Copula Constructions in Rawang*

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This paper discusses the various uses of the copula in the Rawang language, a Tibeto-Burman language of northern Myanmar, plus other types of copula like-constructions, with data taken mainly from naturally occurring texts.

Key words: Rawang, Tibeto-Burman, copula constructions, Sino-Tibetan

1. Introduction

The people who speak the Rawang language (possibly as many as 40,000 people) live in the far north of 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. They are closely related to people on the other side of the Chinese border classified as either Dulong or Nu(ng) (see LaPolla 2001, 2003 on Dulong). In this paper, I will be discussing the copula constructions found in Rawang, 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.1

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1 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 = [a], ø = [ɯ], 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: $ā$, mid tone: $ā$, low falling tone: $â$. All syllables that end in a stop consonant (-p, -t, -q, -k) are in the high tone. Open syllables without a tone mark are unstressed. A colon marks non-basic long vowels. Four lines are used in the examples because of the many morphophonological changes that obscure the morpheme boundaries.
2. Typological overview

Rawang is verb-final, agglutinative, and with both head marking and dependent marking. Following are the different classes of verb (the citation form for verbs is the third person non-past affirmative/declarative form):

- **Intransitives**, which take the non-past affirmative/declarative particle (ē) alone in the non past (e.g. ngē‘to cry’) and the intransitive past tense marker (-ı) in past forms (with third person argument); they can be used transitively only when they take valency-increasing morphological marking (causative, benefactive).²

- **Adjectives**, which are a subclass of intransitive verb, and so can be predicative without the copula. In citation they take the nominalizer wē (e.g. ēwē ‘big’), but when used as predicates function the same as other intransitive verbs.

- **Transitives**, which take the non-past third person object marker (ō) plus the non-past affirmative/declarative particle (ē) in non-past forms (e.g. rō‘to carry (something)’) and the transitive past tense marker (-ā) in past forms (with third person P arguments);³ they can be used intransitively only when they take valency-reducing morphological marking (intrasitivizing prefix, reflexive/middle marking suffix). In transitive clauses the agentive marker generally appears on the NP representing the A argument.

- **Ambitransitives** (labile verbs), which can be used as transitives or intransitives without morphological derivation (vōmō / vōme ‘to eat’). There are both S=P type and S=A type ambitransitives.⁴ With the S=P 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

² Some stative intransitive verbs can take an oblique argument marked by the locative/dative marker svēng, e.g. svē‘to be afraid’, where the stimulus is marked as an oblique argument:
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(i)   ngā vēsvēng sēvēngē
     1sg dog-LOC afraid-1sg-N.PAST
     ‘I’m afraid of dogs.’
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³ The transitive verb marking can also be added to some nouns to make transitive cognate noun-verb combinations, e.g. (āng)čhēr čhōrē ‘make/grow wings’, pvlē pvlēdē ‘lay out a mat’, shōm shōmē ‘The shōm (a type of bamboo that only ripens once in 50 years) are ripe.’ (Neither the causative or applicative markers are used to make verbs from nouns.)

⁴ These refer to whether the single argument of the intransitive use of the verb corresponds to the A argument or the P argument of the transitive use.
between a general or habitual situation and a particular situation respectively. The difference is due partly to the nature of the P argument, and partly to the nature of general vs. specific action. That is, if the P is specific, then the transitive form must be used, but if the P is non-specific, it is not necessary to use the intransitive form. If no P is mentioned, then usually the intransitive form is used.

(1) S=P type
   a. gvyaqē ‘be broken, destroyed’ gvyaqŏē ‘break, destroy’
   b. gvyapmē ‘be crumpled’ gvyap:pmōē ‘crumple’
   c. dvtnē ‘be broken, snapped (thread)’ da:tnōē ‘break, snap’ (vt.)
   d. bvlpamē ‘be folded’ bvlp:pmōē ‘fold’ (vt.)

(2) S=A type
   a. ñng vmē. ñng vm-ē
      3sg eat-N.PAST
      ‘He’s eating.’ or ‘He eats.’
   a’. ñngi yālōng vimpā á:moē.
       ñng-ī yā-lōng vimpā vım-ō-ē
      3sg-AGT this-CL rice eat-3.TR.N.PAST-N.PAST
      ‘He is eating this rice.’
   b. ñng pē zvtnē.
      ñng pē zvt-ē
      3sg basket weave-N.PAST
      ‘He weaves baskets.’ (general or habitual sense)
   b’. ñngi pē tīq-chvng za:tnōē.
       ñng-ī pē tīq-chvng zvt-ō-ē
      3sg-AGT basket one-CL weave-3.TR.N.PAST-N.PAST
      ‘He is weaving a basket.’

3. Copula clauses

There is one copula verb in Rawang, īō, which has the form īōnē in the 1sg person singular, as in line 7 of (4) below. The copula takes a special form of the negation particle: with all verbs except the copula the negation particle is pronounced [mā-] or [mō-], but with the copula it is pronounced [mû-] (written mū-), 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. cîlcē laq-(mō)-ī ‘(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, tense/aspect marking, interrogative marking, applicative marking, and nominalization (see line 6 of (4) and line 2 of (8) for examples of nominalized copulas).
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 word order of a copula clause is always verb final.

The S of the copula clause does not take any semantic role marking, though it can take the topic marker, nø, as in line 1 of (4). The S of the copula clause can be omitted in certain contexts, as in lines 3, 4 and 7 of (4). It can also be quite complex, as in (5). There are no pivots in Rawang for cross-clause coreference (or other constructions), so there are no constraints in this regard on the S of the copula clause. If there is relativization, it is usually on the S of the copula clause (the head may be an NP or a classifier, as in (23), below).

The copula complement does not take any relational marking. It can be a plain noun, as in (3); a more complicated noun phrase, as in line 2 of (4); a postposition phrase, as in (6) and line 3 of (8); or an interrogative pronoun, as in (7), (9), and (10), the latter also showing that ‘cost’ is also expressed with a copula phrase.

(3) Wē vsʰomɡō nō zōngcē fe.  
[wē vsʰom-gō]CC nō [zōngcē]CC f-ē  
that three-cl TOP student be-N.PAST

‘Those three people are students.’

1 (4) Rwāng mvshōl yālōng nō  
[Rwāng mvshōl yā-lōng]CS nō  
Rawang story this-cl TOP

‘This Rawang story

2 ḏvṃshārī rīma:tnā wē mvshōl fe . . .  
[dvṃshā-ri-ī rīm-at-ā wē]CC mvshōl]CC f-ē  
shaman-pl-AGT keep-DIR-TR.PAST NOM story be-N.PAST

is a story being kept by the shamans . . .

3 Nγāí gō ngā not kēnī dvbū:ngō wē mā-f.  
[nγā-ī gō ngā not kēnī dvbūng-ō wē]CC mō-f  
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 ḏārī vsʰaqwāŋvūnī ḏvṃshārī gūṅg rāā wē,  
[dārī vsʰaq-wāŋvūn-ri-ī dvṃshā-ri-ī gūṅg rā-ā wē]CC (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,

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5 It would be possible to omit wē here; relative clauses such as this one may or may not involve the nominalizer.
5. **táng yìngāri shǒnō wē fe.**
   
   
   \[\text{CS}\left[\text{táng yàng-ā-ři}\right]_{\text{CS}}\left[\text{shǒn-ō wē}\right]_{\text{CC}}\text{f-ē}\]
   
   hear-1sg TMyrs(1stperson)-TP-pl say-3.TR.N.PAST NOM be-N.PAST
   
   what I will tell you is what I heard (from them).

6. **Iwē, topnī toprāng nō**
   
   
   \[\text{f-wē}\left[\text{topnī toprāng}\right]_{\text{nō}}\text{be-that}\]
   
   in.detail complete.details TOP
   
   Be that as it may, as for being complete and in detail,

7. **dvmshā mā-ēngā rvt**
   
   
   \[\text{CS}\left[\text{dvmshā}\right]_{\text{CC}}\left[\text{mā-ī-ŋ-ā}\right]_{\text{rvt}}\]
   
   shaman NEG-be-1sg-1/2.I.PAST because
   
   since I am not a shaman,

8. **mv-gōp mv-rāl-ō,**
   
   
   \[\text{mv-gōp mv-rāl-ō}\]
   
   NEG-cover NEG-think.of-3.TR.N.PAST
   
   I cannot recall all,

9. **dvdvmrōshā dvingē wā fe.**
   
   
   \[\text{CS}\left[\text{dvdvmrōshā}\right]_{\text{CC}}\left[\text{dvingē wā}\right]_{\text{CC}}\text{f-ē}\]
   
   think-reach- R/M much only be-N.PAST
   
   I can recall only this much.

10. **Dvmshā chèngwārī kā nō kān-vām daq wē.**
    
    \[\text{CS}\left[\text{dvmshā chèngwārī kā}\right]_{\text{CS}}\left[\text{nō kān-vām daq wē}\right]_{\text{CC}}\text{f-ē}\]
    
    shaman chief-pl word TOP reliable-DIR possible NOM
    
    The words of the shaman chiefs are reliable.’

   (LaPolla & Poa 2001:1-5)

(5) **Vpāng Pūngā shngot dvń̄ yāng-ā mvshōl sēng cā:nō nō**

\[\text{PN PN-AGT teach guide TMyrs-TR.PAST story LOC follow-3.TR.N.PAST PS}\]

‘Following the story taught by Alang Pung,

\[\text{dvtut dvń̄t tnu:ngō nō wā yāngi wē dāmshā fe.}\]

\[\text{CS}\left[\text{dvtut dvń̄t tnu:ngō nō}\right]_{\text{CS}}\left[\text{wā yāngi wē dāmshā}\right]_{\text{CC}}\text{f-ē}\]

in.continuation trace-3.TR.N.PAST PS do TMyrs-IP NOM damsha be-N.PAST

the damsha rites were handed down continually. (Lit.: That which follows the story taught by Alang Pung and has been handed down continually is the damsha rites.)’

(LaPolla & Poa 2001:13)
(6) *Káyvŋ kěnǐ ḍiə?*  
(Ø CS) [ká-yvŋ kěnǐ]CC ḍ-ǐ  
WH-LOC from N.1-be-N.PAST  
‘Where are you from?’

(7) *Lègā bok káyvŋ ìe?*  
[lègā-bok]CS [ká-yvŋ]CC ì-ē  
book-CL WH-LOC be-N.PAST  
‘Where is the book?’

1 (8) *Wèdýŋtē dvşhà rvgqē té yängshà wē ínò*  
[wè-dýŋtē dvşhà rvgqē té yäng-shà wē]CC í-nò  
that-much poor place-LOC grow TMyrs(1st person)-1pl.PAST NOM be-PS  
‘Growing up in a place with that much hardship,’

2  
*wèdō frì d[vďm]ȯ̀ ē.*  
[wè-dō frì] d[vďm]-ò-ē  
that-ADV be-pl CAUS-remember/think-3.TR.N.PAST-N.PAST  
I remember things like that. (I remember those things.)

3  
*Gvray Gvsşŋpè jējú kěnǐ ìe.*  
[gvray gvsşŋpè jējú kěnǐ]CC ì-ē  
God-MALE grace from be-N.PAST  
(It) is from God’s grace. (By God’s grace.)’  
(LaPolla & Poa 2001:163-4)

(9) *Yābok lègā kāgo dvpvt ìe?*  
[yā-bok lègā]CS [kā-go dvpvt]CC ì-ē  
this-CL book WH-CL for be-N.PAST  
‘Who is this book for?’

(10) *Kādýŋtē ìe?*  
[kā-dýŋtē]CC ì-ē  
WH-much be-N.PAST  
‘How much does (it) cost?’

As is the case with other verbs, when the copula is followed by a directional particle, it marks a change of state:

(11) *ô yādō nōnľong kěnǐ nō, vbaq lōŋgē,*  
ô yā-dō nōn-lōng kěnǐ nō [vbaq]CC lōŋ-gē  
uh this-ADV done-DIR from TOP solid.thing be-DIR-N.PAST  
‘Uh, when it becomes cooked, (it) becomes a solid thing,’
"àngkè ñlongë.
[àng-kè] CC ñ-longë
NFP-solid be-DIR.N.PAST
(it) becomes a solid thing.’ (LaPolla & Poa 2001:166-7)

The copula can be followed by dỳngwáà ‘just like’ to express ‘be similar/the same’:

(12) Vmò, Gvmò nỳng Dvmò tiqlòng dỳngwáàë.
[vmò gvmò nỳng dvmò] CS [tiq-lóng] CC ñ-dỳngwáà-é
Ameu, Gameu and Dameu one-thing be-just.like-N.PAST
Ameu, Gameu and Dameu are the same.

The copula can take a modal auxiliary, and a second token of the copula for emphasis, as in (13):

(13) Angdvìng ñangdvìng nài èshò:nòri shòngbë toprëi toprång.
[àng-dvìng ñang-dvìng nà-ì è-shòn-ò-ri] [shòngbë toprëi toprång]
NFP-step NFP-step 2sg-AGT N.1-say-3.TR.N.PAST-pl all detail complete
What you say step by step must all be in detail and complete,

çvmréìi sìng nái shèngò:tnò bùnzàñ frà fè.
çvmré-ri sìng nà-ì è-shèngòt-ò bùnzàñ] CC ñ-rà ñ-è
child-pl LOC 2sg-AGT N.1-teach-3.TR.N.PAST pattern/method be-must be-N.PAST
in the pattern of you teaching children. (LaPolla & Poa 2001:134)

The copula can be used in Tail-Head constructions, as in the second line of (14) (see also (6)):

(14) Vzòmwàngryaq kènè shèngcit ròl:-mi nò, . . .
viòmwàng-ryaq kènè shèngcit ròl-vm-i nò
forest-place from shèngcit pick-BEN-1pl PS
‘We picked shèngcit (seungcit) from the forest, . . .

Ròl:-ì nò f dvgp,
rö lm i ñò f dvgp
pick-1pl PS be when
After we (had) picked (seungcit),

shèng dỳngtùri, ñàngdòng ñàngdòng tutshài nò, . . .
shèng dỳng-tù-ri ñàng-dòng ñàng-dòng tut-shài-ì nò
tree CL-cut-pl NFP-section NFP-section cut-R/M+1pl-1pl PS
we cut the tree into short pieces, we cut it section by section, . . .

(LaPolla & Poa 2001:134-5)
The copula can be used alone as answer to a question:

(15) Q: à:ngi dèshá nì?
    àng-i    dv-è-shá    nì
    3sg-AGT INTR-N.1-know GUESS
    ‘He knows you, I guess?’
A: ó / ì / èshàngè
    ‘Yes’ / ‘Yes’ / ‘(He) knows me.’

4. Possession/existence

Usually possession is expressed by the verb vdá, as in (16), but an alternative is for the copula to take the benefactive applicative suffix to express possession, as in (17) (see LaPolla 2000 on the applicative suffix).

(16) Nøngmaq nó rømennyángli tiqcégó vdáìë.
    nøngmaq nó [rømennyángli tiqcé-gó] vdá-ì-ë
    1pl TOP friend old ten-CL have-1pl-N.PAST
    ‘We have ten old friends.’

(17) Yābok lègā kāgō iâuë.
[ yā-bok lègā ]lc [kā-gō ]cc  i-ā-ō-ë
    this-CL book WH-CL be-BEN-3.TR.N.PAST-N.PAST
    ‘Who does this book belong to?’

If the equational clause involves an NP which includes the possessive suffix -ō (e.g. ngā-ō ‘mine’) then the clause will have a possessive sense. (There is generally no marking of genitives: ngā gwin chvēng  ē-lū-a:tōnò [1sg cup CL N.1-take-DIR+3sg] ‘Bring me my cup!’):

(18) Yāchvēng ngāō iē.
    yā-chvēng ngā-ō  i-ē
    this-CL 1sg-POSS be-N.PAST
    ‘This (cup) is mine.’

(19) Yābok lēgā kāgōō iē?
[ yā-bok lēgālc [kā-gō-ō ]cc  i-ē
    this-CL book WH-CL-POSS be-N.PAST
    ‘Whose book is this?’

For existential expressions the intransitive verb ēlē is used:
(20)  _Vmè nô chôm yûng vlē._  
mère nô chôm-yûng vlê  
mother TOP house/home-LOC exist-N.PAST  
‘Mother is at home.’

(21)  _Dvmsûhàkà vlē._  
dvmshà-kà vlê  
damsha-language exist-N.PAST  
‘There is a damsha language.’  
(LaPolla & Poa 2001:16)

(22)  _Yādō vûyân._  
yā-dō vlûyân  
this-ADV be-TMyrs  
‘This was the way it was.’  
(LaPolla & Poa 2001:2)

5. Naming

Naming can involve the transitive verb _gîdê_; as in line 3 of (23); the transitive verb _vlûcê_, as in lines 5 and 6; or the copula, as in line 7:

1  (23)  _J Shông vdòng rûm lîng?_  
shông…vdòng-rûm…lîng  (relative clause with CL as head)  
tree inside-inside be-CL  
The thing that is inside the tree?

2  _M Ò, vdôngrûm lîng chaq â:mò nò,_  
ò vdông-rûm…lîng chaq-vm-ô nò  
uh- inside-inside be-CL peel-BEN-3.TR.N.PAST PS  
Uh, (they) peel off the skin (of) the thing that is inside (the tree),

3  _wêdô nî â:mô wè, bônghô . . ._  
wê-dô-nî vm-ô wê bônghô  
that-ADV-just eat-3.TR.N.PAST NOM thorn  
and eat it just like that, though (it has) thorns.

4  _J Wêlông sêng kàdô ëgô nêngê?_  
wê-lông sêng kà-dô ë-gô nêng-ë  
that-CL LOC WH-ADV N.1-call 2pl-N.PAST  
How do you call that thing?

5  _M ākvtònêng mènông êlôcê._  
ā-kvt-ông mènông vlô-ë  
this-time-CL meneung call-3.TR.N.PAST-N.PAST  
It’s called meneung.
6 Mènōng ë:lōd? 
   mènōng  Yöô-lá 
   meneung  call-3.TR.N.PAST-Q 
   It is called meneung?

7 Ô. mènōng Ḗ. 
   ô  mènōng  f-ê 
   uh  meneung  be-n.past 
   Uh, it is meneung.  
   (LaPolla & Poa 2001:152)

6. Attribution

Unlike in English, attribution of “adjectival” characteristics does not usually involve 
the copula; attribution is generally done with adjectives, which function as intransitive 
predicates, as in (24), but for a slightly different rhetorical effect an adjective can be 
ominalized and then take the copula, as in (25).

(24) Lègā bok tēē. 
   lègā  bok  tē-ê 
   book  CL  big-N.PAST 
   ‘The book is big.’

(25) ăng-svîng  ê-kvîn kënî nō  nā  gō  ângdâl  ê-iê. 
   ăng-svîng  ê-kvîn  kënî  nō  nā  gō  âng-dâl  ê-i-ê 
   3sg-LOC N.1-believe from(if) TOP 2sg also  PREF-stupid N.1-be-N.PAST 
   ‘If you believe him, you are an idiot (a stupid one).’

7. Non-finite clause + copula constructions

Aside from being used in normal copula clauses that include two noun phrases, the 
copula is also used in a clause type where there is only one noun phrase, which is a 
nominalized clause. That the nominalized clause functions as a single constituent (i.e. 
the arguments of that nominalized verb are not arguments of the copula but of the 
nominalized verb) can be seen from the fact that even if a first or second person referent

6 That is, English uses the same copula clause structure for attribution which involves nominals 
and for attribution which involves adjectives, e.g. He is a lawyer and He is tall, whereas in 
Rawang, while attribution which involves nominals is usually done with a copula clause, 
because adjectives are a subtype of verb, attribution with adjectives usually is done with a 
clause in which the adjective is the predicating element.
is involved in the nominalized clause, the copula does not take person marking. The clauses have different meanings depending on the type of nominalization used.

7.1 Nominalization by the distal demonstrative \( \text{wē} \)

A common pattern is where an otherwise unmarked clause is nominalized by the distal demonstrative \( \text{wē} \), and then followed by the copula. It is generally used to contrast referents ((26a-d)) or emphasize that something is in fact the case ((26e)), but can sometimes have something like a passive sense ((26f-g)). In contrastive clauses the copula often takes the contrastive prefix \( \text{dv}- \).

\[(26)\]

a. \( \text{Mvnuqlòng wē ėvām nēng wē ūmá?} \)
   \( \text{mvnuq-lóng wā ė-vām nāng wē ē-má} \)
   shoot-CL only N.1-eat 2pl NOM be-Q
   ‘Is it only the shoots that you eat?’

b. \( \text{Vdō dīwē dīvē ēnō, Vpūng nō mv-dī} \)
   \( \text{Vdō dī-wē dv-i-ē nō Vpūng nō m̄v-dī} \)
   PN go-NOM CFP-be-N.PAST TOP PN TOP NEG-go
   ‘Vdeu went, not Vpung.’

c. \( \text{Zūngkaq dīwē dīvē ēnō} \ldots \)
   \( \text{zūng-kaq dī-wē dv-i-ē nō} \)
   school-LOC go-NOM CFP-be-N.PAST TOP
   ‘He’s going to school (not anywhere else).’

d. \( \text{āng ūlēgā rīwē dīvē ēnō} \ldots \)
   \( \text{āng-i lēgā rī-ō-wē nō} \)
   3sg-AGT book carry-3.TR.N.PAST-NOM CFP-be-N.PAST TOP
   ‘He’s carrying books (not something else).’ or ‘He’s carrying books (not someone else).’

e. \( \text{āng dī bōwē ē} \)
   \( \text{āng dī bō-i-wē i-ē} \)
   3sg go PFV-L.PAST-NOM be-N.PAST
   ‘(Yes,) He went.’

f. \( \text{Vpūng nō Vdōī vdōrōwē ē} \)
   \( \text{Vpūng nō Vdō-ī vdōr-ō-wē i-ē} \)
   PN TOP PN-AGT hit-3.TR.N.PAST-NOM be-N.PAST
   ‘Vpung was hit by Vdeu.’
The copula can be used in construction with an infinitive of a verb to express first person intention, as in (27)-(29):

(27) Zùng cĕnhilĕm ĭe.
    zùng cĕnh-ši-ł́m  ľ-ĉ
    school learn- R/M- INF be- N.PAST
    ‘I am going to school.’

(28) Dvmshări ĕ shën yăngă däng kĕnjă kă dvha:tnî.
    [[[dvms-hă-r-ĕ shën yăng-ă däng kĕnjă] [kă dvha-t-]\]
    shaman-pl- AGT say TMyrs-TR.PAST regarding from word simple-INST
    ‘(I will tell) in simple words in line with what the damsha says,

    vmŏ, gvmŏ nṳng dvŏmŏ wăwĕ nṳng vsĭng tvańćĕ
    [vmŏ gvmŏ nṳng dvŏmŏ wă-wĕ] nṳng [vsĭng tvańćĕ-ćĕ
    ameu gameu and dameu call/say-NOM and person human-son

ustainability by the infinitive marker -łílv

While first person intention usually involves the copula in this construction, as in (30a), the intransitive form of the ambidirectional verb wăĉ ‘to do’ can be used instead (use of wăĉ means the intention is more immediate), as in (30b), and this verb must be used, rather than ľe; for 2nd and 3rd person, as in (30c-d).
(30) a. nʊngmaq yop-ɪ́vɪ́m ɪ́-ɛ́. ‘We are going to go to bed/sleep.’
   1pl sleep-INF be-N.PAST
b. nʊngmaq yop-ɪ́vɪ́m wà́-ɪ́-ɛ́. ‘We are going to go to bed/sleep (now).’
   1pl sleep-INF do-1pl-N.PAST
c. nà vɪ́m-ɪ́vɪ́m ɛ́-wà́-ɛ́. ‘You are going to eat.’
   2sg eat-INF N.1-do-N.PAST
d. âng vɪ́m-ɪ́vɪ́m wà́-ɛ́. ‘He is going to eat.’
   3sg eat-INF do-N.PAST

7.3 Intransitivization and nominalization by v- -shaq

This construction is formed by adding the intransitivizing prefix v- before the verb and the nominalizer -shaq after the verb. The nominalized clause then functions as the copula complement of a copula clause. Morse (1965:353) discussed this as an adverbial clause subtype and called the two elements just mentioned “passive voice affixes” which, together with the copula, “manifest passive voice”. The examples in (31) are some of those given by Morse; those in (32) are from my own fieldwork.

(31) a. Shé nʊ vðúshaq ɛ́.
   shé nʊ v-dú-shaq ɪ́-ɛ́
   gold TOP INTR-dig-PERF be-N.PAST
   ‘The gold is dug.’ Morse (1965:353)

b. Lègā nʊ vɑ́shaq ɛ́.
   lègā nʊ v-rɑ́-shaq ɪ́-ɛ́
   book TOP INTR-carry-PERF be-N.PAST
   ‘The books have been carried.’ Morse (1965:353)

   bangkà v-poq-shaq ɪ́-ɛ́
   door INTR-open-PERF be-N.PAST
   ‘The door is open.’

b. Kōpí vʳʊ̄ngshaq ɛ́.
   kōpí v-rʊ̄ng-shaq ɪ́-ɛ́
   coffee INTR-brew-PERF be-N.PAST
   ‘Coffee is/has been made.’

c. vɪ́m vðúshaq ɛ́.
   vɪ́m v-dú-shaq ɪ́-ɛ́
   rice INTR-pound-PERF be-N.PAST
   ‘The rice has already been pounded.’
While these clauses have the intransitive prefix and are nominalized, they can still take two NPs representing the A and P arguments, and the marking is the same as in the unmarked clause, except where the NP representing the P argument appears in topic position and is followed by the topic marker, as in (33b).

(33) a. \((Ngà-ı \ (àng-sväng) lègā shàršhaq íē)\)
   ngā-ı \(āng-sväng \ lègā \ shv-v-rî-shaq \ i-ê\)
   1sg-AGT 3sg-LOC book CAUS-INTR-carry-PERF be-N.PAST
   'Books have already been sent (to him) (by me).'</b>

b. \(āng nö \ (ngà-ı)\) vđ́ngké shaq íē.
   āng nö ngà-ı v-đ́ng-ké-shaq i-ê
   3sg TOP 1sg-AGT INTR-finish-eat(defeat)-PERF be-N.PAST
   'He has already been defeated (by me).'</b>

c. \(āngi kōpì vrāngshaq ñāmî\).
   āng-ı kōpì v-rāng-shaq i-ām-ı
   3sg-AGT coffee INTR-pound-PERF be-DIR-IP
   'Coffee has been made by him.'</b>

d. \(āngi ngāsvıng \ Yānggūng dātān shaq íē\)
   āng-ı ngā-śväng Yānggūng dv-v-vtān-shaq i-ê
   3sg-AGT 1sg-LOC Yangon CAUS-INTR-visible-PERF be-N.PAST
   'Yangon has been shown to me by him.'

8 Contrast the non-nominalized version of this clause:
   (i) \(āngi ngāsvıng \ Yānggūng dētān vęngā\).
   āng-ı ngā-śväng Yānggūng dv-è-vtān yāng-ā
   3sg-AGT 1sg-LOC Yangon CAUS-N.1-visible TMyrs(1stperson)-TR.PAST
   'He showed me Yangon.'
Copula Constructions in Rawang

come about and is still relevant (cf. the development of English perfect marking from a construction with an adjectival participle and the verb have or be; see Mitchell 1985, Carey 1990). Where this situation is associated with a particular referent being affected, it has something of the sense of a passive, but we can see from examples such as (34) that it does not always have this sense.

(34) Wörvt vyò nō ākt gō tì vríshaq ē.  
  (LaPolla & Poa 2001:36)  
  wē-rvt vyò nō ākt gō tì v-rí-shaq i-ē  
  that-because bumble.bee TOP now also water INTR-carry-PERF be-N.PAST  
  ‘Therefore, the bumble bees have been carrying water until now.’

7.4 Nominalization by nā

The nominalizer nā, which marks uncertainty, is used in construction with the copula to express ‘probably . . .’ or ‘might have . . .’:

(35) āng tuqám nā ē.  
  [āng tuq-ám nā] i-ē  
  3sg arrive-DIR PROB be-N.PAST  
  ‘He might have arrived (there) (already).’

7.5 Nominalization by pà

In this construction, the word pà ‘thing’ is used as the head of a relative clause structure, and this is then followed by the copula to express ‘I guess . . .’:

(36) āng di āmì pà ē.  
  [āng di ām-i pà] i-ē  
  3sg go DIR-1.PAST thing be-N.PAST  
  ‘I guess he left.’

(37) āngí dvíng ap-à pà ē.  
  [āng-i dvíng ap-à pà] i-ē  
  3sg-AGT finish DIR-TR.PAST thing be-N.PAST  
  ‘I guess he finished it.’

8. A note on Dulong

In the closely related Dulong dialects there is no copula ē, and no non-past particle ē, but there is a copula ě, which may be the origin of the non-past particle in Rawang
(First Township (Northern Dulongjiang) Dulong, personal fieldwork; cf. LaPolla 2003; a brève over a vowel means it is a reduced syllable, the other diacritics represent level (ā) or falling (à) tone):

(38) bǝnibnã (dûŋ) dũ, [kã guʔ sũ gû̄]CS
    livestock middle LOC words say know.how NOM

    [dũguʔ]CC ê tɛiwa.
    dog be HEARSAY

‘It is said among the livestock the one that knew how to talk was the dog.’ (From “The story of why dogs have long tongues and can’t talk”; LaPolla 2001:19)

9. Conclusions

We have seen that the copula is an intransitive verb, in that it takes intransitive morphology, but is not like other intransitive verbs in not being able to take the causative prefixes and in being able to take two unmarked arguments. It can be used for nominal attribution, identification, possession, and naming, and appears with a variety of nominalized clauses to achieve certain rhetorical effects. It is quite frequent in Rawang discourse (see (4) for example), and this may be because of the large number of functions it has.

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9 It would be possible to use the topic marker nû instead of the nominalizer guû here.
### Abbreviations

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tr>
<td>1/2.I.PAST</td>
<td>1st and 2nd person intransitive past marker</td>
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<tr>
<td>N.1</td>
<td>non-1st person actor (in a clause with a speech act participant)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.TR.N.PAST</td>
<td>3rd person transitive non-past marker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFP</td>
<td>noun forming prefix</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>actor of a prototypical transitive clause</td>
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<td>N.PAST</td>
<td>non-past marker</td>
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<td>AGT</td>
<td>agentive marker</td>
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<td>P</td>
<td>patient of a prototypical transitive clause</td>
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<td>BEN</td>
<td>benefactive suffix</td>
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<td>PERF</td>
<td>perfect nominalizer</td>
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<td>CAUS</td>
<td>causative prefix</td>
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<td>CL</td>
<td>classifier</td>
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<td>PN</td>
<td>proper name</td>
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<td>CFP</td>
<td>contrastive prefix</td>
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<td>PROB</td>
<td>marker of probability</td>
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<tr>
<td>CS</td>
<td>S of a copula clause</td>
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<td>R/M</td>
<td>reflexive/middle marker</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIR</td>
<td>direction marker</td>
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<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>single direct argument of an intransitive verb</td>
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<tr>
<td>INF</td>
<td>infinitive marker</td>
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<td>TMYRS</td>
<td>marker of remote past</td>
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<td>INTR</td>
<td>intransitivizing prefix</td>
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<td>TOP</td>
<td>topic marker</td>
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<td>L.PAST</td>
<td>3rd person intransitive past marker</td>
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<td>TR.PAST</td>
<td>transitive past marker</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOC</td>
<td>locative marker (also used for dative, purpose)</td>
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References


