

## Comparative Constructions in Rawang

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### 1. Introduction

- Dulong and Rawang are closely related Tibeto-Burman languages spoken just south and east of Tibet.
- The people who speak Dulong for the most part live in Gongshan county of Yunnan province in China, and belong to either what is known as the ‘Dulong’ (*tǎrùŋ* or ‘Taron’, or ‘Trung’) nationality (pop. 5816 according to the 1990 census), a name they were given because they mostly live in the valley of the Dulong (Taron/Trung) River, or to one part (roughly 6,000 people) of the Nu nationality (those who live along the upper reaches of the Nu River—the part of the Salween within China).
- The people who speak Rawang (population unknown, although Ethnologue gives 100,000) live in northern Kachin State in Myanmar (Burma), particularly along the Mae Hka (‘Nmai Hka) and Maeli Hka (Mali Hka) river valleys. In the past they had been called ‘Hkanung’ or ‘Nung’, and have often been considered to be a sub-group of the Kachin.
- Until government policies put a stop to the clearing of new land in 1994, they still practiced slash and burn farming on the mountainsides (they still do a bit, but only on already claimed land), in conjunction with planting paddy rice near the river.
- In this paper, I will be using data of the Mvtwang (Mvt River) dialect of Rawang, which is considered the most central of those dialects in Myanmar and so has become something of a standard for writing and inter-group communication.<sup>1</sup>

### 2. Typological overview

- Verb-final, agglutinative, with both head marking and dependent marking. Large number of formative affixes, including the diminutive *-cè* and the augmentative *-mè*. Generally predication involves the use of verbs.
- No pivots in Rawang for cross-clause coreference (or other constructions).
- Three classes of verb and the copula (the citation form for verbs is the third person non-past affirmative/declarative form) :
  - Intransitives take the non-past affirmative/declarative particle (*ē*) alone in the non-past (e.g. *ngōē* ‘to cry’) and the intransitive past tense marker (*-ì*) in past forms (with

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<sup>1</sup> In the Rawang writing system (Morse 1962, 1963), which is used in this paper, most letters represent the standard pronunciations of English, except that *i* = [i], *v* = [ə], *a* = [ɑ], *ø* = [u], *q* = [ʔ], and *c* = [s] or [ts] (free variation; historically [ts]). Tones are marked as follows (using the letter *a* as a base): high falling tone: *á*, mid tone: *ā*, low falling tone: *à*. All syllables that end in a stop consonant ([-p, -t, -ʔ, -k]) are in the high tone. Open syllables without a tone mark are unstressed. A colon marks a non-basic long vowel.

third person argument); they can be used transitively only when they take valency-increasing morphological marking (causative, benefactive).<sup>2</sup>

- Adjectives are a subclass of intransitive verbs, and so can be predicative without the copula. In citation they take the nominalizer *wē* (e.g. *tēwē* 'big'), but when used as predicates function the same as other intransitive verbs.
- Transitives take the non-past third person object marker (*ò*) plus the non-past affirmative/declarative particle (*ē*) in non-past forms (e.g. *ríòē* 'to carry (something)') and the transitive past tense marker (*-à*) in past forms (with third person O arguments);<sup>3</sup> they can be used intransitively only when they take valency-reducing morphological marking (intransitivizing prefix, reflexive/middle marking suffix). In transitive clauses the agentive marker generally appears on the NP representing the A argument.
- Ambitransitives can be used as transitives or intransitives without morphological derivation (*ýmòē / v̄mē* 'to eat'). There are both S=O types and S=A types. With the S=O type, as in (1), below, adding an A argument creates a causative, without the need to use the causative prefix. With the S=A type, as in (2), use of the intransitive vs. the transitive form marks a difference between a general or habitual situation and a particular situation respectively. The difference is due partly to the nature of the object, and partly to the nature of general vs. specific action. I.e. if the O is specific, then the transitive form must be used, but if the O is non-specific, it is not necessary to use the intransitive form. If no O is mentioned, then usually the intransitive form is used.

(1) S=O type

a.	<i>gvyaqē</i>	'be broken, destroyed'	<i>gvyaqòē</i>	'break, destroy'
b.	<i>gvyoꝑmē</i>	'be crumpled'	<i>gvyoꝑmòē</i>	'crumple'
c.	<i>dvtñē</i>	'be broken, snapped (thread)'	<i>da:tnòē</i>	'break, snap' (vt.)
d.	<i>bvløꝑmē</i>	'be folded'	<i>bvløꝑmòē</i>	'fold' (vt.)

(2) S=A type

a.	<i>Àng v̄mē.</i>	'He's eating.' or 'He eats.'
	<i>àng v̄m-ē</i>	
	3sg eat-N.PAST	

<sup>2</sup> Some stative intransitive verbs can take an oblique argument marked by the locative/dative marker *s̀vng*, e.g. *svrē* 'to be afraid', where the stimulus is marked as an oblique argument:

- (i) *ngà vgĩs̀vng svrēngē* 'I'm afraid of dogs.'  
*ngà vgĩ-s̀vng svrē-ng-ē*  
 1sg dog-LOC afraid-1sg-N.PAST

<sup>3</sup> The verb morphology can also be added to some nouns to make cognate noun-verb combinations, e.g. (*àng*)*chēr chēròē* 'make wings', *pvlū pvlūòē* 'lay out a mat', *shòm shòmē* 'The *shòm* (*Melocanna baccifera* (?), a type of bamboo that only blooms once in 50 years) are blooming.' (Neither the causative or applicative markers are used to make verbs from nouns.)

- a' *À:ngí yālòng vmpà á:mòē.* 'He is eating this rice.'  
*àng-í [yā-lòng vmpà] v̄m-ò-ē*  
 3sg-AGT this-CL rice eat-3.TR.N.PAST-N.PAST
- b. *Àng pé zvtñē.* 'He weaves baskets.' (general or habitual sense)  
*àng pé zvt-ē*  
 3sg basket weave-N.PAST
- b' *À:ngí pé tiqchv̄ng za:tnòē.* 'He is weaving a basket.'  
*àng-í [pé tiq-chv̄ng] zvt-ò-ē*  
 3sg-AGT basket one-CL weave-3.TR.N.PAST-N.PAST

- There is one copula verb in Rawang, *íē*, which has the form *óngàē* in the 1sg person singular, as in line 7 of (4) below. It takes a special form of the negation particle: normally the negation particle is pronounced [mə-] or [mɔ-], but pronounced [mù-] (written *mò-*) with the copula, as in line 3 of (4) below. It cannot be used in a normal causative sense, though it can take the precative marker (*laq-*), which is a sub-type of imperative (e.g. *cílchè laq-(mò)-í* '(Don't) let him be a soldier'). It is an intransitive verb, and except for the special characteristics just mentioned, it is otherwise like other intransitive verbs in terms of person marking, TAM marking, interrogative marking, and applicative marking.
- The copula is used for identity ((3) & (4)), and equation ((5)), though can be omitted in certain contexts, as in lines 4 and 9 in (4) below.
- The copula subject and copula complement do not take any case marking, though the CS can take the topic marker, *n̄̃*, as in (3) and line 1 of (4). The CS can be omitted in certain contexts, as in lines 3, 4 and 7 of (4). It can also be quite complex, as in (5).

(3) *Wē vshòmǵ n̄̃ zòngcè íē.* 'Those three people are students.'  
*[wē vshòm-ǵ n̄̃]<sub>CS</sub> [zòngcè]<sub>CC</sub> í-ē*  
 that three-CL TOP student COP-N.PAST

1 (4) *Rvwàng mvshól yālòng n̄̃* (LaPolla & Poa 2001:1-5)  
*[Rvwàng mvshól yā-lòng n̄̃]<sub>CS</sub>*  
 Rawang story this-CL TOP  
 'This Rawang story

2 *dvmshàrìí rīma:tnà wē mvshól íē, . . .*  
*[dvmshà-rì-í rīm-at-à wē<sup>4</sup> mvshól]<sub>CC</sub> í-ē*  
 shaman-pl-AGT keep-DIR-TR.PAST NOM story COP-N.PAST  
 is a story being kept by the shamans, . . .

<sup>4</sup> It would be possible to omit *wē* here; relative clauses such as this one may or may not involve the nominalizer (which derives from one of the distal demonstratives, *wē*).

- 3 *Ngàí gō ngà nọt kèní dḃbū:ngò wē m̄-í,*  
 [ngà-í gō ngà nọt kèní dḃbōng-ò wē]<sub>CC</sub> m̄-í  
 1sg-AGT also 1sg mind from originate-3.TR.N.PAST NOM NEG-be  
 (This) does not come from me (is not something that originated with me),
- 4 *dārì vshaqwàngvnrìí dḃmshàrìí gùng ráà wē,*  
 [dārì vshaq-wàngvnrì-í dḃmshà-rì-í gùng rá-à wē]<sub>CC</sub> (Ø Copula)  
 long ago old-very.old-pl-AGT shaman-pl-AGT tell DIR-TR.PAST NOM  
 (it) was told by damshas and very old men of long ago,
- 5 *táng yvngàrì shònò wē í ē.*  
 [tá-ng yàng-à-rì]<sub>CS</sub> [shòn-ò wē]<sub>CC</sub> í-ē  
 hear-1sg TMyrs(1<sup>st</sup>person)-TP-pl say-3.TR.N.PAST NOM COP-N.PAST  
 what I will tell you is what I heard (from them).
- 6 *Iwē, tōpnì tōprāng nō*  
 í-wē [tōpnì tōprāng] nō  
 COP-that in.detail complete.details TOP  
 Be that as it may, as for being complete and in detail,
- 7 *dḃmshà m̄-ōng à rvt mv-gōp mv-rà:lò,*  
 [[(Ø CS) [dḃmshà]<sub>CC</sub> m̄-í-ng-à] rvt] mv-gōp mv-ràl-ò  
 shaman NEG-COP-1sg-1.N.PAST because NEG-cover NEG-think.of-  
 3.TR.N.PAST  
 since I am not a shaman, I cannot recall all.
- 8 *dvdḃmrónshì dḃngtē wā í ē.*  
 dvdḃm-rón-shì dḃngtē wā í-ē  
 think-reach-R/M much only COP-N.PAST  
 I can recall only this much.
- 9 *Dḃmshà chvngwàrì kà nō kḃmḃm daq wē.*  
 [dḃmshà chvngwà-rì kà]<sub>CS</sub> nō [kḃm-ḃm daq wē]<sub>CC</sub> (Ø copula)  
 shaman chief-pl word TOP reliable-DIR possible NOM  
 The words of the shaman chiefs are reliable.'
- (5) *Vp̀vng Pū:ngí shvngōt dvtú yà:ngà mvshól sv̀ng cà:nò nò* (LaPolla & Poa 2001:13)  
 [[[Vp̀vng Pūng-í shvngōt dvtú yàng-à mvshól sv̀ng] c̀vn-ò nò]  
 PN PN-AGT teach guide TMyrs-TR.PAST story LOC follow-3.TR.N.PAST PS  
 'Following the story taught by Apang Pong,
- dvtut dvtut tv̀nù:ngò nò wà yà:ngì wē dàmshà í ē.*  
 [dvtut dvtut tv̀nùng-ò nò] wà yàng-ì wē]<sub>CS</sub> [dàmshà]<sub>CC</sub> í-ē  
 in.continuation trace-3.TR.N.PAST PS do TMyrs-IP NOM dàmshà COP-N.PAST  
 the damsha rites were handed down continually. (Lit.: That which follows the story  
 taught by Apang Pung and has been handed down continually is the damsha rites.)'

### 3. Comparative clauses

#### 3.1 A2 comparative clauses

- All of the Rvwang comparative structures and the elements in them are native.
- The main comparative structure used in Rvwang is the A2 type, but with a slight difference (common in Tibeto-Burman languages): the mark and the index are often the same element. That is, a form is used that marks the role of the standard, but at the same time is the only index to the fact that it is a comparative construction. In some Tibeto-Burman languages the form used for this construction is a unique unanalyzable form (e.g. Qiang *-sa*), but in many other cases it is a postposition with a locative sense, or locational noun, as in the case of Rvwang, which uses *mvd̀̀m* 'above, over', as in (6)-(8).
- It is possible in Rvwang to have an adverb of extent, *té* (derived from *tēwē* 'big'), often reduplicated in some contexts, before the parameter, and then it might be understood as 'more'. (Another common adverb of extent, *gvzà*, is not usually used in comparatives.) In clauses without the Standard and Mark (see §3.2), this may be the only overt marking of comparison.
- The predicate in these comparative clauses is intransitive, with the Comparee being the single direct argument and the Standard being an adjunct.

- (6) *Vdó nō Vpūng mvd̀̀m (té(té)) ỳ̀ngē.*  
 [*Vdó nō*]<sub>Comparee</sub> [*Vpūng mvd̀̀m*]<sub>Standard+Mark</sub> [*té-té*      *ỳ̀ng-ē*]<sub>Index+Parameter</sub>  
 PN TOP            PN above                            more-more tall-N.PAST  
 'Adeu is taller than Apung.'

- The Parameter can also take a quantifier or secondary extent adverbial, as in (7a-b), sometimes in addition to *té*. In this case, e.g. (7b), only one iteration of *té* can be used.

- (7) a. *Vdó nō Vpūng mvd̀̀m vní lémaq ỳ̀ngē.*  
 [*Vdó nō*] [*Vpūng mvd̀̀m*] [[*vní lémaq*]<sub>ADV</sub> *ỳ̀ng-ē*]  
 PN TOP PN above two inch(<B) tall-N.PAST  
 'Adeu is two inches taller than Apung.'

- b. *Vdó nō Vpūng mvd̀̀m tíqh̀̀ncè té ỳ̀ngē.*  
 [*Vdó nō*] [*Vpūng mvd̀̀m*] [[*tíq-h̀̀n-cè té*]<sub>ADV</sub> *ỳ̀ng-ē*]  
 PN TOP PN above one-bit-DIM more tall-N.PAST  
 'Adeu is a little bit taller than Apung.'

- The Parameter can also be an adverb within the predicate:

- (8) *Vpū:ngí nō Vdó mvd̀̀m té shòshòwā wà dára.*  
 [*Vpūng-í nō*] [*Vdó mvd̀̀m*] [[*té shòshò-wā*]<sub>ADV</sub> *wà dár-à*]  
 PN-AGT TOP PN above more happily-ADV do TMhrs-TR.PAST  
 'Apung did (it) more happily than Adeu.'

- The word *mvd̀̀m* is not only used in these constructions; it still has its basic use as a locational noun ('top' or 'above') or adverbial, as in (9) and (10), or with the sense of 'aside from ...', as in (11) and (12).

(9) *Svb̀̀y mvd̀̀mm̄̄ vch̀̀ngē.*

[*svb̀̀y mvd̀̀m-̄̄*] *v-ch̀̀ng-ē*

table above-LOC PREF-hang-N.PAST

'(It) is (permanently) hanging above the table.'<sup>5</sup>

(10) *Ǹ̀mb̀̀ngch̀̀m tiqch̀̀ng sh̀̀g̀̀ng mvd̀̀md̀̀m vl̄̀:ngē.*

[*ǹ̀mb̀̀ng-ch̀̀m tiq-ch̀̀ng*] [*sh̀̀g̀̀ng mvd̀̀m-d̀̀m*] *vl̄̀ng-ē*

air/wind-house one-CL mountain above-REDUP fly-N.PAST

'An airplane is flying over the mountain.'

(11) *S̀̀ng z̄̀r v̄̀l mvd̀̀m r̄̀msh̀̀i n̄̀ngsh̀̀i daq̀̀i rvt,*

(LaPolla & Poa 2001:45)

[*s̀̀ng z̄̀r v̄̀l mvd̀̀m*] [*r̄̀m-sh̀̀i n̄̀ng-sh̀̀i daq̀̀-ì*] *rvt*

humanseries exist above add-R/M accompany-R/M DIR-I.PAST because

'Because she was added to the other humans, (she was called *Vn̄̀ng*)'.

(12) *Yā mvd̀̀m luq̄̀.*

(LaPolla & Poa 2001:83)

[*yā mvd̀̀m*] *luq̄̀-ē*

this above enough/plenty-N.PAST

(After listing twenty places where the Rvwang had lived before, the storyteller then said:) 'There are more than these places.' (or 'Aside from these there are plenty (of others).')

- There is no direct negative form which uses *mvd̀̀m*, and there is no form equivalent to 'less' in comparatives; if the intention is to express something like 'John is not taller than Bill' or 'John is less tall than Bill', then either the 'as much as' form is used, as in (13a) (cf. (6) and see §3.5 below), or a Parameter with the opposite meaning is used, as in (13b).

(13) a. *Vd̄̀ n̄̀ Vp̄̀ng d̀̀ngtē mv-ȳ̀ng.*

[*Vd̄̀ n̄̀*] [*Vp̄̀ng d̀̀ngtē*] *mv-ȳ̀ng*

PN TOP PN much NEG-tall

'Adeu is not as tall as Apung.'

b. *Vd̄̀ n̄̀ Vp̄̀ng mvd̀̀m (té) dvg̀̀ngē.*

[*Vd̄̀ n̄̀*] [*Vp̄̀ng mvd̀̀m*] [*té dvg̀̀ng-ē*]

PN TOP PN above more short-N.PAST

'Adeu is shorter than Apung.'

<sup>5</sup> Different locative postpositons can be used in this construction, with different effects: if the translative form (reduplication of last syllable) were used instead of *̄̄*, i.e. *mvd̀̀md̀̀m vch̀̀ngē*, the meaning would be that the object is only temporarily hanging there; with the locative postposition *taq* instead of *̄̄*, (i.e. *svb̀̀y mvd̀̀m taq*) the meaning would be 'on top of the table'; contrast this also with *svb̀̀y taq* 'on the table'.

- It seems that for comparatives of the type 'John came earlier than Bill' a comparative is not used; instead an adverb meaning 'early' or 'late', which cannot be made comparative, is used, as in (14) and (15).

(14) *Vdó nō Vpūng mēp̄v̄ngwā dīrāì.*  
 [Vdó nō] [Vpūng mēp̄v̄ng-wā]<sup>6</sup> dī-rá-ì  
 PN TOP PN behind-ADV go-DIR-I.PAST  
 'Adeu came after Apung.' (= 'Adeu came later than Apung')

(15) *Vdó ó Vpūng, Vpūng z̄v̄ngz̄v̄ng tuq ráì.*  
 [Vdó ó Vpūng] Vpūng [z̄v̄ngz̄v̄ng tuq rá-ì]  
 PN COM PN PN ahead arrive DIR-I.PAST  
 'Apung arrived ahead of Adeu.' (= 'Apung arrived earlier than Adeu')

- The same basic A2 structure is used for comparing two patient arguments, but the Comparee is then not the topic of the clause, instead occurring in the usual focus position of the clause, as in the examples in (16). Animate patients can take the same marking as in normal transitives, as in (17) and (18) (it would be possible in (16c) as well).

(16) a. *Ngà nō shā mvd̄vm vyúng (tété) shòngē.*  
 [ngà nō] [shā mvd̄vm] vyúng [té-té shòng-ē]  
 1sg TOP meat above vegetables more-more like-N.PAST  
 'I like vegetables more than meat.'

b. *Ngàí nō īnglikkà mvd̄vm Rvwàngkà tété (shón) shángòē.*  
 [ngà-í nō] [īnglik-kà mvd̄vm] Rvwàng-kà  
 1sg-AGT TOP English-language above Rawang-language  
 [té-té shón shá-ng-ò-ē]<sup>7</sup>  
 big-big speak know-1sg-3.TR.N.PAST-N.PAST  
 'I can speak Rawang better than (I can speak) English.'

c. *(Ngàí) Vdó mvd̄vm Vpūng tété shòngòē.*  
 ngà-í [Vdó mvd̄vm] Vpūng [té-té shòng-ò-ē]<sup>8</sup>  
 1sg-AGT PN above PN more-more like-3.TR.N.PAST-N.PAST  
 'I like Adeu more than (I like) Apung.'

<sup>6</sup> With the adverb marker *wā* it shows the time of the two arrivals is a little bit apart; if the translative were used, i.e. *mēp̄v̄ngp̄v̄ng dīrāì*, then one came right after the other.

<sup>7</sup> Tone change of *shón* to *shón* due to it being in construction with *sháòē*.

<sup>8</sup> Notice the difference in transitivity between example (16a) and (16c): the former is a statement about vegetables in general, and so is morphologically intransitive (no agentive marker on the topic and no third person patient marker on the verb), while the latter is a statement about a particular individual, and so is transitive. With this verb there is also a third possibility as well, *shóngāòē*, with the benefactive applicative suffix, when the specific object liked belongs to someone else.

- There is no ambiguity of the *I love you more than John* type in Rawang; compare (17) with (16c) and (18):

(17) *Vnā:ngí nà s̀vng èshòng mvd̀vm, ngàí tété shòngē.*  
 [Vn̄vng-í [nà s̀vng] è-shòng mvd̀vm] [ngà-í [té-té shòng-ē]]  
 PN-AGT 2sg LOC N.1-like above 1sg-AGT more-more like-N.PAST  
 'I love you more than Anang loves you.' (Lit: 'Anang loves you than, I love you more';  
 cf. *Vn̄vngí nà s̀vng èshòngē* 'Anang loves you.')

(18) *Vd̄ó s̀vng shòng-ò mvd̀vm, Vp̄ung s̀vng lè tété shòng-ò-ē.*  
 [[Vd̄ó s̀vng] shòng-ò mvd̀vm]  
 PN LOC like-TR.N.PAST above  
 [[Vp̄ung s̀vng lè] té-té shòng-ò-ē]  
 PN LOC CONTR more-more like-3.TR.N.PAST-N.PAST  
 'I like Apung more than I like Adeu.' (I like them both, but I prefer Apung.)

- In (17) and (18) *mvd̀vm* appears after the first verb of a two clause structure, but it doesn't seem to be a true bi-clausal comparative, in the sense that the two clauses in a bi-clausal comparative are in a paratactic relationship; instead it seems one clause is embedded as an adjunct in the other, maintaining the basic structure of the A2 comparative (see §3.4 below for true biclausal comparatives). This is most clear in (19):

(19) *Ang n̄ b̀vnlì wā mvd̀vm, kà tété shòng-ē.*  
 [àng-n̄] [[b̀vnlì wā] mvd̀vm] [kà té-té shòng-ē]  
 3sg TOP work(n.) do above words more-more talk-N.PAST  
 'S/he talks more than s/he works (does some work, but mostly talks).'

- Two properties related to one participant (see also (19)):

(20) *John n̄ m̀vrsh̀vm vnv̄p mvd̀vm tété mvdaq.*  
 [John n̄] [m̀vrsh̀vm vnv̄p mvd̀vm] [té-té mvdaq]  
 PN TOP face beautiful above more-more intelligent  
 'John is more intelligent than beautiful.'<sup>10</sup>

(21) *Angmaq n̄ mvkún mvkún shá-ò mvd̀vm, l̄vm tété jā:ngē.*  
 [àng-maq n̄] [mvkún mvkún shá-ò mvd̀vm]  
 3sg-pl TOP song sing know-3.TR.N.PAST above  
 [l̄vm té-té jāng-ē]  
 dance more-more good.at(<Jinghpaw)-N.PAST  
 'They dance better than they sing.'

<sup>9</sup> *nà s̀vng* could appear where it is here or after *ngàí* or in sentence-initial position.

<sup>10</sup> With *gvzà* 'very' and/or *ḡ* 'also' instead of *tété*, this example would mean 'In addition to being beautiful, he is intelligent.'



- Two clauses compared:

(22) *Ngà í rōngò mvd̀vmm̄ nà lègā vrū tété lèw̄nē.*  
 [ngà-í rō-ng-ò mvd̀v-m-̄] [nà lègā vrū] [tété lèw̄n-ē]  
 1sg-AGTread-1sg-3.TR.N.PAST above-LOC 2sg writing write more quick(<B)-N.PAST  
 'You write faster than I read.'

### 3.2 A2si comparative clauses

- The Standard can be and often is omitted. In some cases where no standard is mentioned or understood from context, the interpretation can be the superlative, 'more than any other' = 'most'.

(23) *Ngà n̄ vyúng tété shòngē.*  
 [ngà n̄] vyúng [té-té shòng-ē]  
 1sg TOP vegetables more-more like- N.PAST  
 'I like vegetables better.' or 'I like vegetables best.'

(24) *Ngà tété ȳngē.*  
 ngà [té-té ȳng-ē]  
 1sg big-big tall-N.PAST  
 'I'm taller.' or 'I am tallest.'

(25) . . . *wēd̄ èj̄ ã:mò nìḡ, té shvlāē, . . .* (LaPolla & Poa 2001:177)  
 wē-d̄ [è-j̄ v̄m-ò] nì-ḡ [té shvlā-ē]  
 this-ADV N.1-fry(<B) BEN-3.TR.N.PAST if-also more good-N.PAST  
 (Talking about Lamzu, a kind of bamboo) ' . . . they (taste) better if you fry them.'

(26) *Vmān n̄ vní mvzá rām kèní n̄*  
 [vmān n̄] [vní mvzá rām kèní n̄]  
 the.truth(<B) TOP two handspan about from TOP

*wēd̄ té v̄m byōē, téwā shvlāē, wē rvt̄ taq n̄.* (LaPolla & Poa 2001:181)  
 wē-d̄ [té v̄m byō-ē]<sup>11</sup> [té-wā shvlā-ē] [wē rvt̄ taq n̄]  
 that-ADV more eat good(<B)-N.PAST more-ADV good-N.PAST that time LOC TOP  
 'The truth is it's more delicious if it is about 2 handspans tall, at that time.'

(27) *Angkècè ḡ téwā ḡvmdaqē. Wēd̄ mvl̄mē.* (LaPolla & Poa 2001:196)  
 ang-kè-cè ḡ [té-wā ḡv-m-daq-ē]<sup>12</sup> wē-d̄ mvl̄m-ē  
 PREF-boil.off-DIM also big-ADV tasty-DIR-NP that-ADV tasty-N.PAST  
 'Without liquid(gravy or water) is more delicious. That way is tasty.'

<sup>11</sup> *wēd̄ v̄m tété byōē* would also be possible here with the same meaning.

<sup>12</sup> In these examples, the forms *téwā ḡvmē*, *tété ḡvmē*, and *té ḡvmē* could be used interchangeably.

- (28) *Wēdō waqcì edór bódò kvtní nō kādō gō ým shvlāē.*  
*wē-dō waqcì edór bódò kvtn-í nō kā-dō gō ým shvlā-ē*  
 that-ADV powder pound PFV-3.TR.N.PAST time-ADV TOP WH-ADV also eat good-N.PAST

*Wēòng gō mok èyē á:mò nìgō shvlāē.*  
*wē-òng gō mok è-yē ým-ò nì-gō shvlā-ē*  
 that-CL also bread(<B) N.1-make BEN-3.TR.N.PAST if-also good-N.PAST

*Wēòng gō té gvmē, kvtn pvn.*  
*wē-òng gō té gvm-ē kvtn pvn*  
 that-CL also more tasty-N.PAST that kind

'(Well that longbongshi, you dry it in the sun then pound it and then soak it in the water, after while you sift the water and pound that again until it become flour then you can make bread out of it.) It can be fixed many different ways after it becomes flour. The bread of it is very delicious. Tastes better than others, that kind.'

### 3.3 A1 comparative clauses

- Aside from the A2 type of comparative, there are times when a form of the A1 comparative structure is used, where the Parameter appears in the complement of a copula clause, as in (29) and (30). This is used when the Parameter is a noun, e.g. *tvp* 'close' in (29a-b), or when a verb is nominalized (this is very common), as in (30).

- (29) a. *Àngmaq chòm nō ngàmaq chòm mvdvm kèní Melbourne tvptvpyng íē.*  
*[àng-maq chòm nō] [ngà-maq chòm mvdvm kèní]*  
 3sg-pl house TOP 1sg-pl house above from  
*[Melbourne tvp-tvp-yng]cc í-ē*  
 PN close-close-LOC COP-N.PAST

'His house is closer to Melbourne than my house.' (Lit.: 'His house is a place close to Melbourne, more so than mine.')

- b. *Wēdāng nō yādāng mvdvm tvp íē má?*  
*[wē-dāng nō] [yā-dāng mvdvm] [tvp]cc í-ē má*  
 that-CL(roads) TOP this-CL(roads) above close COP-N.PAST Q  
 'Is that road closer than this road?'

- (30) a. *Àng nō tétépè íē.*  
*[àng nō] [té-té-tē-pè]cc í-ē*  
 3sg TOP more-more-big-MALE COP-N.PAST  
 'He is taller.' (Lit.: 'He is the taller male.')

- b. *Tvrà yādāng (té(wā)) yvnggúng íē.*  
*[tvrà yā-dāng] [té-wā yvnggúng]cc í-ē*  
 3sg this-CL(roads) more-ADV long COP-N.PAST  
 'This road is longer.'

- In some cases, such as in (31), the copula used is not the usual copula, it is the verb *v̄lē* 'to exist, to live (at a place)'.

- (31) *Àng n̄ ngà mvd̀m kèní Melbourne tvptvpýng v̄lē.*  
 [àng n̄]cs [ngà mvd̀m kèní] [Melbourne tvp-tvp-ýng]cc v̄l-ē  
 3sg TOP 1sg above from PN close-close-LOC exist-N.PAST  
 'He lives closer to Melbourne than I do' (Lit.: 'He lives in a place close to Melbourne, more so than me.')
- (also possible would be *Melbourne s̀ng tvp íýng* [Melbourne LOC close COP-LOC])

### 3.4 Bi-clausal comparative clauses

- There is also a bi-clausal strategy which sometimes involves having the contrastive noun marker *m̀ng* (or sometimes *l̀è*) after the Comparee (this has the sense of 'instead of NP'). (In (32) it would be possible to have just *s̀ng* and/or *n̄*, but *m̀ng* makes the contrast stronger.)

- (32) *Vpūng s̀ng (n̄) mv-shòngò, Vdó (s̀ng) m̀ng (n̄) shòngòē*  
 [[Vpūng s̀ng n̄] mv-shòng-ò] [[Vdó s̀ng m̀ng n̄] shòng-ò-ē]  
 PN LOC TOP NEG-like-3.TR.N.PAST PN LOC CONTR TOP like-3.TR.N.PAST-N.PAST  
 'I like Adeu more than I like Apung (Lit.: 'I don't like Apung, I like Adeu instead.')

- (33) *Vpūng n̄ tēwē, Vdó n̄ c̀mē.*  
 [[Vpūng n̄] tē-wē] [[Vdó n̄] c̀m-ē]  
 PN TOP big-NOM PN TOP small-N.PAST  
 'Apung is bigger than Adeu.' (Lit.: 'Apung is big, but Adeu is small.')

- In (33), one person is big and the other is small. Another situation is where both are big, but one is bigger, as in (34):

- (34) *Vpūng n̄ gvzà tēwē, Vdó n̄ tété tēē.*  
 [[Vpūng n̄] [gvzà tē-wē]] [[Vdó n̄] tété tē-ē]  
 PN TOP very big-NOM PN TOP more-more big-N.PAST  
 'Apung is very big, but Adeu is bigger.'

### 3.5 Equative comparative clauses

- Comparatives of the 'as much as' type are generally formed using the adverb *d̀ngtē* 'much', if it is a measurable Parameter, as in (35)-(37), or the adverb marker *d̄*, in other cases, such as in (38).
- Both positive and negative forms of the predicate are possible, but the constraint on the Parameter being a measurable concept is more strict for *d̀ngtē* in the positive (e.g. *d̀ngtē* can be used in (37), but not in (38)). The word *n̄* 'just, exactly' is also not used in the negative.
- In some cases either *d̀ngtē* or *d̄* could be used, but the meaning would be slightly different; for example if (36) had *d̄*, the meaning would be 'He is not tall the way you are.'

- (35) *Vdó nō Vpūng dvingtē (nī) yvngē.*  
 [Vdó nō] [Vpūng dvingtē (nī)] yvng-ē  
 Adeu TOP Apung much just tall-N.PAST  
 'Adeu is (just/exactly) as tall as Apung.'
- (36) *Ang nō nà dvingtē mv-yvng.*  
 [àng nō] [nà dvingtē] mv-yvng  
 3sg TOP 2sg much NEG-tall  
 'He's not as tall as you.'
- (37) *Ang nō nà dvingtē mà-dvbù.*  
 [àngnō] [nà dvingtē] mà-dvbù  
 3sg TOP 2sg much NEG-happy  
 'He is not as happy as you.' (He is happy, but less happy than you.)
- (38) *Ang nō nà dō (nī) dvbùē.*  
 [àng nō] [nà dō nī] dvbù-ē  
 3sg TOP 2sg ADV just happy-N.PAST  
 'He is (just) as happy as you.'

- If the two items being compared exhibit the characteristic represented by the Parameter to the same extent, the adverb *dvcháchá* 'same level' can be used, as in (39a) (the predicate can be positive or negative). In this case the two items compared are joined by the comitative marker into one NP. There are two comitative markers in Rvwang, *ó* and *nvng*, and either one can be used in this construction. It is also possible for the two items being compared to be represented by a single noun phrase, as in (39b).

- (39) a. *Nà ó ngà nō dvcháchá yvngshìē.*  
 [nà ó ngà nō] [dvcháchá yvng-shì-ē]  
 2sg COM 1sg TOP same.level tall-dl-N.PAST  
 'You and I are the same height.'
- b. *ngàní mvzè nō dvcháchá yvngshìē.*  
 [ngà-ní mvzè nō] [dvcháchá yvng-shì-ē]  
 1sg-dl girl TOP same.level tall-dl-N.PAST  
 'We two girls are the same height.'

### 3.6 Superlative

- The superlative can be an inference from the context, when no Standard is mentioned or understood (see §3.2), or it can be explicitly marked using the morpheme (*v*)*tṽng*, derived from *vtṽng* 'edge, end' (e.g. *tvrà vtṽng* 'end of the road'; *svboy vtṽng* 'edge of the table'; *vrúm vtṽng* 'farthest place (heaven)', *vtṽngpè* 'God'). In this case the Parameter is nominalized by (*v*)*tṽng* and appears as the complement of the copula, similar to an A1 type comparative structure:

- (40) *Ngà n̄h ȳvng(v)t̄vng óngàē*  
 [ngà n̄h] [ȳvng-vt̄vng]cc í-ng-à-ē  
 1sg TOP tall-edge COP-1sg-1.N.PAST-N.PAST  
 'I am the tallest (one).'
- (41) *Àng n̄h vdá(v)t̄vng íē.*  
 [àng n̄h] [vdá-(v)t̄vng]cc í-ē  
 3sg TOP have-edge COP-N.PAST  
 'He is the richest (one among us).'
- (42) *Computerrì n̄h sh̄vngbē shvlāwē, Apple computer lònng m̀vng shvlávt̄vng íē.*  
 [[computer-rì n̄h] [sh̄vngbē shvlā-wē]]  
 computer-pl TOP all good-NOM  
 [[Apple computer lònng m̀vng] [shvlá-vt̄vng]cc í-ē]<sup>13</sup>  
 PN computer CL CONTR good-edge COP-N.PAST  
 'All the computers are good, but the Apple computer is the best.'

### 3.7 Inherently comparative lexemes

- The adjectives (stative verbs) are in fact inherently comparative, but generally not used that way; in an explicitly comparative context, a simple statement such as *àng ȳvngē* [3sg tall-N.PAST] could mean 'S/he is taller.'
- There is a verb *nēshìē* 'to like, prefer', which seems to be a deponent verb, as it takes the reflexive/middle marker but there is no transitive (non-middle) counterpart. It is only used following another verb, that is 'prefer to V'; for 'prefer NP', see (46)-(47) below.

- (43) a. *Mōdō zúnshì mvd̀vm tvrà dí nēng sh̀ngē.*  
 [mōdō zún-shì mvd̀vm] [tvrà dí nē-ng sh̀-ē]  
 car ride-R/M above road go prefer-1sg R/M-N.PAST  
 'I prefer to walk than ride in the car.' (use of *mvd̀vm* makes it 'prefer' instead of 'like')
- b. *Yābok lègā r̄h nēng sh̀ngē.*  
 [yā-bok lègā] [r̄h nē-ng sh̀-ē]  
 this-CL book read like-1sg R/M-1sg-N.PAST  
 'I like/prefer to read this book.'
- c. *Australia rvgaq̄ té v̄l nēng sh̀ngē.*  
 [Australia rvgaq̄-ō] [té v̄l nē-ng sh̀-ē]  
 PN place-LOC more live like-1sg R/M-1sg-N.PAST  
 'I prefer to live in Australia.'

- The meaning in (43a) could also be expressed as in (44):

<sup>13</sup> There is a change of tone from *shvlā* to *shvlá* here because the word is in construction with *vt̄vng*.

(44) *Mōdō zúnshì mvd̀vm tvrà dí lònɡ té shònɡē.*  
 [mōdō zún-shì mvd̀vm] [[tvrà dí lònɡ] té shònɡ-ē]  
 car ride-R/M above road go CL more like-N.PAST  
 'I prefer to walk than ride in the car.' (Lit.: 'I prefer the walking one.')

- The verb *mvz̀vnē* 'surpass, be more than' (a loan from Jinghpaw) is also inherently comparative. In (45) the Parameter is 'two inches', but it could be other measurements, e.g. *vnícé mvt* 'twenty marks (on a test)'.<sup>14</sup>

(45) *Vdó nō Vpūng mvd̀vm vní lémaq mvz̀vnē.*  
 [Vdó nō] [Vpūng mvd̀vm] [[vní lémaq]<sub>ADV</sub> mvz̀vn-ē]  
 Adeu TOP Apung above two inch(<B) surpass-N.PAST  
 'Adeu is two inches taller/more than Apung.'

- The comparative noun marker we saw in §3.4 above can also appear in a clause with the verb *shònɡ(ò)ē* 'like/love', giving the verb the sense of 'prefer', as (46) and (47):

(46) *Ngà nō vyúng lè nō shònɡē. (m̀vng also possible instead of lè)*  
 [ngà nō] [vyúng lè nō] shònɡ-ē  
 1sg TOP vegetable(s) CONTR TOP like-N.PAST  
 'I prefer vegetables.'

(47) *Ngà nō chòngmō mvd̀vm, ǹvmcì lè (té) shònɡē. (m̀vng also possible instead of lè)*  
 [ngà nō] [chòngmō mvd̀vm] [ǹvmcì lè] té shònɡ-ē  
 1sg TOP banana(s) above juice.fruit CONTR more like-N.PAST  
 'I prefer fruits with juice to bananas.'

### 3.8 The verb 'compare'

- The verb 'compare' is *shvbóngòē*. The clause with *shvbóngòē* generally appears in a two clause construction with a comparative clause, as in (48), and the two items compared appear as two conjoined nouns. As with the *dvcháchá* construction mentioned above (§3.5), the two conjoined nouns could be replaced by a single NP, e.g. in (48), *wē-lòng ǹvng yā-lòng* 'that one and this one' could be replaced by *wē-lòng-ní* [that-CL-dl] 'those two'.

(48) *Wēlòng ǹvng yālòng shvbóngò ǹvng nō, yālòng tété shvlāē.*  
 [[wē-lòng ǹvng yā-lòng] shvbóng-ò ǹ-ng nō]  
 this-CL COM that-CL compare-3.TR.N.PAST if-1sg TOP  
 [yā-lòng [té-té shvlā-ē]]  
 this-CL big-big good-N.PAST  
 'When I compare this one with that one, this one is better.'

<sup>14</sup> *mvz̀vn* has also come to be used as an adverb of extent in comparatives instead of *té* by some people.

### 3.9 Co-relative comparatives

- Co-relative comparatives generally involve the adverb *dvshà dvshà*, often shortened to *dvshàshà*, 'keep on ...'.<sup>15</sup> This form can appear in the first clause of the two-clause structure, as in (49a), or it can appear in the second clause, as in (49b).

(49) a. *Tìgwit té èaq dvshàshà, (té) tì bálràē.*  
 [tì-gwit [té è-aq dvshàshà]] [té tì bál-rà-ē]  
 water-cold more N.1-drink keep.on more water thirsty-must-N.PAST  
 'The more you drink cold water, the thirstier you are.'

b. *Té tìgwit èaq, dvshàshà tì bálràē. (té can appear before or after tìgwit)*  
 [té tì-gwit è-aq] [dvshàshà tì bál-rà-ē]  
 more water-cold N.1-drink keep.on water thirsty-must-N.PAST  
 'The more you drink cold water, the thirstier you are.'

- The form *dvshàshà* can also appear in both clauses, as in (50):

(50) *Nòt byōng dvshàshà, dvshàshà (lè) dvbó m̄v̄nshòngē.*  
 [nòt byō-ng dvshàshà] [dvshàshà lè dvbò m̄v̄n-shì-ng-ē]  
 mind good-1sg keep.on keep.on CONTR fat continue-R/M-1sg-N.PAST  
 'The happier I am the fatter I become.' ('The more I keep on being happy, the more I keep on getting fat.')

- Another possibility is to have *mvd̄vm* at the end of the first clause, as in (51) and (52). When *mvd̄vm* is used, *dvshàshà* can't be used in the same clause. Either *té* or *dvshàshà* can appear in the second clause, but not both.

(51) *Té tìgwit èaq mvd̄vm(d̄vm), (té) tì bálràē.*  
 [[té tì-gwit] è-aq mvd̄vm-d̄vm] [té tì bál-rà-ē]  
 morewater-cold N.1-drink above-REDUP more water thirsty-must-N.PAST  
 'The more you drink cold water, the thirstier you are.'

(52) *Mè-wā nī v̄lò mvd̄vmd̄vm, dvshàshà wàòē.*  
 [[mv-è-wā nī] v̄l-ò mvd̄vm-d̄vm] [dvshàshà wà-ò-ē]  
 NEG-N.1-doNEG.IMP say-3.TR.N.PAST above-REDUP keep.on do-3.TR.N.PAST-N.PAST  
 'The more I tell (him) not to do it, the more he does it.'

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<sup>15</sup> *dvshàshà* is not just used in 'the more ... the more' constructions; it can be used in a single clause with the meaning of 'keep on ...'. Example (i) would be used in a situation where the person was told already once not to be so stubborn or uncooperative, but has continued to be so:

(i) *Dvshàshà mè-shèngārshì nī!*  
*dvshàshà mv-è-è-shvngār-shì nī*  
 keep.on NEG-N.1-N.1-be.stubborn-R/M NEG.IMP  
 'Don't keep being so stubborn (or uncooperative)!'

- A third possibility is to use the auxiliary verb *m̄vnhòē* 'continue' instead of or together with *dvshàsà*, as in (50) and (53). (Auxiliary verbs generally participate in transitivity harmony, and so *m̄vnhòē* takes the reflexive/middle marker to make it intransitive to match the intransitive main verb.)

(53) *Nøt byōng m̄vnhòng mvd̀m̀d̀v̀m, té dvb̀ò m̄vnhòngē.*  
 [nøt byō-ng m̄vnh-shì-ng mvd̀m̀d̀v̀m] [té dvb̀ò m̄vnh-shì-ng-ē]  
 mind good-1sg continue-R/M-1sg above-REDUP more fat continue-R/M-1sg-N.PAST  
 'The happier I am the fatter I become.' ('The more I continue being happy, the more I continue getting fat.')

- Still another possibility is to use *n̄vngn̄vng* (< *n̄vngòē* 'to add (something)') to be used after the verb in the first clause instead of *mvd̀m̀* or *dvshàsà*, as in (54):

(54) *Nøt byōng n̄vngn̄vng, dvb̀ò m̄vnhòngē.*  
 [nøt byō-ng n̄vng-n̄vng] [té dvb̀ò m̄vnh-shì-ng-ē]  
 mind good-1sg add-add more fat continue-R/M-1sg-N.PAST  
 'The happier I am the fatter I become.'

### 3.10 Interrogative comparatives

- We saw a yes-no question type of comparative in example (29b), formed simply by adding a question particle to the end of the clause. To form a question word interrogative of a comparative, an interrogative pronoun simply replaces the Standard or Comparee:

(55) *Kāg̀ó tété (kvl̀v̀ng) ỳòē?*  
 k̄ā-g̀ó [té-té kvl̀v̀ng ỳò-ē]  
 WH-CL more-more run flow-N.PAST  
 'Which (person) (runs) faster?'

(56) *(àng) k̄āg̀ó mvd̀m̀ (kèní) té (kvl̀v̀ng) ỳòē lé?*  
 àng [k̄ā-g̀ó mvd̀m̀ kèní] [té kvl̀v̀ng ỳò-ē] lé  
 3sg WH-CL above from more run flow-N.PAST Q  
 'He's faster than whom?' (In a context such as *Àng tété ỳòē lá? K̄āg̀ó mvd̀m̀ (kèní) lè?* 'He's faster? Faster than whom?')

### Abbreviations

1/2.I.PAST	1st and 2nd person intransitive past marker	N.1	non-1st person actor (in a clause with a speech act participant)
3.TR.N.PAST	3rd person transitive non- past marker	N.PAST	non-past marker
AGT	agentive marker	PFV	perfective marker
BEN	benefactive suffix	pl	plural
CAUS	causative prefix	PN	proper name
CL	classifier	PREF	intransitivizing prefix



CONTR	contrastive noun marker	R/M	reflexive/middle marker
DIR	direction marker	TMyrs / TMhrs	marker of remote past / marker of very recent past
I.PAST	3rd person intransitive past marker	TOP	topic marker
LOC	locative marker (also used for dative and purpose)	TR.PAST	transitive past marker

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