

## Yi Future: Tense or Evidential?\*

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The Nuosu future clitic encodes future time reference but exhibits a “first-person” constraint that is reminiscent of evidential markers. We argue in support of the tense hypothesis but demonstrate with pan-Yi data that the evidential constraint is historically inherited from a quotation clitic which in turn can be traced back to a verb of speech (SAY). Several Yi languages display SAY-future tenses like Nuosu. Still other Yi languages derive future tense from the diachronic sources of WANT, FOLLOW and (probably) GET.

Key words: future tense, evidential, Yi, Nuosu

### 1. Introduction

Scholars disagree on the status of the English auxiliary *will* as a tense or modality auxiliary. The use of *will* is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition for future time reference (Comrie 1985:47). *Will* has several modal uses with present time reference.

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|--------|------------------|--|
| (1) a. | Intention:       | We’ <b>ll</b> do the job now.                                |
| b.     | Volition:        | He <b>will</b> go swimming in dangerous waters. <sup>1</sup> |
| c.     | Polite request:  | <b>Will</b> you help me look for my purse?                   |
| d.     | Belief in truth: | The match <b>will</b> be finished by now.                    |

On the other hand, future time reference can be indicated by other forms than *will*.

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<sup>1</sup> Example (1b) is quoted from Comrie (1985:47), (1c+d) from Salkie (2010:192), (2a) from Declerck et al. (2006:182), and (2b) from Salkie (2010:196).