Proto-Lahiri

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Contents

List of Abbreviations

Glossing abbreviations and conventions used are those given by the Leipzig Glossing Rules: `https://www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php`.
Additional abbreviations are given below.

CAP	Capabilitive modal.
CIRC	Circumfix.
CNS	Construct state.
DEON	Deontic modality.
DIR	Direct sensory evidential.
EPIS	Epistemic modal.
EXP	Experiential aspect.
INFR	Inferential evidential.
INV	Inverse.
NDIR	Non-direct sensory evidential.
PAU	Paucal number.

1 Introduction

Proto-Lahiri is the reconstructed common ancestor of the Lahiri languages. The grammar of Proto-Lahiri presented in the present text is the culmination of several decades of comparative linguistic work by a number of researchers in the field of the Lahiri languages, and it is their contributions from which much of the material presented is derived.

The Lahiri languages constitute a genetic grouping of indigenous languages spoken across Lahan and in some areas of mainland Puzimm. These languages have a long history of contact both between one another and with languages of other language families, most notably a number of Sanju-Jutean and Asuranesian languages, which are also spoken by indigenous Lahani groups, and the Neviran language of the Saruan Empire, which controlled much of Lahan beginning in the 17th century. The influences of these other languages leave their mark on the modern Lahiri languages and, along with limited data, have made comparative linguistic work on the Lahiri languages a challenge. Where possible, the influences of these languages have been recognised and filtered out of the reconstruction presented here, however research is ongoing and Lahani linguistics is a rapidly evolving field.

Most estimates of the age of Proto-Lahiri indicate it was spoken as a single language around 4000 BCE, however estimates vary between authors, ranging from 1000 BCE to 6000 BCE. Linguistic and archaeological data have proven inconclusive, and in some cases contradictory. No stance will be taken on the matter in this work. Similarly, agreement on where Proto-Lahiri was spoken has yet to be found. Archaeological work finds evidence of settlement both on Lahan and on mainland Puzimm around the appropriate time, and at the time of writing there are insufficient means to date these settlements to the required accuracy. Linguistic evidence in the form of reconstructed vocabulary give hints as to cultural aspects of the Proto-Lahiri speakers, but do not contradict archaeological evidence. Additional evidence in favour of a Puzimm urheimat comes in the form of the mainland Lahiri languages and the family's proposed genetic affiliation with the Adzo-Neviric languages of north and eastern Baredina, however migrations from Lahan to Puzimm have been posited and the Ekuo-Lahiri[1] hypothesis has yet to gain wider acceptance.

Genetic and archaeological evidence suggests the speakers of Proto-Lahiri (or the speakers of some ancestor, depending on one's stance in the aforementioned location matter) migrated across the Lahan Sea between 4000 and 3500 BCE. From this initial location in western Lahan, successive migrations along the coast and into the interior resulted in the divergence of Proto-Lahiri into a number of daughter groups which continued to develop into the modern Lahiri language family.

2 Phonology

The phonology of Proto-Lahiri presented in this section is that given by Halvorsen (1991). This is the current most widely-accepted view within Lahiri comparative linguistics, and is recommended as a more in-depth view of the reconstruction of the phonology of Proto-Lahiri. What follows is an abbreviation of the material contained therein.

[1] The name given to the macro-grouping consisting of the Lahiri and Adzo-Neviric languages.

		Labial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stop	Voiced	p	t		k	
	Voiceless	b	d			
Nasal			n			
Fricative	Voiced	ɸ	s		x	h
	Voiceless	β	z			
Affricate	Voiced		t͡s			
	Voiceless		d͡z			
Lateral			l			
Approximant				j	w	

Table 1: Consonant phonemes of Proto-Lahiri.

High	ɨ
Mid	ə
Low	ä

Table 2: Vowel phonemes of Proto-Lahiri.

2.1 Consonants

Table 1 shows the consonant phonemes of Proto-Lahiri. This reconstructed inventory is fairly unremarkable. Notable are the absences of voiced counterparts to the voiceless velar consonants, as well as the absence of nasals at labial and velar articulations.

2.2 Vowels

Table 2 gives the vowel phonemes of Proto-Lahiri.

2.3 Phonotactics

2.4 Phonological processes

Epenthetic *aa* is regularly inserted in inflection to break up illicit clusters.

3 Noun phrases and possession

Noun phrases in Proto-Lahiri are relatively unmarked, and depend more on position and inherent categories such as animacy along with verbal morphology to indicate their role in the clause. Possession is a notable exception, with nouns being marked for construct state in agreement with their possessor, however this is not required in instances of inalienable or natural[2] possession.

[2] 'Natural' here refers to a sense of how commonplace the assocation is, for instance "my mother" can be considered more 'natural' than "my dog" as everyone has a mother but not everyone has a dog. The case can be made for considering these to be endocentric compounds, however this analysis will not be pursued here.

	SG	PL	PAU
G1		*n-*	*in-*
G2		*d-*	*ad-*
G3		*l-*	*el-*
G4		*t-*	*at-*
G5		*j-*	*iij-*
G6		*yee-*	*eeyee-*
G7		*k-*	*aak-*
G8		*f-*	*eef-*
G9	*baa-*		*daa-*
G10		*itii-*	*tii-*
G11	*nwe-*		*nwi-*
G12		*ikii-*	*kii-*
G13	*xee-*		*aaxii-*

Table 3: Animacy class and number exponents.

Proto-Lahiri exhibits a complex system of nominal classification which survives in various forms in the modern Lahiri languages. All nominals (with the exception of nominal adjectives, which take the classification of their antecedent) are classed into one of thirteen animacy classes. This classification, unlike the looser number and register classes, is more or less fixed, being violated only in rare and specific pragmatic contexts. These classes are arranged in a hierarchy, which is relevant to features of verbal marking and constituent order in the clause, and is described in detail in section 4, however is largely irrelevant to noun phrase marking and structure.

3.1 Number

Nouns distinguish three numbers: singular, plural, and paucal. Paucal marks a small number of something. These markers also differ based off of the animacy class of the nominal. In most cases the singular is unmarked, however classes G9, G11, and G13 have an unmarked plural.

Table 3 shows the marker forms.

3.2 Possession marking

There is no synthetic marking for possessors.

Possessed nouns are marked as being in the construct state. Construct state markers agree with the possessor in number and animacy, giving a large number of forms for different number and animacy combinations.

Table 4 shows the marker forms.

4 Animacy

Proto-Lahiri's animacy system plays a central role in the language's morphosyntax.

	SG	PL	PAU
1	*t-*	*t⟩ ⟨vi*	*d-*
2	*h-*	*nw⟩ ⟨ki*	*nw-*
G1	*ve-*	*lw⟩ ⟨ii*	*lw-*
G2	*w-*	*aw⟩ ⟨ii*	*aw-*
G3	*n-*	*nw⟩ ⟨ti*	*nw-*
G4	*d-*	*d⟩ ⟨ii*	*dw-*
G5	*l-*	*l⟩ ⟨i*	*lab-*
G6	*s-*	*s⟩ ⟨i*	*sat-*
G7	*jii-*	*jii⟩ ⟨ii*	*jiiw-*
G8	*y-*	*y⟩ ⟨ee*	*w-*
G9	*se-*	*se⟩ ⟨i*	*kw-*
G10	*c-*	*c⟩ ⟨ii*	*f-*
G11	*p-*	*p⟩ ⟨i*	*b-*
G12/13	*tw-*	*tw⟩ ⟨ii*	*tw-*
4	*w-*	*w⟩ ⟨wii*	*w-*

Table 4:

There are 13 animacy classes based on semantic criteria. They are as follows.

G1 (Sacred) This class contains a wide variety of nominals that broadly share the characteristic of being sacred, protected for religious reasons, or culturally salient. This includes words such as *aacéél* 'deity' or *keepexé* 'medicine,' as well as celestial events such as *siiklá* 'lightning' and *xalwééiin* 'solstice,' cultural activities such as *wéktaax* 'language,' *halííy* 'song,' and *tiiwál* 'right, entitlement,' as well as some oddities such as *xawépaa* 'lava' and *iiskaí* 'pride.'

G2 (Adult sentients) This class fairly straightforwardly contains nominals that refer to adult sentient beings. This includes agentives such as *épyeln* 'traveller' and *pyíliiw* 'leader,' kinship terms such as *késda* 'daughter' and *tiizdí* 'father,' or titles such as *síyaa* 'heir' and *jii* 'priest.'

G3 (Flying animals) This class contains flying animals such as birds and bats, notably excluding flying insects which occur lower in G11, as well as a number of flightless birds. Perhaps one reason for these nominals having a class to themselves, and its relative prominence on the hierarchy, is reflected in the importance of birds in ancient Lahani life; birds were the dominant group of vertebrates on Lahan before the arrival of humans and find a special, often sacred place in Lahani religion and culture. Examples of this class include *vííysciik* 'kestrel,' *pyiiví* 'songbird (generic),' and *pelvé* 'moa.'

G4 (Large animals) This class contains large animals. This class contains most words for large livestock such as *idlάát* 'domestic cattle,' *besk* 'livestock,' and *nexinaká* '?horse,' as well as large predators such as *kíyee* '?lion,' *waí* 'crocodile,' *ákwii* 'shark,' and *beejíy* 'whale.'

G5 (Medium animals) This class contains medium-size animals. A notable outlier within this class is terms for pre-adult humans such as *paníík* 'child (benthi),' *sieyát* 'child (lethe),' *taanén* 'child (generic),' and *zecííw* 'baby.' Other words in this class include *xisnéx* 'pig,' *kátii* 'goat,' and *waxéni* 'monkey.'

G6 (Small animals) This class contains small animals. This class includes words such as *swéétee* 'small fish,' *déénix* 'turtle,' and *beelsé* 'salamander.'

G7 (Moderates) This class contains semi-animate nominals. These are nouns which behave or seem animate in some way but do not clearly belong to one of the higher animacy classes. This excludes plants, which are found in G8 and G9. There are also a number of nominals in this class that cannot be clearly thought of as being classified by a single characteristic, hence this class is in part a 'default' class for nouns with no clear classification. Common types of semi-animate nominals found in this class are: liquids, gases, and particulates such as *yiiwíí* 'wind,' *kísyen* 'wave,' *daiiz* 'blood,' *ííyek* 'ash,' and *weeywijíl* 'mead'; body parts such as *tixiwééj* 'hair' and *wéékykekaa* 'skin' and the more abstract *tixkás* 'name' and *yakíy* 'culture, ethnicity'; abilities or traits such as *cáása* 'knowledge,' *tilédeel* 'ability,' and *ziivelέw* 'weight'; and a number of outliers such as *síízeka* 'salt,' *tikyáxek* 'time,' *tiiwlák* 'ghost,' and *hyii* 'excess, too much.'

G8 (Large plants) This class contains primarily terms for different trees such as *peei* 'tree (generic),' *káiypa* 'date palm,' and *awíí* 'sago palm' as well as materials derived from those trees such as *képee* 'wood (material)' and *kíndee* 'raw wood, broken branch.'

G9 (Small plants) This class contains most other terms for plants and plant derivatives that are not classed in G8. This includes *eetfé* 'flower,' *seelíí* 'seed,' *biiséé* 'rice (grain),' *eenjáiin* 'rice (plant),' and *jiiyt* 'branch.' One outlier in this class is *nehííw* 'egg (uncooked),' which is conjectured to have derived from Ekuo-Lahiri **məhíːw* 'seed.'

G10 (Constructs) This class contains inanimate objects that have been created by humans such as *ákiin* 'bow (weapon),' *siiyál* 'knife,' and *taví* 'string,' as well as the more abstract *ayiné* 'kingdom, alliance'. This also includes cooked foods such as *íxiihbi* 'bread' and the generic *cay* 'food (cooked), ingredient,' as well as the food-adjacent *byek* 'eggshell,' presumably by analogy with *yihecí* 'cooked egg.'

G11 (Invertebrates) This class contains terrestrial invertebrates such as *liikéé* 'spider,' *niiyíín* 'earthworm,' *weeyííb* 'fly,' and *yikyiiwiiné* 'ant.'

G12 (Landscape) This class broadly contains 'positions': local topography such as *cíwnyiik* 'hill' and *tiwxéé* 'valley'; climatic features and vegetation such as *jálnewit* 'grassland, savannah' and *piiyééa* 'dense forest'; buildings and architecture such as *jínep* 'camp' and *kiplenίít* 'door, lip, flap'; as well as a majority of body parts such as *naan* 'nose,' *laawíí* 'tongue,' *híwnelxeey* 'belly,' and *peycíí* 'buttocks.'

G13 (Uncouth) This class contains terms for socially unacceptable or harmful things: parasites such as *pik* 'louse'; adverse events such as *siwéks* 'death,' *niiy* 'disease,' and *céétpaka* 'violence'; and dangerous things or taboo words such as *dacá* 'monstrous creature.'

Table 5 gives the prevalence of different noun classes in Halvorsen's dictionary.

5 Verbs and verb phrases

The Proto-Lahiri verb phrase finds a greater variety of marking than nominal elements, with a limited tense system, supplemented by various aspectual markers, as well as a three-way system

Noun class	Percentage	Count
G1	7.8	31
G2	8.6	34
G3	5.0	20
G4	6.3	25
G5	4.5	18
G6	5.8	23
G7	17.9	71
G8	2.5	10
G9	5.5	22
G10	5.8	23
G11	2.5	10
G12	26.5	105
G13	1.3	5
Total	**100.0**	**397**

Table 5: The occurrence of different noun classes yah yeet

of evidentiality and three modal particles.

5.1 Evidentiality

Evidentiality indicates the source from which the speaker obtained the information of an utterance. Three evidential categories are distinguished: the direct evidential, marking events which the speaker participated in or observed directly; the indirect evidential, marking events which the speaker observed indirectly such as by hearing, 'internal states' such as emotion, or second-hand information such as that gained by reading or instruction; and finally the inferential evidential, which indicates information such as world knowledge or *a priori* knowledge such as inferences, logical deductions, or assumptions.

Evidentiality is an obligatory marking category, and omission of evidential marking on any verb will always result in an ungrammatical utterance, regardless of the semantic or syntactic status of the verb. Certain verbs or syntactic positions license only a single evidential, making the choice of marking vacuous, however marking is still required in these instances.

Evidential marking can be used independently of TAM marking; neither category imposes any restrictions on the other. The capabilitive modal *ki* requires the use of the inferential evidential, however neither of the other modalities impose restrictions on evidentiality marking. Evidentiality does, however, have certain non-compositional semantics when used with the other modalities, particularly the epistemic modal *le*. This interaction makes analysing Proto-Lahiri's evidentiality as a form of epistemic modality problematic; this matter will be discussed further in section 5.2.2.

As evidentiality provides information about the source of information for the utterance itself, not the event described by the utterance. This is illustrated in (1). This sentence uses the inferential evidential as it is the speaker's decision and hence *a priori* knowledge that they will be going hunting. The direct evidential is not used as, although the speaker will experience the event directly, that has not yet occurred at the time of the utterance and it is not the source from which

the speaker receives the information.

(1) *vi ka ji-kyaví<nye>t lekáá=ye*
1S DEON INFR-hunt<SBJV> EXP=now
'I will be going hunting.'

Additionally, among verbs of perception and knowledge, usage of certain evidentials is infelicitous for obvious semantic reasons. This results in obligatory "tautological" markings that have become optional in some daughter families.

The direct evidential is marked by the prefix *s-*. It is used for events of which the speaker has direct evidence such as by direct participation, direct line of sight, touch or other physical sensation, or, rarely, second-hand information from a trusted source such as elders or the gods.

(2) *vi saa-dakés-seey ki*
1S DIR-cut-INV G6
'(I felt) it (the animal) scratch me.'

The direct evidential is obligatory with verbs of perception that lexically encode these same sources of information.

(3) *vi saa-saawét ki*
1S DIR-look.at G6
'I saw it (the animal).'

(4) a. **vi naa-saawét ki*
1S NDIR-look.at G6

b. **vi ji-saawét ki*
1S INFR-look.at G6

The indirect evidential is marked by the prefix *n-*. It is used for events that the speaker experienced indirectly or of which the speaker has second-hand information. This includes indirect sensory perception such as hearing events which are out of line of sight, smell, or instinct,[3], 'internal states' such as emotion or physical well-being and second-hand knowledge such as hearsay or written information.[4]

(5) *étaa naa-taawéni jaa-déhek*
G2 NDIR-give.birth PL-two
'(I heard) she had twins.'

[3]Instinct, interestingly, is treated as a sensory phenomenon rather than a form of *a priori* knowledge, which would place it in the domain of the inferential evidential.

[4]As Proto-Lahiri is not believed to have been written, the use of the indirect evidential for written information is only attested in daughter languages, which also often make other significant changes to Proto-Lahiri's verbal marking system.

modal	raised	creaky	raised
i	*ye*	*ii*	*yee*
a	*i*	*aa*	*ii*
e	*a*	*ee*	*aa*

Table 6: Vowel raising chart.

5.2 Mood and modality

The modal system of Proto-Lahiri can be separated into two formally distinct but co-dependent subsystems, here referred to individually as mood and modality. While these two subsystems are closely related semantically they can be distinguished on the basis of their form, with mood being marked by synthetic means and modals being marked phonologically separate but syntactically bound words.

The mood subsystem concerns itself with the reality status of a given assertion. The primary mood categories are the unmarked realis, the irrealis, and the dubitative, a more specific form of irrealis which indicates a speaker's doubt that an event will or has occurred.

The modal subsystem concerns itself with epistemic and deontic modalities. The modal categories are the capabilitive *ki*, the epistemic *le*, and the deontic *ka*. Each of these markers can co-occur with any of the moods, with varying interpretations, hence, along with the morphological differences, the modal markers are considered a distinct system which is orthogonal to the mood system.

5.2.1 Mood

The realis is the basic form of any verb stem, being unmarked and relatively semantically neutral. It is used for situations that either have already happened, are happening, or are guaranteed to happen, and is therefore independent of tense and aspect.

The two marked moods, the irrealis and dubitative, both use a vowel raising process as part of their exponents. This process raises the low and central vowels /ä/ and /ə/ to /ə/ and /ɨ/ respectively. The high vowel /ɨ/ cannot raise any further and breaks into /jə/. Phonation is preserved in this process; creaky vowels will raise to their creaky counterparts. Table 6 shows the basic and raised versions of each vowel.

The irrealis is used for a wide range of events which are, in some sense, not real. This includes hypotheticals, future events, the protasis of conditionals, clauses with certain modalities, inferred knowledge[5], and as emphasis in negated clauses. The irrealis is marked by infixing *n* after the final vowel in the stem. The final vowel is then copied to the position immediately following the infixed nasal and raised by the process described above.

[5]The irrealis has some overlap with the inferential evidential here, however the inferential evidential's other uses clearly distinguish it, as does the use of the realis mood for inferred knowledge of which the speaker is certain.

	strong	weak
epistemic	*le*	
deontic	*ka*	
capabilitive	*ki*	

Table 7: The modal system of Proto-Lahiri.

	strong	weak
epistemic		
deontic	must	can
capabilitive		

Table 8: The modal system of English.

(6) *étaa* *ji-wéé<nii>yk* *wit* *w-iitexékaa*
G2 INFR-go.to<IRR> PFV G2.CNS-home
'He might have gone home.'

5.2.2 Modality

Proto-Lahiri has three modal particles that precede the verb. These cover epistemic and deontic modalities and do not specify quantificational force; rather their primary distinction is in modal base. This can be contrasted with the modal system of English, which makes its primary distinction in quantificational force and does not specify modal base. Table 8 shows the modal system of English, in contrast to table 7 which shows the modal particles of Proto-Lahiri.

The modal particle *ki* has its modal base in capability—the a priori physical or mental ability of the subject. This is to be distinguished from the epistemic modal *le* which can also have capabilitive meaning but differs in the origin of capability, with the epistemic specifying ability from knowledge and the capabilitive *ki* specifying inherent ability. For this reason, *ki* is rarely used with human or sentient subjects as human ability is considered to derive from knowledge rather than inherent ability or instinct, as with an animal.

The capabilitive modal *ki* requires the main verb to be marked for the inferential evidential; other evidential markings are ungrammatical.

(7) a. *twixéw* *he* *ki* *ji-swíícep* *piiyééa*
axe PROX CAP INFR-cut.through dense.forest
'This axe can cut through dense forest.'

b. *twixéw* *he* *ki* *ji-swííce<ni>p* *piiyééa*
axe PROX CAP INFR-cut.through<SBJV> dense.forest
'This axe might be able to cut through dense forest.'
'This axe must be able to cut through dense forest.'

As Proto-Lahiri's modals do not specify modal force, (7b) permits alternate translations with varying modal force.

Note the variation in meaning based off of mood marking on the verb in (7). In the realis, as the situation is real, only one interpretation is valid, in which the axe is definitely able to cut through dense forest. However, in the irrealis, as the situation becomes hypothetical, two interpretations become valid because of the unspecified modal force.

ki also distinguishes itself from *le* in permitting circumstantial readings, where *le* does not. *ki* allows human or sentient subjects in circumstantial readings, and use of a human or sentient subject with *ki* tends to cause a circumstantial interpretation. Examples (8a) and (8b) remain true even if the speaker knows that there are no reeds growing in the estuary, whereas such prior knowledge will render (8c) false.

A circumstantial reading will tend to require the use of the inferential evidential, however other evidential markings are not forbidden and carry a particular semantic flavour. This can be seen in (8b) which carries the implication that the speaker has personally investigated the conditions in the estuary with the intent of determining whether the conditions allow for reeds to grow, in comparison to the implicationally weaker (8a), in which the speaker may have only a brief acquaintance with the conditions in the estuary.

Likewise, the use of *le* in situations where it contrasts with a circumstantial reading, as in (8c), will tend to require the use of the direct or indirect evidential as the epistemic reading stipulates certain knowledge.

(8) a. *syiibeeíín ki ji-yiicá xaa-cééaa ixé*
reed CAP INFR-grow G12.CNS-estuary on.top
'Reeds can grow in the estuary (based off of what I know of reeds and the conditions in the estuary, although there may not be any growing there).'

b. *syiibeeíín ki s-yiicá xaa-cééaa ixé*
reed CAP DIR-grow G12.CNS-estuary on.top
'Reeds can grow in the estuary (I have gone and investigated the conditions in the estuary myself, and this is my conclusion, although there may not be any growing there).'

c. *syiibeeíín le s-yiicá xaa-cééaa ixé*
reed EPIS DIR-grow G12.CNS-estuary on.top
'Reeds can grow in the estuary.'

The modal *ka* expresses deontic modality—what could or must be according to some set of rules or beliefs. As with the other modals, the modal force is unspecified. *ka* does not enforce any evidential or modal requirements upon the marking of the verb.

(9) *dve étih ka ji-hézaa taa-káá-vi*
1P NEG DEON INFR-be.at 1P.CNS-stay-CIRC
'We cannot stay here.'

(10) *evé ka j-efázi*
2S DEON INFR-enter
'You should come in.'

When the verb is marked as irrealis, *ka* enforces a future interpretation and allows epistemic readings.

(11) *éntaa ka ji-lají<nye>*
G2 FUT come.back<IRR>
'He might/will come back.'

(12) *evé j-aétka-ne tii peyí ka ji-niiéé<nyee>k*
2S INFR-shake<IRR> G10 COND:then FUT INFR-drop.down<IRR>
'If you disturb the rock it might fall.'

5.3 Tense

Proto-Lahiri's tense system is highly restricted. Unmarked verbs are unspecified for tense, allowing interpretations in the past, present, or future, being more frequently constrained by aspectual marking. The primary tense distinction is past vs. non-past, however both tenses are explicitly marked and the future tense can also be expressed by modal markers.

All of Proto-Lahiri's tenses are relative, indicating the event time relative to some reference time which is typically introduced in a previous clause or by a focused temporal adjunct. This is in constrast to absolute tenses which indicate event time relative to the utterance time. This can be seen most clearly in utterances where the reference time is explicitly given such as (13).

(13) [OBL *tiivét ki saa-jáát*] *vi saa-dwiié wít=ye*
day REL DIR-leave 1S DIR-leave PFV=now
'I left yesterday.'

5.3.1 *=ye* recent time

The recent time tense marker *=ye* 'now' indicates that the event marked occurs around the same time as the reference time (not the utterance time, as noted above). The specific ordering relationship between the event time and the reference time is determined aspectually. However, as the default unmarked aspect is imperfective, the primary reading of *=ye* is one of ongoing co-occurrence.

(14) *vi s-keenéw=ye*
1S DIR-stand.up=now
'I am standing up.'

=ye is a clitic which attaches to the right side of the verbal core, following aspectual markers and adverbs but preceding the direct object.

(15) *vi s-keej jaa=ye ki*
1S DIR-eat quick=now G6
'I am eating it quickly.'

=ye is permitted in future tense reading forced by the combination of the irrealis mood and deontic modal. In this situation, however, it lends an inchoative meaning to the event, complicat-

ing this formative's analysis as a pure tense marker since the mood and modal combination can, by themselves, mark future tense.

(16) *détaa ka ji-dwiié<ni>=ye*
G2:PL DEON INFR-leave<SBJV>=now
'They will start leaving.'

=ye is also frequently used at the beginning of discourse to indicate the reference time for the ensuing clauses, a necessity for being able to resolve the time to which a tense marker or subsequent tenseless clause refers.

(17) *étaa ka saa-xííwee<nii>=ye awá,*
G2 DEON DIR-cook<SBJV>=now sago

ka ji-swíícep wit biplééii
DEON INFR-cut.through PFV fruits
'She (will) cut(s) the fruits as the sago begins to boil.'

5.4 Aspect

Default imperfective

Perfective aspect marker *wit* post-verbal particle, indicates event time occurs entirely within topic time. Use with *=ye* indicates that the event time begins within the topic time, but is not necessarily entirely within.

Experiential *lekáá* post-verbal particle, indicates event time ends before topic time and that speaker had experienced the event, some perfect flavour i.e. past experience is somehow relevant now.

6 Valency-changing operations

6.1 *je* passive

7 Clause types

7.1 Simple clauses

References

Halvorsen, S. (1991). A Comparative Survey of the Sound Systems of the Lahiri Languages. *Asuran Linguistics*, 37(2).