THE ICONIC STRUCTURE OF THE TAM-PARADIGM IN THE YI GROUP

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ABSTRACT. In the isolating languages of East Asia, each TAM (tense, aspect and modality) concept is realised as bound morpheme attached to the verb or at the end of the sentence. None of these TAM notions needs to be specified, that is to say, a verb may be left unmarked for TAM. Conversely, it is possible to find up to three TAM categories stacked after each other, if they are semantically compatible. In languages of the Yi group (Tibeto-Burman/P.R. of China), in which several TAM concepts were investigated in detail (Gerner 2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2007, 2009), the paradigm of TAM particles exhibits a particular strong iconic structure.

I shall represent this iconic structure within Hengeveld and Dik's layered TAM-model (Hengeveld 1989; Dik [Hengeveld] 1997a) which recognizes the organization of the following TAM concepts:

TAM-Layers	Individual TAM concepts
Nuclear predication	π_1 (TAM$_1$): perfective/imperfective, phasal aspect, ability and internal deontic modality
Extended predication	π_2 (TAM$_2$): tense, perfect, quantificational aspect, external deontic modality
Proposition	π_3 (TAM$_3$): speaker (epistemic) attitudes, information sources
Clause	π_4 (TAM$_4$): illocutionary particles

The Yi languages allow arrangement of different TAM particles as is illustrated by the following examples and shown by the schema below. The Yi data follow exactly the prediction of Bybee (1985) and Haiman (1985).

(1)   Liangshan Nuosu (Sichuan Province)

tʮi55	ko33	ta33,	ɹu33	a44ɕi3	gʺ333	tsþ33	″21	đʺ44	ndzo21	èo44éi21.
here	LOC:in	COV:put	mushroom	many	CL	3P SG	search	π_1:GET	π_2:EXP	π_3:POSS
								Layer 1	**Layer 2**	**Layer 3**

'He might have found mushrooms in this place before.'

(2)   Liangshan Nuosu (Sichuan Province)

tso21đo ko3344	ko33	la33	sa55	o44	ma55.
3P PL	LOC	come	π_1:EXH	π_2:DP	π_3:FEAR
			Layer 1	**Layer 2**	**Layer 3**

'It is to be feared that they have all come.'

(3)   Weining Neasu (Guizhou Province)

…Ä21	sß33	¢o13	he33	le55.
3P SG	run	π_1:SEND	π_2:FUT	π_4:REPLY
		Layer 1	**Layer 2**	**Layer 4**

'[In order to reply you:] He will run up all the paths [he was supposed to run].'

(4)   Luoping Nase (Yunnan Province)

°″″21	•gÀo21ni33	li†21	kʺ33	ma21	di55	lo33.
3P SG	tomorrow	come	π_1:MOD:can	NEG	π_3:NESS	π_4:SUG
			Layer 1		**Layer 3**	**Layer 4**

'[What do you think:] It may not be possible for him to come tomorrow.'

(5)   Liangshan Nuosu (Sichuan Province)

a33ma55	i21mo21	go55	ndi55	èo44éi21	da21?
Mama	belly	ache	π_2:PER	π_3:POSS	π_4:ALT
			Layer 2	**Layer 3**	**Layer 4**

'Mom's belly might be aching once in a while, right?'

Verb $<$ Layer 1 (π_1) $<$ Layer 2 (π_2) $<$ Layer 3 (π_3) $<$ Layer 4 (π_4)

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