



Morphological Architecture of Liangmai: A Comprehensive Analysis of Word Formation

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the morphological architecture of Liangmai, an under-documented Tibeto-Burman language spoken predominantly in Manipur and Nagaland in Northeast India. The study explores how lexical and grammatical units are structured and combined to form words and express grammatical meanings. Drawing on primary field data collected from native speakers, the paper focuses particularly on three major word-formation processes in Liangmai: affixation, compounding, and reduplication. The analysis shows that many basic lexical forms are monosyllabic and that roots frequently combine with prefixes and suffixes to form different classes of words and derive new lexical and grammatical forms. A significant feature of Liangmai morphology is the occurrence of bound roots, with affixes playing an important role in determining the grammatical and lexical category of derived forms. Compounding contributes to lexical expansion through the combination of independent or dependent forms, while reduplication performs both lexical and grammatical functions. The study demonstrates the systematic nature of Liangmai word formation and contributes to the broader documentation of its morphological structure. It also underscores the importance of morphological documentation for language preservation, linguistic research, pedagogical development, and the future creation of educational and digital resources for Liangmai.

Keywords: Liangmai; Tibeto-Burman; Morphology; Word Formation; Affixation; Compounding; Reduplication

Introduction

Liangmai (ISO 639-3: njn) is a Tibeto-Burman language spoken predominantly in the northeastern Indian states of Manipur and Nagaland. Burling (2003) classifies Liangmai within the Zeme-Naga group of the Tibeto-Burman language family. The language is primarily spoken in the Tamei and Tousem areas of Tamenglong district and in other parts of Manipur, including Senapati and the Imphal region. In Nagaland, Liangmai speakers are concentrated mainly in Peren district, with smaller speech communities found in Dimapur, Kohima, and other urban centres. The term Liangmai refers both to the language and to its speakers. The Liangmais have been living in this area with their distinct traditional culture and language over a long period of time. According to the 2011 Ethnologue, currently, there are approximately 70,800 Liangmai speakers in Nagaland and Manipur.

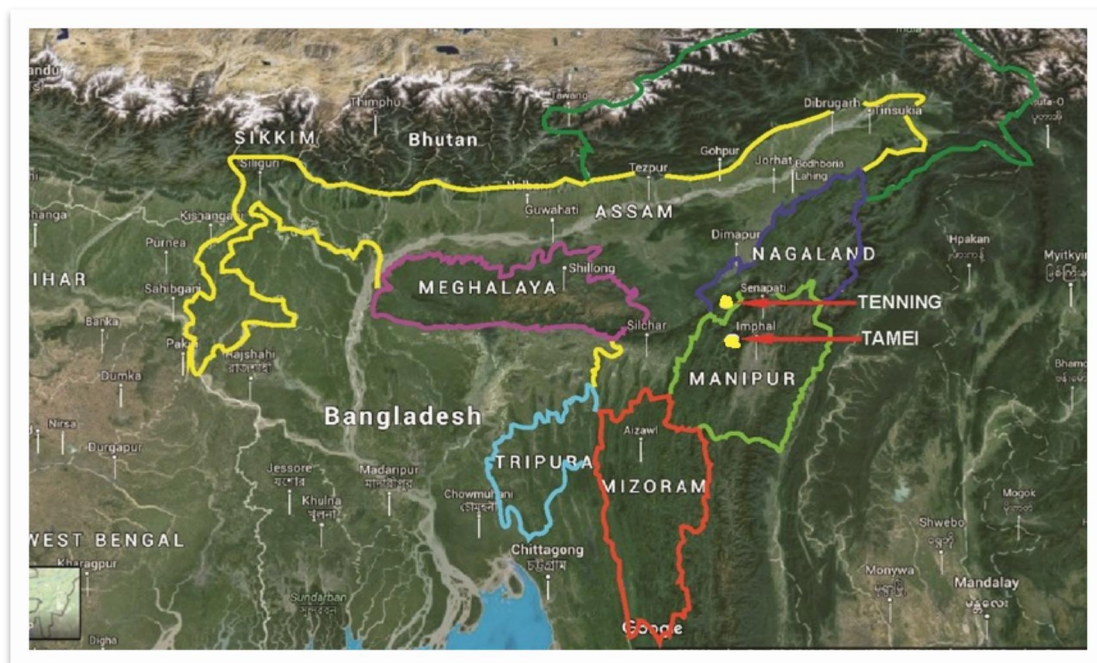
Liangmai-speaking communities have maintained a distinctive linguistic and cultural identity despite increasing contact with dominant regional languages such as Manipuri and Nagamese. Such contact, together with expanding access to education, migration, urbanisation, and socioeconomic change, has contributed to an increasingly multilingual linguistic environment. Nevertheless, Liangmai continues to serve as an important marker of community identity, cultural continuity, and traditional knowledge. The language is therefore significant not only as a means of communication but also as a repository of the community's cultural heritage.

The Liangmai community has traditionally maintained an agrarian economy, with jhum cultivation (shifting cultivation), hunting, and fishing forming important components of traditional livelihood. Prior to extensive contact with Christian missionaries and wider external institutions, the community's social and economic life was largely organised around indigenous practices and local systems of knowledge. Over time, however, processes of education, religious change, migration, and socioeconomic transformation have significantly influenced the linguistic and cultural landscape of the community.

From a linguistic perspective, Liangmai remains relatively under-documented when compared with many better-described languages of the region. Although existing studies have contributed to an understanding of aspects of Liangmai phonology, grammar, vocabulary, and sociolinguistic profile, its morphological structure and word-formation processes require further systematic investigation. Morphology provides an important means of understanding how a language organises its lexical and grammatical resources and how new words and grammatical forms are generated.

The present study therefore focuses on the word-formation processes of Liangmai, with particular attention to affixation, compounding, and reduplication. The study examines the ways in which roots and other morphological units combine to form new lexical items and grammatical forms. Preliminary observations indicate that many basic lexical forms in Liangmai are monosyllabic and that a considerable number of roots occur as bound forms. Affixation, particularly the use of prefixes and suffixes, plays an important role in the formation and classification of words. Compounding and reduplication further contribute to the expansion of the Liangmai lexicon and the expression of grammatical and semantic distinctions.

By examining these processes systematically, this paper seeks to contribute to the descriptive documentation of Liangmai morphology and to a broader understanding of word formation in Tibeto-Burman languages. Such documentation is particularly important for the preservation and revitalisation of under-documented languages and may also provide useful resources for language teaching, curriculum development, lexicography, and the future development of digital linguistic resources for the Liangmai-speaking community.



The highlighted portion of the map represents the geographical areas where Liangmai is spoken and where the fieldwork for the present study was undertaken.

Liangmai belongs to the Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Manipur and Nagaland in North East India. Liangmai is an agglutinative language having the characteristics of SOV language. The basic words in the language are mostly monosyllabic and new words are derived by different morphological processes. The main processes of word formation discussed in this paper are affixation, compounding and reduplication.

Methodology

The present study is primarily based on primary data collected through fieldwork conducted in the Tamei Sub-Division of Tamenglong District, Manipur. The data were collected from native speakers of Liangmai and include both linguistic and socio-cultural materials. The primary data collected during the fieldwork comprise the following:

- (a) Linguistic data: Phrases and sentences representing different grammatical structures, including declarative constructions, prefixes, suffixes, reduplication, and other relevant morphological and syntactic patterns.
- (b) Cultural texts: Traditional songs, stories, myths, fables, and other oral narratives, along with relevant socio-cultural information associated with the Liangmai community.

For the purpose of linguistic analysis, the data were transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) to ensure accurate representation of the sounds and phonological features of the language.

The study also incorporates recorded spontaneous speech produced by native speakers during the fieldwork. Audio and visual data were collected using an Olympus Multi-Track PCM LS-100 Handy Audio Recorder, a Canon PowerShot SX60 HS digital camera, and a POCO X3 Pro smartphone. These devices were used for recording speech, documenting cultural materials, and capturing relevant photographic data.

The recorded materials were subsequently transcribed phonetically using the IPA. Acoustic and phonetic analyses were carried out using Praat (version 4.5.04), while Toolbox 1.5.8 was used for linguistic data management and analysis. The recorded audio, transcriptions, and other research materials were securely stored on an HP ProBook Core i7 computer for further analysis and documentation.

Structure Of Morphemes

A morpheme is the smallest distinctive grammatical unit and constitutes a fundamental unit of morphological analysis. The morphemes in Liangmai can broadly be classified into two major types: free morphemes and bound morphemes.

Roots

Roots in Liangmai may be either free or bound. Free roots occur independently as complete words, whereas bound roots cannot occur independently and generally require the addition of other morphological elements. In Liangmai, free roots are predominantly found in the noun category, while verbs and several other word classes generally contain bound roots. Kinship terms and colour terms also tend to occur as bound roots.

Free Roots

Free roots in Liangmai are predominantly found in the noun category. They are roots that can occur independently without requiring the addition of grammatical affixes. However, not all Liangmai nouns consist of free roots. Free roots are particularly common among proper names, animal names, plant names, and terms referring to body parts, among other lexical categories. Most of these roots are monosyllabic.

A few examples of free roots in Liangmai are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Free roots in Liangmai

Body parts		Animals, birds and insects		Plants, fruits and vegetables	
Liangmai	Gloss	Liangmai	Gloss	Liangmai	Gloss
<i>pi</i>	‘head’	<i>kəbak</i>	‘pig’	<i>tsəpai</i>	‘bamboo’
<i>tʰám</i>	‘hair’	<i>mətom</i>	‘cow’	<i>kəbi</i>	‘yam’
<i>ben</i>	‘hand’	<i>tətʰi</i>	‘dog’	<i>təgai</i>	‘thatch’
<i>zu</i>	‘face’	<i>təmaŋ</i>	‘fly’	<i>ˈzian/ˈzeng</i>	‘mustard’
<i>mik</i>	‘eye’	<i>təpeŋ</i>	‘butterfly’	<i>kəbiu</i>	‘ginger’

Bound Roots (BR)

Bound root cannot occur alone as words in isolation. It requires affixation in order to become full-fledged words. A few nouns in Liangmai are also in bound forms. Kinship terms and colour terms in Liangmai are all bound roots. Kinship terms are always prefixed with ə- and the colour terms are always prefixed with kə- and suffixed with -bo. This is illustrated with examples from (a) to (c).

- (a) kə + tikbo kə-tik-bo ‘black’
prefix br
- (b) kə + kabo kə-ka-bo ‘white’
prefix br
- (c) kə + heŋbo kə-ka-bo ‘red’
prefix br

Affixation

The morphological process whereby grammatical or lexical information is added to a stem is known as affixation. An affix is a bound morpheme that is attached to a word stem to form a new word or word form. Affixation plays an important part in deriving new forms. Suffixation is more productive than prefixation word formation process in Liangmai. There are two types of affixes in Liangmai i.e. prefix and suffix. They are discussed in the following:

Prefixation

The types of prefixes found in Liangmai are (1) pronominal prefix (2) non-pronominal prefix

1. Pronominal Prefix

In Liangmai, there are three pronominal prefixes

ə-	‘1st person pronominal prefix’
nə-	‘2nd person pronominal prefix’
pa-	‘3rd person pronominal prefix’

These pronominal prefixes are used in kinship terms, body parts and inalienable possession and ownership of things and properties, etc. They always occur directly before the root. The examples are given below:

Liangmai	Gloss	Liangmai	Gloss
ben	‘hand’	əben	‘my hand’
Piu	‘father’	nəpiu	‘your father’
pui	‘mother’	papui	‘his mother’

2. Non-Pronominal Prefix:

There are some non-pronominal prefixes in this language. Noun consists of one root which is a free form and can occur in isolation without any affixes. Such roots are invariably monosyllabic word. They are discussed with the help of the following examples.

Prefix-tə → Noun +verb

Prefix		Noun + Verb →		Derived noun
Prefix	Liangmai	Gloss	Liangmai	Gloss
tə	zi	sleep	təzi	‘bed’
tə	dui	liquid	tədui	‘water’
tə	tan	hard	tətan	‘strong’
tə	pi	head	təpi	‘mithun’s skull’

Prefix-kə → Noun

Prefix		Noun →		Derived noun
Prefix	Liangmai	Gloss	Liangmai	Gloss
kə	suŋ	shade	kəsuŋ	‘umbrella’
kə	rim/rin	smell	kərim/rin	‘armpit smell’
kə	bi	root	kəbi	‘yam’
kə	mun	entrance	kəmun	‘door’

Prefix	Verb	Gloss	Noun	Gloss
kə	sai	to die	kə-sai	‘death’
Kə	thiu	to be hot	kə-thiu	‘heat’
tə	siaŋ	to curse	tə-siaŋ	‘curse’
tsə	liaŋ	to be proud	tsə-liaŋ	‘pride’
kə	paŋ	to be foolish	kə-paŋ	‘foolishness’

Prefix-tsə → Noun

Prefix		Noun →		Derived noun
Prefix	Liangmai	Gloss	Liangmai	Gloss
tsə	piaŋ	beaker	tsəpiaŋ	‘cup’
tsə	bam	sit	tsəbam	‘seat’
tsə	kha	collect	tsəkha	‘tax collection’
tsə	kuaŋ	platter	tsəkuaŋ	‘plate’

Prefix-pə → Noun

Prefix		Noun →		Derived noun
Prefix	Liangmai	Gloss	Liangmai	Gloss
pə	lai	burn	pəlai	‘burnt rice’
pə	ri	on	pəri	‘on top’
pə	kaŋ	ball	pəkaŋ	round dish

Derivation

Derivation in Liangmai is employed as a morphological process to create new words by adding derivational suffixes.

Derivation of nouns from verbs

(i) Like many other Tibeto-Burman languages, verbal nouns in Liangmai are derived from the verbs by adding the derivative suffix- bam.

Verb	noun
tad ‘go’	tad-bam ‘walking’
tiu ‘eat’	tiu-bam ‘eating’
sak ‘drink’	sak-bam ‘drinking’
ŋau ‘see’	ŋau-bam ‘seeing’
thiu ‘sing’	thiu-bam ‘singing’

(ii) Agentive nouns are also derived from verbs by adding the derivative suffix -mai.

ken ‘read’	ken-mai ‘reader’
lem ‘dance’	lem-mai ‘dancer’
thiu ‘sing’	thiu-mai ‘singer’
rau ‘write’	rau-mai ‘writer’

Derivation of Adverbs from adjectives

Adverbs are derived from adjectives by adding the derivative suffixes - ziu.

Adj.		Adv.	
məsan	‘clear’	məsan-ziu	‘clearly’
hum	‘sweet’	hum-ziu	‘sweetly’
məla	‘easy’	məla-ziu	‘easily’
ŋauwi	‘beautiful’	ŋauwi-ziu	‘beautifully’
bin	‘light’	bin-ziu	‘lightly’

Derived Nouns

Derived nouns are the nouns which are formed through derivational process. In Liangmai, most of the derived nouns are derived from verbs and adjectives. The derived nouns in Liangmai are discussed in the following sections.

Nouns derived from Adjectives

In Liangmai, nouns are derived from adjectives by suffixing the -bo. Some morphophonemic changes take place when nouns are derived from adjectives. This is illustrated with the help of the following examples

Adjectives		Derived Nouns	
Liangmai	Gloss	Liangmai	Gloss
ŋausa	‘ugly’	ŋausa-bo	‘ugliness’
tsunsa	‘sad’	tsunsa-bo	‘sadness’
məra	‘sick’	məra-bo	‘sickness’
kha	bitter	kha-bo	‘bitterness’

Nouns derived from Verbs

In Liangmai, nouns can be formed by derivation from verbs. Nouns are derived from stem2 verbs by suffixing the nominalizer -bo. The nouns derived from stem2 are shown in the table.

Verbs		Derived nouns	
Stem	Gloss	Liangmai	Gloss
sai	‘die’	sai-bo	‘death’
zi	‘sleep’	zi-bo	‘slept’
tau	‘sit’	tau-bo	‘chair’
bai	‘hide’	bai-bo	‘hideout’

Suffixation

Adverbs can be derived by suffixing -ziu to the verbs and this is a very productive process.

Adjective	Gloss	suffix	Adverb	Gloss
masən	clear	ziu	masənziu	‘clearly’
ŋaowi	beautiful	ziu	ŋaowiziu	‘beautifully’
hum	sweet	ziu	humziu	‘sweetly’

Agentive nouns are also derived from verbs by adding suffix -mai to the verb root. Consider the following examples:

verb	gloss	Agentive	noun	gloss
lem	dance	mai	lem- mai	‘dancer’
məthen	‘play’	mai	məthen –mai	‘player’

rao	‘write’	mai	rao-mai	‘writer’
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Nominalizer -bo

Nouns can be derived from verbs and adjectives by suffixing the nominalizer -bo to verbs or adjectives as shown in the following examples below

Verbs/Adjectives	Gloss	Nominalizer	Derived nouns	Gloss
tiu	‘eat’	-bo	tiubo	‘eatables’
tsunwi	‘happy’	-bo	tsunwibo	‘happiness’
rɪŋ	‘to live’	-bo	rɪŋbo	‘life’
sai	‘to die’	-bo	saibo	‘death’

Nominalizer -bo in Liangmai

Compounding

Compounding refers to the joining together of existing words without the aid of any affixes.

Compounding is a productive process in Liangmai, as seen in the following sub-sections. Like many of the languages of main land Asia, Liangmai compound words are composed of basically two elements. The component parts of the newly-formed word usually occur as independent words in the language, but the compositional meanings of compound gradually become lexicalized. Compound words in Liangmai are mostly endocentric in nature and are generally made up of two constituent roots. These compound words fall into two distinct groups, namely right-headed and left-headed depending upon the nature of the constituent elements. In the following subsections, compounds in Liangmai are categorized on semantic and formal grounds.

Coordinative Compound

Copulative compounds have two semantic heads and no modifier and these compounds frequently occur in Liangmai. For example:

panao	+	pakina	panao-pakina
wife	+	husband	‘husband and wife’
papiu	+	pana	papiu-pana
father	+	son	‘father and son’
patsi	+	pakina	patsi-pakina
brother	+	pakina	‘brother and sister’
tiŋpi	+	tiŋrun	tiŋpi-tiŋrun
north	+	south	‘north- south’

Endocentric Compound

Compounds which have a head are called ‘endocentric compounds. The head of the compound is that root which determines the category of, or is the main referent of, the compound. As stated above, compound words are mostly endocentric in nature where one of the constituent elements functions as the head of that compound.

Right-Headed Endocentric Compounds

Nominal compounds such as noun + noun compounds may be either right-headed or left headed. In the case of right-headed noun + noun compound the first root modifies the second root as shown below. As seen below the resulting meaning of noun + noun compounds are always a noun.

tsəra+si	(bean+fruit) =	tsəra-si ‘fruit’
məkhui+dui	(bee+liquid)=	məkhui-dui ‘honey’
tsəmik+lin	(eye+layer)=	tsəmik-lin ‘eyelash’

mik+dui	(eye+liquid)=	mik-dui ‘tears’
tsərasi+dui	(fruit+liquid)=	tsərasi-dui ‘juice’
kəbaŋ+ki	(servant +ky) =	kəbaŋ-ky ‘prison’
tsəkhao+gi	(animal+skin) =	tsəkhao-gi ‘leather’

Right-headed nominal compounds such as noun+verb compounds below are deverbal synthetic compounds (Hoe-ksema 1985:142 cited in Chelliah, 1997) where the first root is the patient of the second. But, unlike in Meithei where the second root modifies the first root, in Liangmai as shown below it is rather the first root that modifies the second root. Note that the resulting new words are always nouns.

tsə+ŋəm	(tea+win)=	tsə-ŋəm ‘work’
te+lai	(food+burn)=	te-lai ‘burnt rice’
zuŋ+khap	(finger+tide) =	zuŋ-khap ‘finger ring’

Left-Headed Endocentric Compounds

Nominal compounds such as noun+noun compounds given below are left headed. In this case the second root modifies the first root. The examples given below involve noun+stative verb and noun+gender. This is something which distinguishes them from the N + N compounds.

ben+sem	(hand +small) =	sen-sem ‘handicraft’
zuŋ+pui	(finger +female) =	zuŋ-pui ‘thumb’

Exocentric Compounds

Compounds without a head are known as ‘exocentric compounds. Nominal compounds such as noun+noun compounds given below are headless compound in the sense that neither of the two elements can function as the head.

siŋ+miu	(tree +support)	siŋ-miu ‘tortoise’
tsə+lai	(tea +burn)	tsə-lai ‘small inside’
kə+thi	(white + drink)	kə-thi ‘earthquake’
mi+kha	(tail + bitter)	mi-kha ‘smoke’

As in other Tibeto-Burman languages, compounding is a very productive process of word formation in Liangmai. Compound nouns and compound verbs are formed by compounding two or more lexemes. Compound nouns are very common in the language. Compounds can be both endocentric and exocentric. Some examples of compounding are discussed in this section.

Noun + Verb → Noun Compound

This type of compound nouns is composed of a Noun and a verb to form a compound noun.

Noun + Verb → Noun Compound

Noun		Verb →		Compound noun	
Liangmai	Gloss	Liangmai	Gloss	Liangmai	Gloss
pi	head	run	wear	pirun	‘cap’
mik	eye	run	wear	mikrun	‘spectacles’
əriak	book	ken	read	əriakken	‘study’

Adjective + Noun → Noun Compound

Adjective		Noun →		Compound noun	
Liangmai	Gloss	Liangmai	Gloss	Liangmai	Gloss
suan	morning	tek	rice	suan tek	'breakfast'
nien	noon	tek	rice	nien tek	'lunch'
tsun	night	tek	rice	tsun tek	'dinner'

Compound nouns can also be formed by compounding an adjective and a simple noun where the adjective functions as the attribute of the noun.

Adjective + Noun → Noun Compound

Adjective		Noun →		Compound noun	
Liangmai	Gloss	Liangmai	Gloss	Liangmai	Gloss
suan	morning	tek	rice	suan tek	'breakfast'
nien	noon	tek	rice	nien tek	'lunch'
tsun	night	tek	rice	tsun tek	'dinner'

Associative Compounds

There are also compounds formed by juxtaposing two nouns to form a compound noun. The two constituents in this type of compound are of the same semantic field.

Associative Compounds

Noun		Noun →		Associative compound	
Liangmai	Gloss	Liangmai	Gloss	Liangmai	Gloss
tiŋgen	sky	di	earth	tiŋgendi	'heaven'
thəinai	today	sonnai	tomorrow	thəinai sonnai	'nowadays'
tsəkhao	animal	rəm	village	tsəkhao rəm	'animal kingdom'

Noun Compounding

Noun is one of the most important parts of speech in the domain of morphology. A noun may be a combination of different constituents with various lexical categories. They have- noun + noun combination, noun + noun + noun combination, free noun + bound noun combination, noun + verb, noun + adjective, verb + noun combination. Following are the explanation for each combination.

(a) Noun + Noun

It is the process of compounding where two free nouns are combined together and create a new noun word having an independent meaning. The compound words remain the same grammatical category. This kind of compounding could be seen in terms of kinship terms, in terms of birds and animals. e.g.-

- thiŋ (bird) + pui (male) > n. thiŋpui (female bird)
- kabak (pig) + kiu (male) > n. kabakkui (male pig)
- kami (goat) + pui (male) > n. kamipui (female goat)
- tsapuan (elephant) + tsi (male) > n. tsapuan tsi (male elephant)

Besides the above combination, when two free nouns are combined together sometimes they

perceive the oblique form or contract form. In such combination, first word is always having disyllabic/trisyllabic and second word is monosyllabic in form. During combination, second syllable of the first word is automatically dropped and first syllable takes an oblique form but second word is always remained in intact position except a few changes taking place in the last vowel phoneme of the second word. As a result, the compounding creates a new noun word having an independent meaning of its own. e.g.-

tsəmita (eye) + ta (stool) > n. tsəmita (eye-excreta)
 tənīu (nose) + khōu (stool) > n. tənīukhōu (dried mucus in the nostril)
 tsəmīk (eye) + dui (water) > n. tsəmīkdui (tears)
 tsəpi (head) + tham (hair) > n. tsəpitham (hair)

(b) Noun + Adjective

Most of the noun words are also compounding with one noun and one adjective. During compounding, no addition or deletion take place, both the components always keep in intact position without any changes and this type of combination is very limited, as the following structure can show the examples.

dui (water) + di (big) > n. duidi (a big river)
 dui (water) + liu (small) > n. duiliu (a small river)
 zun (finger) + na (big) > n. zunna (little finger)

Adjective Compounding

Like the noun and verb compounding Liangmai has also the adjective compound. This type of compound formation is very limited in number. Following are the two types of adjective compound formations-

Verb + Adjective

waŋ (come) + kəsan (new) > adj. waŋkəsan (new coming/newcomer)
 khai (keep) + san (new) > adj. khaisan (new wear)
 hīu (month) + san (new) > adj. hīusan (new born)

Verb Compounding

Verbs are also compounded together which constitute a new verb having its own meaning. The compound verbs may be a combination of more than two verb roots.

In this formation of compound verb, two simple verbs are joining together and imply the meaning of order or request based on the utterers, as well as intonation and contextual use. The examples are given below

(a) Verb + Verb

waŋ (come) + kam (do)	>	waŋkam	‘come and do’
waŋ (come) + tiu (eat)	>	waŋtiu	‘come and eat’
khoi (take) + waŋ (bring)	>	khoiwaŋ	‘bring’
masui (kick) + paŋ (break)	>	masui paŋ	‘kick and broke’
kep (shoot) + sat (to die)	>	kamsat	‘shoot out’

(b) Verb + Verb + Verb

In this process of verb compounding, three simple verbs are joined together. The simple verbs are mono-syllabic in form but when together they become polysyllabic and no addition or deletion occurs during combination.

tiu 'eat' + loi 'finish' +kam 'do' > tiuloikam	'eat all/eat and finished'
pak 'run' + waŋ 'come' + khoi 'take' > pakwaŋkhoi	'run and take'
masui 'kick' + pok 'burse' taŋ (out) > masuipoktaŋ	'kick and burse'

(c) Verb + Verb + Verb + Verb

Liangmai has the large type of compounding process and this might see in the verb compounding process. This type of verb compounding is very common in the language, as for examples

waŋ 'come' + kam 'do' + loi 'finish' + kam 'do' > waŋkamloikam 'come and do completely'
 waŋ 'come' + pi (give) + loi 'finish' kam 'do' > waŋpiloikam 'come and give all'
 pak 'run' + waŋ 'come' + khoi 'take' + taliaŋ 'throw' > 'pakwaŋkhoitaliaŋ' 'run and take away'

Nominalization

In Liangmai, the suffix is most productive in nature. The suffix -bo functions as a derivational suffix in Liangmai. It is added to the main verb to form a noun or nominal clause for example.

tsəlui thi-u-bo se-pa-je
 song sing-nmz def-3sg-decl
 'He is the one who sings.'

futbol məthen-bo se-pa-je
 foot ball play-nmz def-3sg-be-decl
 'He is the one who plays football.'

The suffix -mai functions as a nominalizer and also functions as a habitual marker in the language. For example:

tsəlui thi-u-mai 'singer'
 song sing-nmz

tsəlem len-mai 'dancer'
 dance -nmz

tsəmai kamsat-mai 'killer'
 Human kill-nmz

i tsəlui thi-u-mai -je
 1sg song sing-nmz-decl
 'I am a singer.'

I tsəmai-tu kamsat-mai-je
 1sg human -acc kill- nmz-decl
 'I am not a killer.'

Reduplication

The last process of word formation here to be discussed is reduplication. Words are also formed by the process of reduplication. It is also one of the most active and productive process of word formation. Reduplication is used both in inflection to convey grammatical function such as plurality, intensification etc. and in lexical derivation to create new words.

Reduplication is a morphological process in which a root or stem or part of it is repeated. As in other Tibeto-Burman languages, reduplication is a very productive process in Liangmai. It has

many functions, some of which are formation of plurals nouns and pronouns, intensification of the action of a verb, intensification of adjectives and adverbs, and derivation of new words etc. Example (1)

tsəki tsəki	‘house house/house to house’
sao sao	‘who who/who are’
wi wi	‘good good’
tiu tiu	‘eat eat’
kam kam	‘do do’

In these examples of non-reduplicated forms tsəki tsəki is the noun, sao sao is pronoun, and wi wi is adjective respectively which representing singular and the reduplicated form performs the grammatical functions representing the meaning of plurality; tiu and kam are the verbs while the reduplicated forms represent the meaning of emphasis, order or request based on the mood of the speaker, changing of intonation and its contextual use.

Example (2)

təziŋ-zɪŋ	‘deserted’
tiŋsa phai- phai	‘dazzling rain’
koi-koi	‘slowly’
tuŋ-tuŋ	‘fast’

Types of Reduplications

In Liangmai, there are two kinds of reduplication processes i.e. complete and partial reduplication. These are discussed in the following sections.

Complete reduplication

Some of the adjectives and interrogative pronouns undergoes complete reduplication to form different kinds of meaning of the words. A few adjectives reduplicate to form adverbs in Liangmai. If the adjective reduplicates, the adverb suffix immediately follows the adjective to form an adverb, for example:

koi-koi-na	waŋ-lo	
slow-slow-adv	come-imp	
‘Come slowly.’		
nahmai-duŋ	rim-rim-ziu	waŋ
boy-pl	silent-silent-adv	come
‘Boys came silently.’		

Some of the interrogative pronouns reduplicate to show plurality in Liangmai as shown below:

sao	+	sao	+	lo	sao-sao-lo
who	+	who	+	q	‘who (plural)’
dega	+	dega	+	lo	dega-degal-o
where	+	where	+	q	‘where (plural)’
de	+	de	+	lo	de-de-lo
what	+	de	+	q	‘what (plural)’

Some examples are illustrated in sentences below:

sao-sao	tsəki-ga	bam-lo
who-rudp	house-loc	exist-q
‘Who are there in the home?’		

dega-dega naŋ tad ra-lo
 where-where 2sg-go-fut-q
 ‘Where will you go?’

naŋ de-de luni-lo
 2sg what-what want-Q
 ‘What do you want?’

Expressive morphology is also found in Liangmai. They are formed by the process of complete reduplication. For example:

tha tha ‘calling sound of hen or chicken’
 kruŋ kruŋ ‘sound of thunder’
 tet tet ‘small raining sound’
 prum prum ‘sound of slapping’
 ha ha ‘sound of laugh’

Reduplication Of Nouns

Nouns are reduplicated in Liangmai to show distributiveness and also to form plural as shown below:

Reduplication of Nouns

Noun	Gloss	Reduplicate	Gloss
tsəki	house	tsəki ~ tsəki	‘house to house’
pəbəm	place	pəbəm~pəbəm	‘place to place’
impui	road	impui~ impui	‘roads’

Reduplication Of Adjectives

Adjectives can be reduplicated to intensify the degree of the action and therefore become an adverb as illustrated in the examples.

Reduplication of Adjectives

Adjective	Gloss	Reduplicate	Gloss
koi	slow	koi~koi	‘slowly’
hum	sweet	hum~hum	‘sweetly’
heŋ	red	heŋ~heŋ	‘very red’

Reduplication In Verbs:

All verbs can be reduplicated and this generally indicates regular action, action repeated simultaneity

Reduplication of verbs

Verb	Gloss	Reduplicate	Gloss
tsəlem	dance	tsəlem~tsəlem	‘always/still dance’
nui	laugh	nui~nui	‘always/still laugh’

Reduplication In Adverbs:

Adverbs can also be reduplicated and the meaning is for emphasis or urgency.

Reduplication of Adverbs

Adverb	Gloss	Reduplicate	Gloss
məniziu	slowly	məniziu~məniziu	‘very slowly’
incəŋziu	honestly	humziu~incəŋziu	‘very honestly’

Partial Reduplication

Partial reduplication is very rare in Liangmai. Only a few disyllabic basic cardinal numerals partially reduplicate to show the meaning of ‘each’ or ‘in a time’. For example:

khaŋ nia nia	waŋ-lau
clf-two-two	come-imp
‘Come two by two.’	
khaŋ-sum-sum	waŋ-lau
three-three-three	come-imp
‘Come three by three.’ (Come three at a time)	

Reduplicated onomatopoeic sounds

The combinations of bases and their respective onomatopoeic duplexes are subcategorized under reduplicated onomatopoeic sounds. They constitute the major part of Liangmai onomatopoeic sounds. They are found in different morphophonological forms. This study observes eight different morphophonological structures of onomatopoeic sounds in Liangmai. They are exemplified below on the basis of their syllabic:

tsi- tsi	‘squeak of a mice’ (adverb)
krumkrum	‘flowing of water’ (adverb)
nhiu nhiu	‘baggy; loose’ (adjective)
kələksa sa	‘extremely poor’ (adjective)

Conclusion

This paper has examined three major word-formation processes in Liangmai, namely affixation, compounding, and reduplication. Among these processes, affixation appears to be particularly productive, with a considerable number of Liangmai words being formed through the addition of prefixes and suffixes to existing roots. The findings suggest that suffixation is more productive than prefixation, particularly in the derivation of new words and the formation of different word classes.

Compounding is another important and productive word-formation process in Liangmai. The language exhibits a wide range of compound formations, including complex verbal compounds involving multiple verbal elements, such as V+V+V+V sequences. Such complex patterns demonstrate the morphological richness of Liangmai and provide an important area for further comparative and typological investigation. Most of the compounds identified in the study are endocentric, although further research may reveal additional structural and semantic patterns.

Reduplication also plays a significant role in Liangmai word formation. It involves the repetition of complete or partial lexical elements and serves various morphological and semantic functions. The process may result in word-class maintenance as well as word-class change, demonstrating that reduplication is not merely a phonological process but also an important morphological mechanism in the language.

This study demonstrates that Liangmai possesses a rich and productive morphological system in which affixation, compounding, and reduplication contribute substantially to lexical expansion and word formation. Since word formation encompasses a wide range of processes, the present study does not attempt to provide an exhaustive account of all morphological processes in Liangmai. Rather, it offers a descriptive overview of three prominent processes and provides a foundation for further investigation. Future research may examine other processes of lexical creation and explore the interaction between morphology, syntax, phonology, and semantics in Liangmai. Such studies would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding and documentation of the morphological structure of this Tibeto-Burman language.

Abbreviations:

ABL - Ablative
 ACC - Accusative
 Adj. - Adjective
 Adv. - Adverb
 CONT -Continuous
 DAT – Dative
 GEN – Genitive
 FUT - Future
 HAB – Habitual
 INST – Instrumental
 LOC – Locative
 N - Noun
 RED -Reduplication

Discussion and Conclusion

The examples discussed above show why hegemonic masculinity and toxic masculinity need to be distinguished. Hegemonic masculinity refers to a socially dominant model of manhood. Toxic masculinity refers to particular harmful expectations and practices that may emerge within or around such a model.

For example, courage can be an important social virtue. But it becomes problematic when a man is expected to prove himself through violence. Responsibility can be positive, but it can become harmful when a man believes that asking for help is a sign of weakness. Sexual confidence may be valued, but it becomes harmful when it involves coercion or disrespect. Leadership may be respected, but it becomes oppressive when it denies women the right to participate. The same quality can therefore have different meanings depending on how it is practised.

The Northeast Indian context also shows that masculinity cannot be separated from local histories. In some communities, warriorhood and protection were central to male identity. In others, agriculture and family responsibilities may have been more important. In contemporary urban settings, education, employment and professional success may increasingly define respectable manhood.

Masculinity is therefore constantly changing. The central question is not whether traditional masculinity should simply disappear. Instead, the question is which elements of masculine identity should be retained, challenged or transformed.

This distinction is also important because men themselves can be harmed by rigid expectations of

masculinity. A man who has been taught never to cry may struggle to express grief. A man expected to provide for his family may feel ashamed when he becomes unemployed. A young man who believes that asking for help is a weakness may avoid seeking support during emotional difficulties.

This is why the critique of toxic masculinity should not be understood as an attack on men. It can also be seen as an attempt to foster healthier forms of masculinity in which men can be strong without being violent, responsible without being controlling, and emotionally resilient without being emotionally silent.

An important part of the discussion should therefore be the possibility of alternative masculinities. Masculinity does not have to be based on domination. Men can demonstrate strength through care, responsibility, cooperation and emotional maturity. Chopra (2007) provides an important framework for thinking about men who actively support gender equality. Such men challenge the assumption that caring work, emotional expression and gender equality are feminine concerns.

In Northeast India, alternative masculinities can also emerge through evolving educational opportunities, migration, women's participation in public life, shifting family structures and greater visibility of LGBTQ+ identities. Young men may increasingly encounter models of masculinity that value friendship, emotional openness, caregiving and equality.

This does not mean that traditional identities must be rejected outright. Cultural traditions can provide belonging, a sense of responsibility and community solidarity. The task is to distinguish between cultural practices that strengthen community life and those that deny equality or normalise violence.

Masculinity in Northeast India is complex, diverse and constantly changing. It cannot be reduced to a single regional model of the "Northeast Indian man." Different communities have developed different ideas about male authority, family responsibility, property, warfare, leadership and emotional behaviour.

The study of origin myths, folktales and customary institutions shows that ideas about masculinity are deeply connected to cultural memory. In some traditions, men are associated with descent, protection, land, political authority and warriorhood, while women may be associated with fertility, labour and the continuation of family life. These narratives do not directly prove how people behaved in the past, but they offer important insights into the cultural imagination of gender.

Customary institutions also reveal the complexity of gender relations. Naga customary law, for example, has played an important role in maintaining community identity while also creating gender inequalities in political participation, property ownership and decision-making. Khasi matriliney presents a different situation in which women have important rights through descent and inheritance, while men may continue to exercise authority in public institutions.

Colonialism, Christianity, education and modernisation have further transformed these relationships. Subsequent developments, including militarisation, ethnic nationalism and migration, have created additional forms of masculine identity. Northeast men may experience masculine privilege within their communities while simultaneously facing racial discrimination and minority status outside the region.

The contemporary period has brought further change. Queer visibility, women's movements, social media and digital gaming have challenged older ideas about what men should be. At the same time, some online spaces reproduce aggressive and exclusionary forms of masculinity.

The small questionnaire used in this study suggests that ideas of the "real man" remain connected with independence, rationality and decision-making. These qualities are not inherently harmful. They become problematic when they are transformed into rigid expectations that prevent men from expressing vulnerability, seeking help or accepting equality.

The central argument of this paper is that masculinity itself should not be treated as the problem. The problem lies in particular forms of masculinity that depend on domination, emotional

suppression, violence, misogyny, homophobia or exclusion. Toxic masculinity is therefore be studied as a historically produced and socially maintained phenomenon rather than as an inherent characteristic of men.

A more productive future for masculinity in Northeast India would not require men to abandon strength, courage, responsibility or cultural identity. Instead, these qualities can be redefined. Strength can include emotional resilience; courage can include the courage to reject violence; responsibility can include care work; leadership can include listening; and manhood can include respect for women, queer people and other gender identities. This study of masculinity in Northeast India is therefore not simply a study of men. It is a study of power, culture, identity and social change. Understanding how manhood is constructed allows us to understand how gender relations can also be transformed.

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