်ဖြန်ခါ	နက်ဖြန်	
morning	နံနက်	မနက်		
last year	ယမန်နှစ်	မနှစ်		
this year	ဒီနှစ်			
next year	နောက်နှစ်			(behind year)

Myanmar Language Commission forms

yesterday	jəmã ²² ne ⁴⁴ məne ⁴⁴
today	jəne ⁴⁴ gəne ⁴⁴ di ²² ne ⁴⁴
tomorrow	mənɛ ^{ʔ55} p ^h jã ²² (k ^h a ²²) nɛ ^{ʔ55} p ^h jã ²²
morning	nənɛ ^{ʔ55} mənɛ ^{ʔ55}
last year	jəmã ²² ṇi ^{ʔ55} mənṇi ^{ʔ55}
this year	di ²² ṇi ^{ʔ55}
next year	nau ^{ʔ55} ṇi ^{ʔ55}

Spoken Burmese corpus (Ozerov)

yesterday မနေ့ 3 မနေ့တစ်နေ့ 1

today ဒီနေ့ 6 ကနေ့ 4 ယနေ့ 2(literary)

tomorrow မနက် 5 ညနက် 1

last year မနှစ်က 1

this year ဒီနှစ် 3 သည်နှစ် 1(literary)

next year no tokens

Corpus forms

yesterday	məne ⁴⁴	məne ⁴⁴ təne ⁴⁴ (one day)
today	di ²² ne ⁴⁴	gəne ⁴⁴ jəne ⁴⁴
tomorrow	mənɛ [?] 55	ɲa ⁴⁴ nɛ [?] 55
last year	məɲi [?] 55ka ⁴⁴	
this year	di ²² ɲi [?] 55	ɔ̃i ²² ɲi [?] 55
next year	no tokens	

Modern Spoken forms

yesterday	မနေ့က	မနေ့		
today	ဂနေ့	ဒီဂနေ့	ဒီနေ့	
tomorrow	နက်ဖြန်	မနက်ဖြန်	မနက်ဖြင့်	
last year	မနှစ်က	မနှစ်		
this year	ဒီနှစ်			
next year	နောက်နှစ်			(behind year)

Modern spoken forms

yesterday	məne ⁴⁴ ga ⁴⁴ məne ⁴⁴
today	gəne ⁴⁴ di ²² gəne ⁴⁴ di ²² ne ⁴⁴
tomorrow	nɛ ^{ʔ55} phjã ²² mənɛ ^{ʔ55} phjã ²² mənɛ ^{ʔ55} phjĩ ⁴⁴
last year	məŋi ^{ʔ55} ka ⁴⁴ məŋi ^{ʔ55}
this year	di ²² ŋi ^{ʔ55}
next year	nau ^{ʔ55} ŋi ^{ʔ55}

LISU AND LAHU YEAR ORDINALS

	Lisu	Lahu	proto-form
year	kh ^o ? ²¹	qh ^o ? ²¹	*khuk ^L
-3	ʃl ⁵⁵ o ²¹ ni ³⁵	-	-
-2	ʃl ⁴⁴ ni ³⁵	a ³⁵ sɿ ⁴⁵ qh ^o ? ²¹	*ʃik ^H + year
-1	a ²¹ ni ³⁵	a ³⁵ ɲi ³³ qh ^o ? ²¹	*a ¹ + year
0	ts ^h ɿ ⁴⁴ ni ³⁵	tɕi ²¹ qh ^o ? ²¹	this + year
+1	næ ⁵⁵ hæ ²¹	nɛ ³⁵ qh ^o ? ²¹	*ʔnak ^L +
+2	næ ⁴⁴ ni ³⁵	-	-
+3	phæ ²¹ ni ³⁵	-	-

LISU AND LAHU DAY ORDINALS

	Lisu	Lahu	proto-form
day	ni ³³	ni ³³	*ni ³
-3	ɣl ⁵⁵ o ²¹ ni ³³	-	+ day
-2	ɣl ⁴⁴ ni ³³	a ³⁵ sɿ ⁴⁵ ni ³³	*ɣik ^H + day
-1	a ²¹ ni ³³	a ³⁵ ni ³³	*a ¹ + day
0	ni ⁵⁵ ni ³³	ja ²¹ ni ³³	+ day
+1	ɣa ⁵⁵ gw ⁴⁴	ɕo ³⁵ pɔ ¹¹	*ʔfok ^L + day
+2	wa ⁴⁴ ni ³³	pha ²¹ ni ³³	*phak ^L + day
+3	phæ ²¹ ni ³³	phi ⁵³ ni ³³	+ day

LISU AND LAHU

Note that Lisu +3 day/year is cognate with Lahu +2 day: semantic shifts within time ordinal paradigm

Note parallel completely lexicalised form of +1 year

Note preserved cognate of TB *s-nik in Lisu year ordinals (but not in Lahu year ordinals!)

BUT also note different forms for 0 day (today) and many others

GONG (THAILAND) TIME ORDINALS

	day	year
-3	me ⁵⁵ thi ³³ ne ⁵³	me ⁵⁵ thi ³³ si ³⁵
-2	me ⁵⁵ ne ⁵³	me ⁵⁵ si ³⁵
-1	ɲa ²¹ ne ⁵³	ɲa ²¹ si ³⁵
0	yo ^{ʔ55} ne ⁵³	heŋ ²¹ si ³⁵ 'this year'
+1	muŋ ³⁵ na ^{ʔ55}	muŋ ⁵⁵ si ³⁵
+2	sɔŋ ⁵⁵ na ^{ʔ55}	thəŋ ²¹ si ³⁵ 'that year'
+3	nək ⁵⁵ na ^{ʔ55}	
+4	nək ⁵⁵ pha ³³ thi ³³ na ^{ʔ55}	
one	thi ³³	
day	ne ²¹	
year	si ³⁵	

CONCLUSION

TB languages have complex time ordinal systems

Time ordinals change differently

- irregular sound change

- intra-paradigm shifts of meaning and form

- archaic forms sporadically preserved

Cognates for time ordinals in TB are found only

- in very closely related languages; no cross-TB

- cognates proposed in Matisoff (2003)

THANK YOU!

Recent publications can be found on
<academia.edu>

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