Tense and aspect in Lamnso

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Abstract: Yuka (1997) has identified three broad tenses in Lamnso. A closer look at these tenses and their specification of time reference will reveal a more complex tense structure of multiple past and future time allusions that distinguish different degrees of remoteness to the past and future tense categories. This paper seeks to determine the various degrees of remoteness to a given tense category exhibited in Lamnso. This paper investigates the relative relationship(s) between a tense marker that denotes the time of an action and the time reference preceding or following that action within the clause. It also examines aspect, interpreted as the way of conceiving the flow of an event (Comrie, 1976). This study identifies seven tense forms for Lamnso (P₃, P₂, P₁, P₀, F₁, F₂ and F₃), which specify time distinctions from the remote past (P₃) to the remote future (F₃) and three aspect forms. These ten tense and aspect forms combine with distinctive tones and time adverbials to derive a time reference structure whose cut-off points are sometimes fluid and non-rigid.

Key words: Lamnso, tense and aspect, tone, clauses, temporal distance

1. Preliminaries

Comrie (1985) conceives of tense as the grammaticalisation of location in time. Tense establishes the range within which languages vary expressions of time reference. Aspect is understood as the “... different ways of viewing the internal temporal constituency of a situation” (Holt 1943: 6). Unlike most English-type languages that have grammaticalised time reference basically as present, past and future, many African...
languages like Fula (Annot 1970), and Meta (Fogwe 2004) portray a
very rich tense system. A number of these languages exhibit very fine
distinctions in their perception of distance between two related events.
An event is generally situated ‘before’ or ‘after’ a given point in time. Some
languages tend to have more varied references in their specification of
the chronology of events leading to the occurrence of an action rather
than others. In this paper, we are interested not only in the simple basic
tense and aspect marking in Lamnso’ but also in the relationship that
exists between tone and the gradation of tense and aspect.

2. Tone in Lamnso

Lamnso’ exhibits eight lexically significant tones. Such
contrastive tones vary in pitch which is semantically significant. Grebe
and Grebe (1975) and Grebe (1984) have done an extensive study of
tone in Lamnso’. The language has three level tones:

(1) High tone [’] as in kán ‘monkey’ kún ‘beans’
MID tone [˘] as in way ‘market’ lój ‘horn’
Low tone [’] as in mbám ‘money’ láv ‘thread’

3 Lamnso’ verbs are basically monosyllabic but when peripheral syllables that mark
various grammatical phenomena are suffixed to the nuclear syllable, disyllabic verbs
are derived. Structurally, there are 3 classes of verbs in Lamnso’, two having a CVC
structure and one with a CVVC structure. The CVC verbs differ in tone. Grebe and
Grebe (1975: 6-7) have observed that the verbs with a high tone have minimal pairs,
each of them bearing a high-low tone. We label the group of verbs marked (A) in this foot
note as Class I and Class II verbs respectively and the CVVC verbs marked (B) below as
Class III verbs. All class I and class II verbs given below are represented in their infini-
tive forms:

(A) sán ‘write’ sañ.3 ‘dry’ fér ‘blow’ fer.3 ‘tell’/ ‘make’
mé ‘come closer’ me.3 ‘shake’ bée ‘slant’ bee.3 ‘shelter’
kiv ‘break’ kiv.3 ‘crack’ káŋ ‘fry’ káŋ.3 ‘choose’
tó ‘break open’ to.3 ‘bore’ yáv ‘take’ yáv.3 ‘eat hastily’
för ‘add seasoning’ för.3 ‘crush’ káŋ ‘belittle’ káŋ.3 ‘tie strongly’
ká ‘clear farm’ ka.3 ‘promise’ bú ‘beat’ bu.3 ‘honour’

The data presented above show that tone is not only contrastive in Lamnso’, but also
unpredictable in CV(C) roots. The semantic interpretation of Lamnso’ verbs vary accord-
ing to the various affixes they take. Such affixes encode the applicative, the causative,
the iterative, the reciprocal etc. Yuka (2008) illustrates the productive manifestations of
verbal extensions and classifies them into neat semantic groups showing how each of
them restricts event meaning and argument structure.

There is another class of verbs that bear a high tone but unlike the verbs in (A), this
class lacks minimal pairs and has a peculiar feature of long vowels. Again unlike Class
I and Class II verbs that are in the majority, Class III verbs below make up a very small
part of Lamnso’ verbs:

(B) téem ‘crooked’ kúuy ‘gather’
nár ‘cook’ ghée ‘loiter’
tiím ‘stand’ dzéer ‘roll’
léey ‘watch’ kóom ‘bear’

The verbs in the data above have long vowels. The two segments of these vowels can
bear two contrastive tones; for instance nàá ‘non-prog-cook’.
As a result of some tonological processes in a sequence of the type HL, LH etc. registered contour tones are derived. The language has five glide tones:

(2) Mid–High [ˉ́] as in wum\(^{2.1}\) ‘egg’
      High-Mid [ˇ́] as in nyoo\(^{1.2}\) ‘vegetable’
      High-Low [ˇ̀] as in rim\(^{1.3}\) ‘witch’
      Mid-Low [ˉ̀] as in wu\(^{2.3}\) ‘he/she’
      Mid-Low-High [ˉ́ˇ] as in yaa\(^{2.3.1}\) ‘grand mother’

The mid tone is not marked in language. The orthographic convention requires that only low and high tones be marked in Lamnso’ over the vowels within the syllables that bear them. In this paper we have indicated mid and contour tones on the vowels of the verbs to overtly represent a sequence of tones that we discern as relevant to our discussion. Lamnso’ tones fall into eight tone classes as shown in the data above. The contrastive tone is always on the nuclear syllable while the tone on the peripheral syllable is always mid-low. The high tone fluctuates freely with the mid-high while the low tone fluctuates with the mid-low. (See Grebe and Grebe (1975) and Grebe (1984) for a detailed discussion of tone in Lamnso’).

3. **Theoretical Orientation**

This paper embraces the structuralist approach in the light of Nurse (2008). Structuralism provides a better platform to isolate, describe and analyze the graduated past and future tenses in Lamnso’ which have been shown to be organized along degrees of remoteness from the present tense. This method of analysis makes possible a pragmatic determination of aspektual categories in this language without missing out on the semantic content(s). Dahl (1985) and Bybee et al. (1994) have demonstrated that Bantu languages generally load aspektual, temporal, locational, syntactic and other information through a series of prefixes and suffixes. A structural analysis is more productive for languages like Lamnso’ whose tense and aspect are either marked on the verb or on affixes to the verb.

4. **Defining the moment of predication**

This section of the paper investigates tenses in Lamnso’. The present tenses are investigated in section 4.1., past tenses in section 4.2., and future tenses in 4.3. Examples will be presented in the order of verb tone classes: Class I, Class II and Class III. Apart from illustrating the operation of tone in tense differentiation, these examples reveal
that tense in Lamnso’ describes events around the deictic centre. An identical event within the same context that in English can be interpreted to belong to present tense, can be understood in Lamnso’ as denoting a present progressive activity.

4.1. Present Tense

**Present Progressive Tense /ø + Ráð/ (P₀)**

(3) a) Kila ø sáŋ ŋwa’
kila P₀ prog-write book
‘Kila is writing a book.’

b) Wu ø saŋ₁.₃ nyám na’
S/he P₀ prog-dry meat cow
‘S/he is drying meat.’

c) Ver ø náá² kuń
We P₀ prog-cook beans
‘We are cooking beans.’

**Perfect of Recent Past /ø + Rád/ (P₀)**

(4) a) Kila ø sáŋ ŋwa’
kila P₀ non-prog-write book
‘Kila has just written a book.’

b) Wu ø saŋ nyám na’
S/he P₀ non-prog-dry meat cow
‘S/he just has dried beef.’

c) Ver ø náá kuń
We P₀ non-prog-cook beans
‘We have just cooked beans.’

The present tense in Lamnso’, unlike other tenses, has no overt affix or particle to mark it. We have chosen to mark its syntactic position in this paper with ø. The verb following the tense position always bears a tone on its first vowel, henceforth it is represented as a radical (Rád). Example (3) describes events that began before the utterance and are still in progress at the time of speaking. In (3a and c) verbs bear a high tone while in (3b) they bear a high-low tone. The semantic difference between the two identical verbs is signalled by the different tones they bear. (4a-c) denote events in the immediate past. Present tense is employed to describe these events because the reporter relates the event at the time it is completed. The two verbs in (4a and b) are disambiguated by the context of the utterance and the interpretation of the NP the verb selects as its complement. ‘Written (a book)’ and ‘dried (beef)’ are homophonous, indicating that there is a categorical tonal neutralization between the two verb classes. Example (4c) bears two contrastive tones (high and low) on the long vowel. The
non-progressive interpretation hinges on the low tone borne by the verb.

To avoid repeating examples, we opt to identify and analyze aspectual marking in the examples that we present to illustrate the various tense forms. The data in (3) for instance relays imperfective aspect marking which is conveyed by the high tone borne by the verb. Conversely, $P_0 + Rád$ conveys actions that are just ending as the utterance is being made. Like in most African languages, Lamnso’ tense and aspect in are intricately interwoven in form, conception and marking.

### 4.2. Past Tense

**Progressive Past Tense 1 /ki + Rád/ ($P_1$)**

(5) a) Tómlá $ki^2$ sáŋ ŋwá’ v ən
   Tomla $P_1$ prog-write book this
   ‘Tomla was writing this book (earlier today).’

b) Kila $ki^2$ sàŋ $i.3$ ndz əy sém
   Kila $P_1$ prog-dry cloths my
   ‘Kila was drying my clothes (earlier today).’

c) Áwune $ki^2$ náá $kún$
   They $P_1$ prog-cook beans
   ‘They were cooking beans (earlier today).’

**Perfective Past Tense 1 /ki + Rád/ ($P_1$)**

(6) a) Tómlá $ki^2$ sáŋ ŋwá’ v ən
   Tomla $P_1$ prog-write book this
   ‘Tomla wrote this book (earlier today).’

b) Kila $ki^2$ sâŋ ndza’y sém
   Kila $P_1$ prog-dry cloths my
   ‘Kila dried my clothes (earlier today).’

c) Áwune $ki^2$ náá $kún$
   They $P_1$ prog-cook beans
   ‘They cooked beans (earlier today).’

Examples (5) and (6) denote events that occurred earlier in the day. Today past tense form is realized as $ki^2$. $ki^2$ above is morphologically identical to the prefix of class 4 nouns in the Lamnso’ noun class system. $ki$ bears a mid tone. The high tone on the verb denotes progressive action; the low tone specifies perfective aspect. Lamnso’ speakers intuitively know that you cannot relate ‘a progressive or perfective event’ with a yesterday adverbial. For instance, if one employs (5a) (‘a progressive past tense’) with ‘a yesterday adverbial’, an unacceptable construction emerges. Again if one adds ‘a yesterday adverbial’ $yoóne$ to a ‘today non-progressive past tense’, an ill-formed construction is derived. (7a-b) illustrate these claims respectively:
The sentences in (5) portray events that were in progress just before the utterance. While the high tone on the verb relays the concept of continuity, P₁ indicates that the action took place today, in the past. In (6c) the low tone on the first verbal vowel specifies the completeness of the action in reference. This tone pattern can also depict an action which has just been completed before the commencement of another action as shown in (7c).

**Progressive Past 2 Tense /vi + Rád/ (P₂)**

(8) a) Tómlá á kā’ súm
    Tomla P₂ prog-clear farm
    ‘Tomla was clearing a farm (yesterday).’

b) Audu ú kūuy ñgwàsāŋ fo₂ nsaàlav
    Audu P₂ prog-gather maize from floor of house
    ‘Audu was gathering maize from the floor of the house (yesterday).’

c) Wirí í bá’rì láv nyuy²
    People P₂ prog-build house God
    ‘The people were building a church (yesterday).’

d) Wo₂ ó góv mu² kisāŋ
    you(sg) P₂ prog-accuse me empty
    ‘You were accusing me falsely (yesterday).’

e) Wonle é shó’ shitìr fo² shà’
    I P₂ prog-pull mushroom from swamp
    ‘The children were harvesting mushroom from the swamp (yesterday).’

P₂ is allomorphic in nature, and can be realized as á, é, í, ó, û. In (8a-e) above, the vowel quality of P₂ is the same as for the preceding vowel. If there is no vowel, other things determine quality.

Eastman (1980), Yuka (1997, 2000) and McGarrity and Botne (2002) have analyzed noun agreement in Lamnso’. In this paper, the nouns in subject position have been controlled not to include examples that will take subject agreement because our discussion on Tense and Aspect is not affected by the exclusion of intricate agreement relations that cut across the Lamnso’ NP. The different vowel realizations of P₂ result from vowel harmony, which is a common feature of the Bantu group of languages. Examples (9a-g) below show that each time the
final segment of the constituent preceding $P_2$ is a consonant, $P_2$ is realized as $e$:

(9) a) Ntásin é ka”1.3 wán s ɔ’la
   Ntásin $P_2$ prog-promise child trousers
   ‘Ntásin was promising the child a pair of trousers (yesterday).’

b) Shóŋ é kiv1.3 shuu lav Kila
   Thief $P_2$ prog-break mouth house kila
   ‘A thief was breaking the door to Kila’s house (yesterday).’

c) Yee lav é kiv1.3 ŋgi’
   Mother house $P_2$ prog-crack melon seeds
   ‘The wife was cracking melon seeds (yesterday).’

d) Wàn ŋ ∂v é tó’ wum2.1
   Child fowl $P_2$ prog-break open egg
   ‘The chicken was breaking-open the egg (yesterday).’

e) Wón é kúm ŋjúm e2 láv ŋwa’
   Children $P_2$ prog-play drum in house book
   ‘The children were drumming in the classroom (yesterday).’

f) Kán é tó”.3 shuu e2 wùn lav
   Monkey $P_2$ prog-bore mouth on wall house
   ‘The monkey was boring a hole on the wall of the house (yesterday).’

g) Lukar é fór ntòn kún
   Luke $P_2$ prog-add seasoning pot beans
   ‘Luke was adding seasoning to a pot of beans (yesterday).’

Our interpretation of (9a-g) above is that the consonant in between the final vowel of the subject NP and the $P_2$ syntactic position, blocks vowel fusion between $P_2$ and the final vowel of the preceding constituent. Examples (10a-d) below reveal yet another morphological manifestation of $P_2$. In these examples, the final segment of the constituent preceding $P_2$ is a semivowel (specifically $[y]$) which predicts $[i]$ after $[y]$:

(10) a) Tíy i for1.3 wán jwi
   Stone $P_2$ prog-crush child dog
   ‘A stone was crushing a puppy (yesterday).’

b) Faáy i réŋ melu’ yoóne
   Compound head $P_2$ prog-tap palm wine yesterday
   ‘The compound head was tapping palm wine yesterday.’

c) Mbuúy i yi ŋgwásan fo2 Tóm lá súm yoóne
   Chimpanzee $P_2$ prog-eat maize from Tomla farm yesterday
   ‘The chimpanzee was eating corn from Tomla’s farm yesterday.’

d) Nsòy i to”.3 shuu wùn lav yoóne
   Beetle $P_2$ prog-bore mouth wall house yesterday
   ‘A beetle was boring a hole on the wall of the house yesterday.’
It is obvious that in (8)-(10), the different variants of $P_2$ are determined by the variation in the final segment of the constituent that precedes tense. The following counter examples are ill-formed because of the wrong choice in each of the vowel representing $P_2$: 

(11) a) *Tömlá é ká’ súm
   Tomla $P_2$ prog-clear farm
b) *Shôŋ ó kiv shuu lav Kila
   Thief $P_2$ prog-break mouth house Kila
c) *Tömlá ú ká’ súm
   Tomla $P_2$ prog-clear farm
d) *Tiy á for$^{1,3}$ wán jwi
   Stone $P_2$ prog-crush child dog
e) Nso’ o wí’ fo’ Din yoóne
   Nso’ people $P_2$ prog-come from Din yesterday
   ‘The people of Nso’ were coming from Din yesterday.’
f) Kf’ ñyi ngwásàk Kila e kibám
   Weevils $P_2$ prog-eat maize kila in bag
   ‘The weevils were eating Kila’s maize in the bag.’
g) Nama’ á rsm Kila shuu yoóne
   Tobacco $P_2$ prog-smell kila mouth yesterday
   ‘Kila’s mouth was smelling of tobacco yesterday.’

Unlike (11a-d), that are ungrammatical, (11e-g) are grammatical. Notice that the glottal stop is transparent to the phonological process and does not block it.

In examples (8)-(10), the $P_2$ marker and the first verbal vowel bear a high tone, unlike the constructions in example (3) where only the verb bears the high tone in its initial vowel segment. (8)-(10) convey ‘imperfective yesterday’ events. Here, the $P_2$ tense form combines with the progressive form of the verb to derive the ‘imperfective yesterday’.

A derivation that relates ‘yesterday progressive’ past event in Lamnso’ cannot take a ‘today’ nor a ‘tomorrow’ adverbial. For example:

(12) a) *Shôŋ é kiv shuu lav Kila lán
   Thief $P_2$ prog-break mouth house Kila today
b) *Shôŋ é kiv shuu lav Kila kibvàashí
   Thief $P_2$ prog-break mouth house Kila tomorrow

Perfective Past Tense $2 /v^2 +$ Rad$^2/$

Perfective past tense 2 relates events that occurred the previous day. This time specification is captured in Lamnso’ by mid tones. The first mid tone is borne by the tense marker while the vowel of the verb bears the other mid tone. The mid tone on the tense marker represents ‘the perfective past tense 2’. Examine the following examples:
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Once one employs a $P_2$ tense form and a progressive verb form, the construction will be ill-formed because the tense form signals that the event had ended, while the verb indicates an imperfective event. An ungrammatical construction will also be derived if a speaker of Lamnso' opted to use a 'today adverbial with a $P_2$ tense form. For instance:

(14) a) *Tómlá a² ka’² súm
   Tomla $P_2$ prog-clear farm
   'Tomla cleared a farm (yesterday).'

b) *Tómlá a² ka’² súm lán
   Tomla $P_2$ prog-clear farm today
   'Tomla was clearing a farm today.'

Remote Progressive Past Tense 3 /v + Rád/ ($P_3$)

Remote progressive past events are conveyed in Lamnso' by one low tone on the tense marker and a high tone on the first vowel of the verb. Similarly, a low tone on the tense marker and another low tone on the first vowel of the verb express the remote non-progressive tense pattern in this language. $P_3$ is employed within contexts where the event reported is situated in some distant past. This distant past could be further specified by the use of adverbials like: bám yóóne 'day before yesterday', fiírí 'two or more days ago', kiyá kisə 'the year before the last'. Consider the examples below:

(15) a) (i) Ntásín è ká’ wán sə̀la bám yóóne
   Ntasin $P_3$ prog-promise child trousers after yesterday
   'Ntasin promised the child a pair of trousers the day before yesterday.'

(ii) Tómlá à ká’ súm fiírí
   Tomla $P_3$ prog-clear farm two or more days ago
   'Tomla was clearing a farm two or more days ago.'
Remote Perfective Past Tense 3 /\v + Ràd/ (P₃)

(16) a) (i) Tömlá à kà’ sùm fiírí
Tomla P₃ non-prog-clear farm today
‘Tomla cleared a farm two or more days ago.’
(ii) Ntásin è kà’ wán sala bám yoone
Ntasin P₃ non-prog-promise child trousers after yesterday
‘Ntasin promised the child a pair of trousers the day before yesterday.’

b) (i) Shòŋ è kiv shuu lav Kila ngàm yis
Thief P₃ prog-break mouth house kila week that
‘A thief had broken the door to Kila’s house the other week.’
(ii) Yee lav è kiv nŋí’ kiya kísa
Mother house P₃ prog-crack melon seeds year that
‘The wife had cracked melon seeds the other year.’

The native speaker of Lamnso’ knows that he/she cannot choose a P₃ tense form and a ‘today or yesterday adverbial’ to derive a grammatical sentence. (17a-b) supports the claim that the tenses have the meaning ‘before yesterday’. These examples are in contrast, because they contain the contradictory combination of the ‘before yesterday’ tense and an adverb that refers to yesterday or today:

(17) a) *Tömlá à kà’ sùm lan
Tomla P₃ non-prog-clear farm today
b) *Shòŋ è kiv shuu lav Kila yoónè
Thief P₃ non-prog-break mouthhouse kila yesterday

What (17) reveals is that a P₃ tense form cannot take a ‘today’ or ‘yesterday’ adverbial. (17) is evidence to our claim that Lamnso’ exhibits subtle implicational differences with adverbials that specify ‘today past’ and ‘yesterday past’. But once an event is two or more days old and can take the fiírí adverbial, then it can also take any other past time adverbials as long as such adverbials do not relate events not later than two days ago. For instance:

(18) a) Tömlá à kà’ sùm fiírí
Tomla P₃ non-prog-clear farm today
‘Tomla cleared the farm more than two days ago.’

b) Tömlá à kà’ sùm ngàm yisá
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Tomla P₃ non-prog-clear farm week that
‘Tomla cleared the farm a week ago.’

c) Tómłá à kà’ sùm ɲwee ves₃
Tomla P₃ non-prog-clear farm month that
‘Tomla cleared the farm a month ago.’

d) Tómłá à kà’ sùm kiya kis
Tomla P₃ non-prog-clear farm year that
‘Tomla cleared the farm a year ago.’

4.3. Future Tense (F)

In Lamnso’ future tense exhibits variants which distinguish time extensions of events that are yet to take place. In this paper we split the future tense (F) in Lamnso’ into three future variants: Future (F₁), Future (F₂) and Remote Future (F₃). Examine the examples below:

Future 1 /yii² ² + Rad²/

(19) a) Tómłá yii² ² yun² bṿy rèn lán
Tomla F₁ buy goat this today
‘Tomla will buy this goat today.’

b) i) Kila yii² ² su² ndẓy sém nkùr
Kila F₁ wash clothes my evening
‘Kila will wash my clothes in the evening.’

(ii) *Kila yii² ² su² ndẓy sém lèn
Kila F₁ wash clothes my now
‘Kila will wash my clothes now.’

c) (i) Áwune yii² ² yụi²ri kán vıtṣ₃ vin
They F₁ kill monkey night this
‘They will kill a monkey this night.’

(ii) *Áwune yii² ² yụi²ri kán bàm kiya
They F₂ kill monkey after year
‘They will kill a monkey after year.’

Examples (19a-c) describe activities that will take place within the course of the day. The perfective interpretation requires a mid tone on the verb. Example (19b(ii)) is unacceptable in Lamnso’ because the construction employs an adverbial that situates the expected event in the immediate future. F₂ places the same event within the course of the day the utterance is made, thus introducing a contradiction. In the same manner, (19c(ii)) is ill-formed because F₁ is matched with the wrong adverbial. The same argument holds for (19c(ii)) which contrasts with the example (19c(iii)).

Future 2 /wiy² + Rád²/ (FUT₂)

(20) a) Tómłà wiy² yun² bṿy rèn bàm ɲgàm kibṿsḥi
Tomla F₂ buy goat this behind week tomorrow
‘Tomla will buy this goat after next week.’
Simple future tense can take adverbials that specify the exact point in time within which an event is expected to occur. Unlike $F_1$ above, $F_2$ cannot take a ‘today’ or a ‘tomorrow’ adverbial. For example:

(21) Áwune wi$y^2$ yu$^{2i2ri}$ kán bàm vi$y^2$ vitàn
They F$_2$ kill monkey behind year five
‘They will kill a monkey after five years.’

From the examples above, it is evident that Lamnso’ portrays a fluid, non-rigid future reference system for events expected to happen two or more days in the future. Here, the specification of a reference point in the future depends on the choice of an adverbial that encodes a time point beyond two days.

**Future $F_3$ /g$\text{ha}n^+$ Râd/**

(22) a) Yuven$^3$ ghan$^2$ du$^2$ sùm kiyá kis$\dot{s}$
Yuven F$_3$ non-prog-go farm year that
‘Yuven will go to the farm the other year (i.e. the year after next year).’

b) M$^3$ ghan$^2$ su$^2$ ndz$^\dot{y}$ sèm bàm viyá vitàn
I F$_3$ non-prog-wash clothes my behind years five
‘I will wash my cloths after five years.’

c) Áwune ghan$^3$ bom$^2$ láv bàm viyá ghv$^3$m
They F$_3$ non-prog-build house behind years ten
‘They will build a house after ten years.’

(22) shows that $F_3$ can take only adverbials that refer to some distant future. Such a future could be months and years ahead, but definitely not days as shown in (23a-b):

(23) a) *Yuven ghan$^3$ du$^2$ sùm bàm kibv$^3$shì
Yuven Fut$_3$ non-prog-go farm after tomorrow

b) *Yuven ghan$^3$ du$^2$ sùm bàm vishiy saâmbà
Yuven Fut$_3$ non-prog-go farm after days seven
Examples (22) and (23) present events expected to take place in the future. F₁, F₂, F₃ are marked by yìî₂₂, wîy₂, and ghan₂, respectively. These future makers are auxiliary verbs in Lamnso’ (yìî₂₂ ‘do’, wîy₂ ‘come’ and ghan₂ ‘go’). yìî₂₂ can be used with adverbials that describe events that are imminent, wîy₂ takes adverbials that are not imminent and yet not remote while ghan₂ is used in combination with adverbials that relate events which will take place in a long time to come.

All the verbs in examples (22) and (23) relay non-progressive events and bear mid tones. Unlike the remote non-progressive past, the remote progressive future tense is captured by a progressive element a as shown in the following examples:

(24) a) Kila yìî₂₂ a² ki₂v ŋgí kila F₁ prog crack melon seeds
‘Kila will be cracking melon seeds (today).’
b) Kila wîy₂ a² ki₂v ŋgí kila F₂ prog crack melon seeds
‘Kila will be cracking melon seeds (after a week).’
c) Kila ghan₂ a² ki₂v ŋgí kila F₃ prog crack melon seeds
‘Kila will be cracking melon seeds (after three years).’

In (24), the role of the high tone is taken over by the morphologically overt progressive marker (a).

Given our analysis of the Lamnso’ tense system above, seven tense forms can be identified: P₃, P₂, P₁, P₀, F₁, F₂ and F₃. These reference time system can summarily be represented as in (25):

(25)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>P₁</th>
<th>P₂</th>
<th>P₃</th>
<th>P₀</th>
<th>F₁</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Progressive</td>
<td>V+Rád</td>
<td>V+Rád</td>
<td>ki+Rád</td>
<td>Ø+Rád</td>
<td>yìî₂₂ +Rad²</td>
<td>wîy₂ +Rad²</td>
<td>ghan₂ +Rád²</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perfective</td>
<td>V+Rád</td>
<td>V² +Rad²</td>
<td>ki+Rád</td>
<td>Ø+Rád</td>
<td>yìî₂₂ a² +Rad²</td>
<td>wîy₂ a² +Rad²</td>
<td>ghan₂ + a² +Rad²</td>
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Another tense/aspect constituent of the yìî₂₂ ‘do’ / wîy₂ ‘come’ / ghan₂ ‘go’ type is sì. sì specifies inception. It brings immediacy to events that are just about to begin or to those that have just begun. The following examples utilize past and future imperfective tense forms. Perfective examples will adopt the same format of derivations:

(26) a) Kila ø sì sâŋ ŋwa’
kila P₀ inceptive prog-write book
‘Kila has started writing a book (now).’
b) Kila ki sì sâŋ ŋwa’
kila P₁ inceptive prog-write book
‘Kila started writing a book (earlier today).’
Examples (26a-f) show that the sí bears a stable high tone. It is syntactically placed after the tense marker in the past tense constructions and immediately after the subject NP in the future tense derivations. Notice that the progressive marker in the future tense (26d-g) is a, unlike the high tone that is employed in the past tense constructions.

Yuka and Isimeme (2005) have extensively examined negation in Lamnso’ They have shown that Lamnso’ adopts a simple strategy to negate declarative sentences. yo’, the negative element, is base generated before the tense position. Our examples show that while P₀ and P₁ are expectedly realized as ø and ki respectively, P₂ is realized as a. Take a look at the following examples:

(27) a) Kila yo² ø sàŋ ŋwa’
    kila neg P₀ prog-write book
    ‘Kila is not writing a book (now).’

b) Kila yo² ki sàŋ ŋwa’
    kila neg P₁ prog-write book
    ‘Kila was not writing a book (earlier today).’

c) Kila yo² ó lo a² sa²ŋ ŋwa’
    kila neg P₂ particle prog write book
    ‘Kila was not writing a book (yesterday).’

d) Kila yo² yi²² lo² a² sàŋ² ŋwa’
    kila neg F₁ particle prog write book
    ‘Kila will not be writing a book (later today).’

e) Kila yo² wiy² lo² a² sàŋ² ŋwa’
    kila neg F₂ particle prog write book
    ‘Kila will not be writing a book (some time to come).’

f) Kila yo² ghan² lo² a² sàŋ² ŋwa’
    kila neg F₃ particle prog write book
    ‘Kila will not be writing a book (a long time to come).’

The data in (27) show that the vowel of P₂ takes the qualities of the final vowel of the constituent preceding tense. The last segment of the negative marker is a glottal stop. Following our suggestion that the
glottal stop is too weak a consonant (in Lamnso’) to block the $P_2$ vowel from copying the last vowel of the preceding constituent, $P_2$ surfaces as a copy of the last vowel of the preceding constituent. The particle $lo$ appears in (27c-f). In each of these derivations, the verb does not bear a high tone that marks imperfective aspect in (29a-b). The progressive interpretation is captured by this progressive marker (a). $lo$ ‘soon, about to’ precedes this progressive marker. Lamnso’ interprets ‘imperfective yesterday past’ events and all ‘future imperfective’ events as incomplete processes. These processes are hypothetically conceived to begin at a point X. The particle $lo$ therefore marks in Lamnso’ durative aspect of such processes beginning from point X.

5. Conclusion

This paper has described the structure of tense and aspect in Lamnso’. It revealed very interesting time references in this language. Tense and aspect in Lamnso’ are intricately interwoven. Ten tense and aspect forms have been identified. They have portrayed that Lamnso’ exhibits multiple time references. Tonal differences semantically derive distinct tense forms which, when combined with adverbials and other forms of aspectual marking ($a$, $si$, and $lo$), can extend the aspectual specification of the derivation. When consecutive events are related in a single clause, the syntactic role of the sequence tends to neutralize absolute time reference for dependent clauses. Each event occurs only at a time relative to the time of the preceding event(s). The cut-off points within Lamnso’ tense and aspect systems are sometimes fluid, non-rigid and vague. It can therefore be appropriate to say that Lamnso’ tenses are relative in character.

References


**Abbreviations**

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<th>Symbol</th>
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<td>ø</td>
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