

Justin Watkins  
**Wa (Paraok)**

## Introduction

### Location and number of speakers

The speakers of Wa are located in a geographical area referred to by Gérard Diffloth (1980) as the Waic corridor, situated between the Salween and Mekong rivers, an area which straddles the south-western Chinese province of Yúnnán, the Shan States of north-eastern Burma and Northern Thailand. The Wa are thought to be among the autochthonous inhabitants of the area they occupy. Luó (1995) writes that a group likely to have been the ancestors of the Wa was in Yúnnán as early as the Qín dynasty (3rd century BC). In any case, it seems likely that the speakers of Northern Mon-Khmer languages were settled in the present-day Wa-speaking area earlier than other groups which now make up the majority of the population of the area, primarily speakers of Tibeto-Burman and Tai-Kadai languages.

### Speaker numbers and dialects

The language described here, also known as Paraok, is the dialect of Wa spoken in Aishuai (Yànshuāi 岩帅), which is the one most widely understood and viewed as standard. Speaker numbers in such a geographically remote, topographically diverse and politically disparate area can at best only be estimates, but a working figure from the latest edition of the SIL Ethnologue (Lewis 2009) puts the total number of speakers of Wa, including Paraok and other varieties, at just under 1.2 million, with two thirds in China and one third in Burma.

The sub-categorization of dialects within Waic languages is confusing – as is indeed typical for the area when describing languages with a high degree of dialect diversity. SIL's major groupings (Lewis 2009), and their alternative names, are Vo (Awa, Wa, K'awa, Kawa, Wa Pwi, Wakut), Paraok (Wa, Praok, Baraog, Baraoke) and Western Lawa (Wa, Wa proper, Pava, Luwa, Lua, L'wa, Lavua, Lavüa, Mountain Lawa). The suggested total speaker numbers for these three groups are Vo 618,000, Paraok 528,400 and Western Lawa 82,000. This yields the

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**Justin Watkins:** SOAS, University of London  
E-Mail: [jw2@soas.ac.uk](mailto:jw2@soas.ac.uk)

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most inclusive count of 1,228,400 speakers. The SIL database includes a further 27,000 speakers of Blang (Bulang, Pulang, Pula, Plang, Kawa, K'ala, Kontoi) and 7000 of Eastern Lawa (Wiang Papao Lua), bringing to about 1.25 million the estimated total population speaking any of the Wa languages included in Diffloth (1980). This figure may certainly involve a degree of speculation and/or overlap.

Outside the main Wa-speaking area, migrations in recent decades have seen Wa villages established in northern Thailand. The oldest settlements, up to fifty years old, are closely integrated into Thai society, though the majority have been established within the last two generations. Further afield, there is a detectable Wa presence in Yangon/Rangoon, Taunggyi and Mandalay in Burma. Small numbers of Wa reside in Kūnmíng and across Yúnnán province in China.

## Wa within Mon-Khmer

Generally, Wa languages are placed in the Palaungic or Palaung-Wa branch of Northern Mon-Khmer. Gérard Diffloth (1980, 1989) sifts through the fragmentary and often contradictory information published on the Wa languages and develops further the classification of the Wa languages proposed by Michel Ferlus (1974). Diffloth (1980) uses the term Waic to refer to one section of the Palaungic branch of Mon-Khmer for which he posits a common reconstructable source, Proto Waic.

Broadly speaking, Diffloth (1980) identifies three distinct groups of Waic languages, namely Bulang (formerly 'Samtau'), Wa and Lawa, as mentioned above. The areas inhabited by the speakers of the three groups of Waic languages are geographically distinct. Lawa speakers are located for the most part in Northern Thailand, while speaker of Wa (including Paraok) inhabit areas further north in the 'Waic corridor' in the Shan States and into Yúnnán. The offshoots of Bulang are spoken mostly in smaller areas to the north and north east of Keng Tung and into Yúnnán.

## Ethno-linguistic comments

The status of Wa as a viable language is threatened by the encroachment of Chinese, and to a lesser extent also Burmese. The Wa lexicon, in particular, is subject to a high rate of attrition from borrowed Chinese vocabulary. Wa speakers live interspersed with speakers of many other languages. In the experience of the author, speakers of other languages rarely learn Wa, sometimes even in mixed marriages, while Wa speakers are typically multilingual. Of the small sample of some two dozen Wa speakers recorded for a field study (Watkins

2002) in the late 1990s, all were able to speak Chinese or Burmese to some degree if they had lived in China or Burma, or in several cases both. Those who had settled in Thailand also spoke at least some Thai. About half of the group spoke Lahu and about half of those who lived or had lived in the Shan State spoke Shan. A quarter spoke five or more languages.

## 1 Phonology

### 1.1 Register

In Wa, as in other Mon-Khmer languages, each vowel can occur in either of two registers, ‘clear’ and ‘breathy’, analogous to the ‘head’ and ‘chest’ registers of Khmer or Mon. The register contrast in Wa, as in Mon-Khmer generally, has a complex of phonetic correlates, including fundamental frequency, vowel quality, phonation type and vowel duration: the particular blend of these in any individual speaker’s production of the register complex may vary, but in general breathy register in Wa is associated with slightly lower fundamental frequency and slightly breathy phonation. The register contrast, described in detail in Watkins (2002, chapter 6), co-occurs with final laryngeal consonants, as illustrated by the set of six words in (1) below, but is neutralized in syllables with a laryngeal initial [ʔ h] or where there is an aspiration gesture in the initial consonant.<sup>1</sup>

- |     |           |            |            |            |             |             |
|-----|-----------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| (1) | <i>tɛ</i> | <i>tɛh</i> | <i>tɛʔ</i> | <i>tɛ̃</i> | <i>tɛ̃h</i> | <i>tɛ̃ʔ</i> |
|     | ‘peach’   | ‘less’     | ‘land’     | ‘peach’    | ‘turn’      | ‘wager’     |

#### 1.1.1 Consonants

The inventory of consonants in the Wa phoneme inventory is shown in (2) below. There is a four-way voicing contrast in initial stop consonants (voiced/unvoiced and aspirated/unaspirated). Initial consonant clusters are restricted to bilabial and velar stops followed by [l] or [r]. Final consonants are restricted to unreleased voiceless stops [p t c k], nasals [m n ɲ ŋ] and glottals [ʔ h]. Final –

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<sup>1</sup> Wa language data are presented here in broad IPA transcription following the conventions set out in this section. Watkins (2002: 28 ff) gives an account of the phonetic detail of Wa pronunciation; Watkins (2002: 188–200) gives a comparative account of the various orthographies in existence for Wa, none of which are used in this chapter.

*ih* is the reflex of \*s in proto-Waic, just as written Khmer –s is pronounced [h], and survives as final –s in certain Waic dialects (Diffloth 1980). Note especially the large number of breathy-aspirated voiced segments in Wa.

(2)		Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
	Plosive/affricate	p b		t d	c j		k g	ʔ
		p <sup>h</sup> b <sup>h</sup>		t <sup>h</sup> d <sup>h</sup>	c <sup>h</sup> j <sup>h</sup>		k <sup>h</sup> g <sup>h</sup>	
	Nasal	m m <sup>h</sup>		n n <sup>h</sup>		ɲ ɲ <sup>h</sup>		
	Fricative		v v <sup>h</sup> /f	s				h
	Approximant			r r <sup>h</sup>		y/ɻ		
						y <sup>h</sup> /ɻ <sup>h</sup>		
	Lateral approximant			l l <sup>h</sup>				

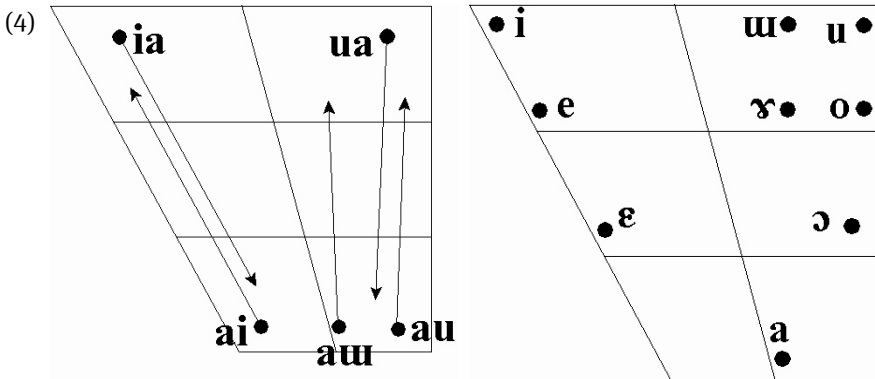
Words illustrating the contrast between these consonants are shown in the table (3) below.

(3)	p	pɔ	‘side of body’	m	mai	‘and’	y	yaon	‘village’
	p <sup>h</sup>	p <sup>h</sup> ao	‘now’	m <sup>h</sup>	m <sup>h</sup> ai	‘to mark’	yh	yha	‘to give birth’ (of animals)
	b	ba	‘thigh’	n	num	‘root’	r	ra	‘two’
	b <sup>h</sup>	b <sup>h</sup> auŋ	‘wind’	n <sup>h</sup>	n <sup>h</sup> am	‘blood’	r <sup>h</sup>	r <sup>h</sup> a	‘tooth’
	t	tauʔ	‘vegetable’	ɲ	ɲɛʔ	‘house’	l	lai	‘why?’
	t <sup>h</sup>	t <sup>h</sup> a	‘to wait’	ɲ <sup>h</sup>	ɲ <sup>h</sup> ot	‘to push over’	l <sup>h</sup>	l <sup>h</sup> ɛʔ	‘rain’
	d	dai	‘flower’	ŋ	ŋɯ	‘fire’	v	vɻ	‘be missing’ (of teeth)
	d <sup>h</sup>	d <sup>h</sup> ah	‘long’	ŋ <sup>h</sup>	ŋ <sup>h</sup> oʔ	‘grain’	v	v <sup>h</sup> ac	‘black’
	c	cəo	‘reason’				s	soʔ	‘dog’
	c <sup>h</sup>	c <sup>h</sup> u	‘sack’				h	haok	‘hair’
	j	jao	‘to jump’				ʔ	ʔɻʔ	‘I’ (1sg pronoun)
	j <sup>h</sup>	j <sup>h</sup> uih	‘mouth’						
	k	kao	‘ten’						
	k <sup>h</sup>	k <sup>h</sup> a	‘from’						
	g	gəŋ	‘mountain’						
	g <sup>h</sup>	g <sup>h</sup> ok	‘collar’						

### 1.1.2 Vowels and diphthongs

The Wa vowel system makes use of the nine vowel contrasts and a range of diphthongs, including high back unrounded vowels [ɣ u] typical of Mainland Southeast Asian languages. There is no duration contrast. Watkins (2002) gives phonological and historical arguments for an analysis which recognizes five phonologically unitary diphthongs in Wa, shown on the vowel quadrilateral in (4) and the table (5) below, though the number of diphthongs in other analyses varies. In any case, the surface phonetic detail of diphthongs is particularly subject to variation between speakers and dialects (Watkins 2002: 34).

The Chinese descriptions which largely inform the transcription used in this chapter transcribe final approximants [j] and [w] as glides *i* and *u*. Furthermore, final palatals /ŋ k/ merge with final palatals /ŋ c/ when preceded by /i/, consistent with the off-glides before palatals observed generally in Mon-Khmer languages.



(5)	i	pi	'flute'	ia	ʔiak	'small'
	e	ke	'gourd'	ai	taiʔ	'hand'
	ε	kε	'sweet'	au	hawk	'hair'
	a	ka	'afterwards'	ao	haok	'to go up'
	ɔ	pɔ	'side (of body)'	ua	kuat	'cold'
	o	po	'mortar'			
	u	pu	'to fly'			
	ɣ	rɣ	'to pull'			
	ɯ	su	'to pour'			

## 1.2 Syllable structure

Chinese analysts (Zhōu & Yán 1984; Wáng & Chén 1981) describe the segmental tier of the Wa syllable as a two-element object with an initial and a final, following the *fānqiè* syllable template of the Tāng dynasty Chinese rhyme dictionaries (Norman 1988: 24). According to the Chinese accounts, a Wa syllable must comprise an initial, a final and a register specification. The initial consists of one or two consonants; the final of at least one and up to three vowels plus an optional final consonant. This structure is expressed by Chinese analysts Wáng & Chén (1981: 40) as follows (ignoring register); optional elements are in parentheses.

initial      final  
 C<sub>1</sub> (C<sub>2</sub>)      (V<sub>1</sub>) V<sub>2</sub> (V<sub>3</sub>) (C<sub>3</sub>)

In this very overpredictive framework, only C<sub>1</sub> and V<sub>2</sub> are unrestricted. C<sub>2</sub> is exclusively /r/ or /l/, V<sub>1</sub> and V<sub>3</sub> can often be analysed as consonant glides /y/ or /w/, which restricts the schema considerably, and the final consonant C<sub>3</sub> may be a plain stop, nasal or one of /ʔ/ or /h/, resulting in a syllable structure which is squarely consistent with the Mainland Southeast Asian stereotype as described by Henderson (1965) and Enfield (2005: 182).

### 1.2.1 Wa sesquisyllabicity and historical morphology

Henderson's (1952: 150–151) description of the phonological structure of Khmer is a good illustration of morphological affixation typically observed in the Mon-Khmer languages of Mainland Southeast Asia. Examples are given in (6). Henderson describes monosyllables in Khmer as 'extensile', capable of yielding 'extended monosyllable', or may have a 'minor syllable' with a tightly constrained structure added to it, yielding a 'minor disyllable' or 'sesquisyllable' in the terminology of Matisoff. The minor disyllable, a fourth structural type, has an initial syllable with restricted variation.

(6) <i>simple monosyllable</i>	<i>extended monosyllable</i>	<i>minor disyllable</i>
ចាំ 'wait'	ប្រចាំ 'watch one another'	បង្ហា 'to pledge'
cam	prəcam	bəŋcam
កើត 'be born'	ខ្ចីត 'waxing of moon'	បង្ហើត 'give'
kaxt	knaxt	bəŋkaxt 'birth'
ដេក 'sleep'	ផ្អែក 'put to bed'	បង្ហែក 'go to bed'
de:k	pde:k	bənde:k

The Mon-Khmer extended monosyllable, called a sesquisyllable by Matisoff (1973), shows what remains of a morphologically rich disyllabic stage of Proto Mon-Khmer (Diffloth 1980), and points to the possibilities morphological complexity observed to a greater or lesser degree in the Mon-Khmer languages of Mainland Southeast Asia, including the Northern Mon-Khmer branch to which Wa belongs (see Shorto 1963 on Palaung and Riang-Lang; Svantesson 1983a on Kammu).

Within Northern Mon-Khmer, presyllables survive in varying stages of decay; in Wa the morphological system of prefixation has all but disappeared, leaving only a few prefixes with a broad, ill-defined range of functions. By far the most common presyllable in the Wa lexicon is *s-*. According to Shorto (1963: 55), “In Praok [Wa], *s-* probably results from the generalization in almost all prefixial contexts of a prefix which originally corresponded to those with an initial *s-* in [Palaung and Riang-Lang].” Shorto proposes that Wa *s-* may be a vestige of a prefix \**siC-*, where C represents a stop. The second consonant of this prefix, or the single consonant of the other historical prefixes *b-* and *g-* which he describes, is preserved only when the initial consonant of the host syllable is *r-* or *l-*, permitting the formation of a morphologically complex consonant cluster. The prefixes *b-* and *g-* cannot form any other clusters; if they are prefixed to a morpheme with any other initial consonant, the stops are deleted, leaving behind only their voicing. Illustrative examples of these vestiges of Wa affixational morphology are given in (7) below, data from Wáng & Chén (1984).

(7) Wa affixational morphology

*g-* prefixation and cluster formation:

<i>lah</i> > <i>glah</i>	<i>lang</i> > <i>glan</i>	<i>rau?</i> > <i>grau?</i>
‘burn’ > ‘hearth’	‘long’ > ‘this long’	‘deep’ > ‘this deep’

Voicing of initial stop:

<i>pɯ</i> > <i>bɯ</i>	<i>tɨn</i> > <i>dɨn</i>
‘thick’ > ‘thickness’	‘big’ > ‘size’

*s-* prefixation and voicing of stop:

<i>kiap</i> > <i>s.giap</i>
‘thick’ > ‘thickness’

Whatever their provenance, these morphological processes are not productive in the modern language. Additionally, *s-* may occur in some words as an optional and morphologically redundant prefix, as in (8).

- (8) *taiʔ* ~ *s.taiʔ*      *gawʔ* ~ *s.gawʔ*  
       ‘eight’                ‘happy’

In Wa the sesquisyllabic structure is not entirely restricted to the *s*-presyllable. In addition, the sesquisyllabic structure is sometimes observed when the first element of a bisyllabic (often partly reduplicative) sequence is reduced, as in (9). Reduction of this kind tends towards a consonant + indeterminate vowel, or maximally to the *s*-presyllable, pronounced with or without an epenthetic vowel.

- (9) Reduction of bisyllables to sesquisyllables. (Data from Wáng and Chén (1981))  
*su so* ‘muddled up’ > [su.so] ~ [sə.so] ~ [sʰ.so] ~ [s.so]  
*ci kua* ‘smallpox’ > [tɕi.kwa] ~ [ɕi.kwa] ~ [sʰ.kwa] ~ [s.kwa]  
*ja ɾah* ‘frog’ > [dʒa.ɾah] ~ [dʒi.ɾah] ~ [sʰ.ɾah] ~ [s.ɾah]

The difference in phonological structure between sesquisyllables and monosyllables with initial consonant clusters or initial *ʔ*, shown in (10) and (11), is evident from the fact that the two can occur together in single morpheme, albeit with morphologically complex etymology.

- (10) *s*-presyllables in conjunction with initial consonant clusters
- |                |               |                |                |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| <i>s.blap</i>  | <i>s.prih</i> | <i>s.gluc</i>  | <i>s.gʰrah</i> |
| ‘strike, kick’ | ‘chapped’     | ‘urge, hasten’ | ‘rinse’        |

- (11) *s*-presyllables contrasted with initial *s*-
- |              |                 |
|--------------|-----------------|
| <i>s.ʔaŋ</i> | <i>saŋ</i>      |
| ‘bone’       | ‘want’          |
| <i>s.ʔu</i>  | <i>su</i>       |
| ‘warm’       | ‘intentionally’ |
| <i>s.ʔut</i> | <i>sut</i>      |
| ‘swollen’    | ‘pick up’       |
| <i>s.ʔoʔ</i> | <i>soʔ</i>      |
| ‘rubber’     | ‘dog’           |

## 2 Morphology

As is the case in many Southeast Asian languages, defining the word in Wa is not always a straightforward matter, so for the purposes of this section ‘word’ is



interpreted as any cluster of morphemes which might usefully be considered to be a single lexeme. In the last section it was shown that Wa affixational morphology is entirely lexicalized and unanalyzable, such that the morphemes making up words are typically monosyllabic (or at most sesquisyllabic). The languages from which Wa has borrowed vocabulary—principally the varieties of Chinese and Tai languages found in areas adjacent to the Wa-speaking areas—also strongly favour monosyllables, though loans from other languages, for instance Indo-European ones, are not.

## 2.1 Morphological derivation by compounding

The Wa lexicon makes extensive use of compounding. The following examples (12)–(24) illustrate the way in which nouns and verbs can combine to complex polymorphemic noun phrases.

- (12)  $N_1N_2$  : synonyms ( $\text{noun}_1 = \text{noun}_2$ )

*kr̥aʷŋ*    *kʰrai*  
 clothes    clothes  
 ‘clothing, things, goods, possessions’

- (13)  $N_1N_2N_3N_4$  : synonyms ( $\text{noun}_1 = \text{noun}_2$ ), made up of ( $\text{noun}_3$  and  $\text{noun}_4$ )

*kr̥aʷŋ*    *kʰrai*    *dai*    *tɕah*  
 clothes    clothes    skirt    shirt  
 ‘clothing, clothes’

- (14)  $N_1N_2$  :  $\text{noun}_1$  associated with  $\text{noun}_2$

<i>kr̥aʷŋ</i>	<i>n̥aŋ</i>	<i>p̥aʷʔ</i>	<i>ŋiɛʔ</i>	<i>k̥aŋ</i>	<i>ŋiɛʔ</i>	<i>ŋiɛʔ</i>	<i>zʰia</i>
equipment	war	relatives	house	work	house	house	bee
‘weapons’		‘family member’		‘housework’		‘beehive’	

*ŋiɛʔ*    *ʔaŋ*  
 house    shit  
 ‘toilet’

- (15) NV – noun which is verb (where verb is a stative/adjectival verb)

<i>du</i>	<i>mʰɔm</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>lɨt</i>
place	good	place	wrong
‘advantage’		‘error, mistake’	

- (16) NV – noun which verbs

<i>du</i>	<i>s.dauh</i>	<i>tɕak</i>	<i>pih</i>	<i>tɕak</i>	<i>pu</i>
place	finish	machine	suck	machine	fly
'ending'		'vacuum cleaner'		'aeroplane'	

- (17) (NV
- <sub>1</sub>
- )(V
- <sub>2</sub>
- A) – (noun which verb
- <sub>1</sub>
- s) which (verb
- <sub>2</sub>
- s adjectivally)

<i>tɕak</i>	<i>pu</i>	<i>haok</i>	<i>dzun</i>
machine	fly	climb	vertical
'helicopter'			

- (18) N
- <sub>1</sub>
- (VN
- <sub>2</sub>
- ) – noun
- <sub>1</sub>
- which verbs noun
- <sub>2</sub>

<i>tɕak</i>	<i>zun</i>	<i>krɔn</i>	<i>tɕak</i>	<i>tiəm</i>	<i>lai</i>	<i>tɕak</i>	<i>tɕan</i>	<i>krɔn</i>
machine	press	clothes	machine	write	text	machine	sew	clothes
'iron'			'typewriter, computer'			'sewing machine'		

- (19) NV – noun where one verbs

<i>niɛ?</i>	<i>ʔit</i>	<i>du</i>	<i>tum</i>	<i>niɛ?</i>	<i>ʔan</i>
house	sleep	place	rest	house	defecate
'bedroom'		'destination'		'toilet'	

- (20) N
- <sub>1</sub>
- (VN
- <sub>2</sub>
- ) – noun
- <sub>1</sub>
- where one verbs noun
- <sub>2</sub>

<i>niɛ?</i>	<i>ʔah</i>	<i>lai</i>
house	read	text
'school'		

- (21) N
- <sub>1</sub>
- (VN
- <sub>2</sub>
- ) – noun
- <sub>1</sub>
- where noun
- <sub>2</sub>
- verbs

<i>du</i>	<i>pɔn</i>	<i>lɔ</i>	<i>li</i>
place	rest	bus	
'bus station'			

- (22) (N
- <sub>1</sub>
- V
- <sub>1</sub>
- )(N
- <sub>2</sub>
- V
- <sub>2</sub>
- ) – (noun
- <sub>1</sub>
- which one verb
- <sub>1</sub>
- s) and (noun
- <sub>2</sub>
- which one verb
- <sub>2</sub>
- s)

<i>krɔn</i>	<i>tɕup</i>	<i>ʔup</i>	<i>sɔm</i>
clothes	wear	rice	eat
'food and clothing'			

- (23) (N
- <sub>1</sub>
- V
- <sub>1</sub>
- )(N
- <sub>1</sub>
- V
- <sub>2</sub>
- ) – (noun
- <sub>1</sub>
- for verb
- <sub>1</sub>
- ing) and synonym (noun
- <sub>1</sub>
- for verb
- <sub>2</sub>
- ing)

<i>krɔn</i>	<i>tɕup</i>	<i>krɔn</i>	<i>sɔm</i>
clothes	wear	clothes	wear
'clothing'			

(24)  $N_1(VN_2)$  – noun<sub>1</sub> which is verbed by noun<sub>2</sub>

*kr̥aʷŋ m̥ʷan kən̥ɲəm*  
 thing play child  
 ‘toy’

A few nouns may serve as the head noun in compounds both with their original lexical meaning but also in a semantically bleached form. The higher the degree of semantic bleaching, the greater the productivity of the noun in morphological derivations. For instance, *kr̥aʷ* ‘road’ may retain the meanings ‘road’ or ‘way/method’ as in (25):

(25) *kr̥aʷ hɔ tɕʰɣ kr̥aʷ ʔot*  
 road train way live  
 ‘railway’ ‘way of life’

or operate as a largely functional morpheme as in (26):

(26) *kr̥aʷ tɕiʔ blon lʰaon kr̥aʷ ɡaʷʷ rʰɔm kr̥aʷ s.bʰɔm*  
 road can much high road happy road starve  
 ‘technology’ ‘happiness’ ‘famine, starvation’

The relativizer *pa* is one of very few morphemes used in morphological derivations which is purely functional, or rather a grammatical morpheme whose source is obscure, yielding nouns such as (27) and (28) meaning ‘that which is verbed’ or ‘that which verbs’ (where the verb may be stative/adjectival):

(27) *pa p̥on*  
 REL receive  
 ‘income, earnings’ < ‘that which is received’

(28) *pa r̥aʷh pa su*  
 REL upright REL straight  
 ‘righteousness’ < ‘that which is upright and straight’

A number of ethnic nationalities and clans, as in (29), are described using such formulations:

(29) *pa ʔaʷʔ pa r̥aok pa rʰaʔ*  
 REL ʔaʷʔ REL r̥aok REL rʰaʔ  
 Plang Paraok, Wa Pa Rhax (a Wa clan name)

## 2.2 Psycho-collocations

The only frequently encountered psycho-collocation in the sense of Matisoff (1986) in the Wa lexicon is *r<sup>h</sup>ɔm* ‘heart’, which appears in over 200 phrases in the Wa Dictionary database (Watkins 2013). This is consistent with Wa’s geographical Mainland Southeast Asian linguistic neighbours which also use a ‘heart/mind’ morpheme to convey emotions, namely Chinese 心 *xīn*, Tai/Shan *tsau*<sup>1</sup> ɔ̄ɔ̄ and Burmese *sei*? ၈ဝ် (see Vittrant 2013). Overwhelmingly, such collocations in Wa take the form VERB + *r<sup>h</sup>ɔm* ‘heart VERBS’ – examples are given in (30). follow.

(30) <i>ʔat</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart is salty	‘angry’
<i>ʔaoh</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart is hot	‘upset, irritated’
<i>praĩʔ</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart is spicy	‘angry’
<i>tat</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart cuts	‘decide’
<i>t̃ɪn</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart is big	‘bold’
<i>t̃ɪk</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart is asthmatic	‘sad’
<i>kaoh</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart stands up	‘indignant, excited’
<i>haok</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart climbs	‘interested, envy’
<i>haʔ</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart is hot, scorching	‘rash, impetuous’
<i>l<sup>h</sup>aonɯ</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart is tall	‘arrogant’
<i>n<sup>h</sup>uuk</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart is asthmatic	‘glum, depressed’
<i>n<sup>h</sup>iæn</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart is hard, stiff	‘stubborn’
<i>k<sup>h</sup>riæn</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart is engaged	‘obliged, embarrassed (cf. Burmese <i>ʔa<sup>3</sup>-na<sup>2</sup>-dɛ<sup>2</sup></i> )
<i>k<sup>h</sup>riæn</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart is seasoned, dried out	‘cordial, polite’
<i>k<sup>h</sup>rup</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart is tired	‘gloomy, disheartened’
<i>l̃ɛc</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart enters	‘interested’ (cf. Burmese <i>seiʔ win<sup>2</sup>-za<sup>3</sup>-dɛ<sup>2</sup></i> )
<i>l̃ɪt</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart is wrong	‘cause offence’
<i>d̃ɪt</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart breaks	‘die’
<i>b<sup>h</sup>aŋ</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart is wide open	‘generous’
<i>dak</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart retreats	‘disgusted’
<i>sau</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	uses heart	‘engrossed’
<i>t<sup>h</sup>ɔ</i>	<i>r<sup>h</sup>ɔm</i>	heart is shallow	‘intolerant’

These collocations VERB + *r<sup>h</sup>ɔm* can be extended using the expressive doublet *r<sup>h</sup>ɔm r<sup>h</sup>i* ‘heart’ to give VERB + *r<sup>h</sup>ɔm r<sup>h</sup>i* or to form an ABAC expressive reduplicative form [VERB *r<sup>h</sup>ɔm* VERB *r<sup>h</sup>i*], as in (31); see also section 3.3.2 below.

- (31) *gəu?*    *r<sup>h</sup>ɔm*    *gəu?*    *r<sup>h</sup>i*  
 happy    heart    happy    heart  
 ‘happy’

## 2.3 Elaborate expressions

### 2.3.1 Rhyming proverbs and sayings

Wang et al. (1992) is a major source of several thousand Wa proverbs and sayings. Proverbs and sayings in Wa typically pivot about a central rhyme, usually a near-exact one, which straddles the divide between two syntactic domains. The material either side of the divide may vary greatly in quantity and syntactical complexity. Often the syntax of the two halves of the whole phrase is symmetrical in structure. Elaborate sayings and proverbs of this kind frequently contain high-register Tai loans. The subject matter may be either pedestrian or lofty, sometimes with historical or legendary allusions. Some examples (32)–(34) follow, in which the third and fourth syllables rhyme or nearly rhyme.

- (32) *pən*    *dau?*    *ŋəc,*            *ləc*    *dau?*    *grɯan.*  
 rest    place    fragrant,    enter    place    hunting hide  
 ‘Rest in a fragrant place, enter a hunter’s hide.’ – Describes the joys of hunting.
- (33) *su*        *nɔh*    *zɯt,*                    *prut*        *nɔh*    *grai*  
 splash    3SG    extinguished,    smother    3SG    gone  
 ‘Sprinkle it out, extinguish it till it’s gone.’ – A prayer to ward off fire.
- (34) *kleh*    *tɿ?*    *vɔŋ,*            *lɿŋ*                    *tɿ?*    *bɔk.*  
 play    one    period,    act diligently    one    time  
 ‘Be romantic for a while, make a true effort once.’ (said between a courting man and woman.)

### 2.3.2 Expressive doublets and derived reduplicative forms

Wa makes use of expressive doublets as in (35), where an ordinary noun *X* is paired with an expressive synonym *X\**, which may be obscure or poetic and typically occurs nowhere else in the lexicon.

- (35)  $r^h\omega m + r^hi > r^h\omega m r^hi$       ‘heart’ + ‘heart\*’ > ‘heart’  
 $pr\xi\eta? prum > pr\xi\eta? prum$       ‘food’ + ‘food\*’ > ‘food, grain’

X=X\* doublets such as these can be used in combination with another pair of words to make four-syllable expressions, as in (36):

- (36) X      X\*  
 $pr\xi\eta? prum lai gu$  >  $pr\xi\eta? prum lai gu$   
 food/grain      trade      ‘grain produced to sell’

They can also be used as the base for part-reduplicated four-syllable nominal or verbal forms (37).

- (37) NOUN      X      NOUN.REDUP      X\*  
 $\eta\eta? pr\xi\eta? \eta\eta? prum > \eta\eta? pr\xi\eta? \eta\eta? prum$   
 leftovers      food      leftovers      food\*      ‘leftovers’
- VERB      X      VERB.REDUP      X\*  
 $yuh pr\xi\eta? yuh prum > yuh pr\xi\eta? yuh prum$   
 make      food      make      food\*      ‘cook food’
- $loh r^h\omega m loh r^hi > loh r^h\omega m loh r^hi$   
 change      heart      change      heart\*      ‘start afresh’
- $so\eta r^h\omega m so\eta r^hi > so\eta r^h\omega m so\eta r^hi$   
 bitter      heart      bitter      heart\*      ‘enraged’

Both the ABBC rhyme pattern and the expressive forms derived from doublets can be used to form extended expressive forms of everyday words. For instance, the three bimorphemic compounds in (38) all mean ‘neighbour’:

- (38)  $s.jun pl\eta k = p\alpha o? \eta^h\omega m = p\alpha o? pl\eta k$   
 close by neighbourhood      friend plot of land      friend neighbourhood  
 ‘neighbour’      ‘neighbour’      ‘neighbour’

Additionally, these can form an ABAC-type reduplicated phrase (39):

- (39)  $p\alpha o? pl\eta k p\alpha o? \eta^h\omega m$   
 friend neighbourhood      friend plot of land  
 ‘neighbour’

and also an ABBC-type elaborate partly reduplicated form (40):

- (40) *s.juən*                      *plək*                      *s.dzʰək*    *ɲiɛʔ*  
       close by                      neighbourhood    pile up    house  
       ‘nextdoor neighbour’

Alliterative partial reduplication is also used in Wa to form aesthetic ideophones. In (41), the initial consonant is used to form a pre-syllable with the vowel [u] in the register of the source syllable.

- (41) *kliən*    >    *ku kliən ~ klu kliən*    *d̥iç*            >    *d̥u d̥iç*  
       ‘twist’        ‘twist repeatedly’    ‘trample’        ‘trample repeatedly’

This kind of pattern may simply be used to generate a number of alternative expressive forms in (42):

- (42) *pu praŋ ~ pru praŋ ~ puŋ praŋ ~ pruŋ praŋ*  
       ‘scatter, disperse’

We find also emphatic forms with euphonic chiming syllables – where the chime may precede or follow the simple unadorned source lexeme, as in (43):

- (43) *kloŋ*            >    *kloŋ kloc*  
       ‘drill’            ‘interrogate, question’
- b̥iʔ*                >    *s.b̥iʔ ~ s.b̥iʔən ~ s.b̥iʔ s.b̥iʔən*  
       ‘sticky’            ‘miserly’
- s.kəoŋ*            >    *s.kəoŋ s.k̥iət*  
       ‘cold’             ‘freezing cold’

## 2.4 Loanwords

The Wa lexicon incorporates a large amount of loan vocabulary from a number of languages. The Wa speaking area lies on the boundary between the Chinese-speaking world and Mainland Southeast Asia. Predictably, words from the *lingue franche* of the area have found their way into the Wa lexicon, in particular Yunnanese Chinese and Tai/Shan languages spoken in Yunnan, China, and in Shan State, Burma. Only a small part of the Wa speaking people have come un-

der the influence of Buddhism, and so the language has absorbed little vocabulary from Sanskrit or Pali.

Chinese loans are very large in number (at least 10% of the lexicon as documented in Watkins 2013), particularly in the domains of politics, science, agriculture, education and technology. Tai/Shan loans in Wa are fewer in number, and include the names of some plants, crops, crafts and materials, and larger numerals (which are themselves Tai/Shan borrowings from Chinese). Tai/Shan is also the source of some high-register ceremonial and formal language found in proverbs and sayings.

Loans from English, typically via Burmese, are found in varieties of Wa spoken on the Burmese side of the border, and include vocabulary to do with technology which was introduced to the Wa at the time of early colonial contact with the British. Loans from English include those in (44):

- (44) Wa *pai* < Burmese ပါတီ *pa'ti*<sup>2</sup> < English 'party'  
 Wa *sai kɛ* < Burmese ဆိုက်ကလံ *s<sup>h</sup>aiN<sup>2</sup>-kɛ<sup>2</sup>* < English '[motor]cycle'

Certain words are likely to be borrowed from Chinese on the Chinese side of the border and from Burmese (or English via Burmese) on the Burmese side of the border, but there are also Chinese-Burmese hybrids which show the diversity of influences on Wa from both sides, as in n (45).

- (45) *mɔʔ t<sup>h</sup>ɔʔ c<sup>h</sup>ɣ* Burmese မော်တော် *mɔ<sup>2</sup>tɔ<sup>2</sup>* (< English 'motor')  
 'car' + Chinese 车 *chē* 'vehicle'  
*cɥ yi p<sup>h</sup>i nɔ* Chinese 主意 *zhǔyì* 'idea'  
 'knowledge' + Burmese ပညာ *pyiN<sup>2</sup>-na<sup>2</sup>* (< Pali *paññā*) 'knowledge'

Many loanwords appear preceded by a Wa superordinary, as seen in (46) the following examples.

- (46) classroom *nɛʔ tʃaɔ suʔ* < Wa *nɛʔ* 'house' + 教室 *jiàoshì* 'classroom'  
 mango *pliʔ mak mɥn* < Wa *pliʔ* 'fruit' + Tai *maak<sup>2</sup> moŋ<sup>3</sup>* 'mango'  
 Western suit *krɔwɥn si tʃuaŋ* < Wa *krɔwɥn* 'clothes'  
 + Chinese 西装 *xīzhuāng* 'Western suit'  
 diesel oil *bɥ di-sɛ* < Wa *bɥ* 'oil' + Burmese ဒီဇယ် *dī<sup>2</sup>-zɛ<sup>2</sup>*  
 (< English 'diesel')





## (52) Wa pronouns

	singular	dual		plural	
1st person	<i>ʔɣʔ</i>	<i>ʔaʔ</i>	<i>yɛʔ</i>	<i>ʔeʔ</i>	<i>yiʔ</i>
	1SG	1DU.INCL	1DU.EXCL	1PL.INCL	1PL.EXCL
2nd person	<i>maiʔ</i>	<i>paʔ</i>		<i>peʔ</i>	
	2SG	2DU		2PL	
3rd person	<i>nɔh</i>	<i>kɛʔ</i>		<i>kiʔ</i>	
	3SG	3DU		3PL	

There is no obligatory marking of person or number, but a noun phrase may be marked as dual or plural using one of the 3rd person dual or plural pronouns as a noun-phrase suffix as in (53) and (54).

- (53) *ʔuc gqoʔ rʰɔm ʔɣʔ kah [Ø] pa kʰruɲ ʔan kiʔ*  
 very nauseous 1SG PREP [Ø] REL filthy that PL  
 ‘I feel revolted by those filthy [things].’

- (54) *mɛʔ moɲ ʔan kɛʔ*  
 wife husband that DUAL  
 ‘that husband and wife couple.’

Empty-headed relative clauses such as *pa kʰruɲ* ‘dirty [thing]’ in (53) are very common indeed in Wa. They are explored further in section 4.3.3 below.

Like other Mainland Southeast Asian languages, Wa does not use articles to mark definiteness or indefiniteness. However, degrees of definiteness or indefiniteness can be expressed using the demonstratives or quantifiers such as those listed in (55), following the noun which they qualify.

- (55) *ʔit tiʔ / buh tiʔ* some, any  
*(ʔiʔ) blah* some, a few  
*mɔt tiʔ* a certain  
*ʔin / ʔan* this / that

### 3.1.2 Classifiers

The position of classifiers in the noun phrase has been described above. There are few true classifiers in Wa, the notable exceptions being the classifiers *kauʔ* for people and *mu*, a general classifier. Besides these two, weights and quantities and a wide variety of countable nouns are used as measure words. A classi-

fier or measure word occurs obligatorily with numbers, but need not be present with demonstratives.

### 3.2 Verbal domain

This section describes the main features of verbs and verb phrases in Wa.

#### 3.2.1 Tense-mode-aspect particles

Like the vast majority of Mainland Southeast Asian languages, verbs in Wa lack inflection of any kind. The tense-mode-aspect system makes use of the preverbal morphemes such as in (56), and illustrated in the examples which follow.

- (56) *hɔc* perfective marker  
*ʔaŋ* negative marker  
*saʔ* experiential, remote past marker ('ever')  
*lai* aspect marker ('after all'; 'not any more' in negative sentences)  
*naŋ* aspect marker ('not yet' in negative sentence)

- (57) *nɔh hɔc ʔam tiʔ, ʔaŋ lai ciʔ ne*  
 3SG PERF dumb REFL, NEG **anymore** can yell  
 'He was dumbfounded and couldn't call out (anymore).'

- (58) *ʔuɸ ʔaŋ.naŋ sin, ɸaŋoʔ ʔut tiʔ vuʔ.*  
 rice **not.yet** cooked, again boil one while  
 'The rice still isn't cooked, so boil it a while longer.'

- (59) *diʔ nɛʔ yiʔ ʔaŋ saʔ kuɸ ʔih,*  
 formerly family 2.PL.EXCL NEG **ever** enough eat,

*nɸiʔ kah ʔaŋ lai ʔuc ʔih.*  
 today but NEG **anymore** finish eat

'In the past our family didn't have enough to eat, but nowadays we can't finish it all.'

Other time adverbs are commonly used additionally to express the temporal relations of actions and events, such as those listed in (60) and (61).

- (60) *k<sup>h</sup>ai?* afterwards, later  
*khaŋ* then  
*n<sup>h</sup>ao?* recently  
*d̥i?* previously  
*kɔn* still

- (61) *k<sup>h</sup>ai?* *hɔc* *sɔm* *ʔe?*, *ʔup* *kɔn* *haoh* *tɔm.nɛ*  
**after** PERF eat 2.PL.INCL rice **still** much somewhat  
 ‘After we had eaten there was still a lot of rice left.’

### 3.2.2 Grammaticalization of verbs

The most common grammaticalized verbs in Wa are those which are commonly found in the language of the Mainland Southeast Asian area. As auxiliary verbs, they appear following the main verb in serial verb constructions, with the coordinating connection conjunction *ti?* between the two.

#### 3.2.2.a *ciɛ* ‘to own’ > possessive (POSS)

When the possessor is a pronoun, *ciɛ* is not obligatory; it could be omitted from (62):

- (62) *saŋ* *ta?* *chɣ* *ciɛ* *mai?* *hu*  
 want ride car **POSS** 2.SG go  
 ‘I want to go in your car.’

The head noun which is possessed can be elided. Prepositional phrases headed by possessive *ciɛ* appear frequently as complement of the copula *mɔh*, as in (63) and (64).

- (63) *s.bei?* *prɛ* *mɔh* *ciɛ* *ʔi* *nap*  
 dress silk COP **POSS** I Nap  
 ‘The silk dress is I Nap’s.’

- (64) *ʔaŋ* *mɔh* *ciɛ* *mai?*, *kah* *mɔh* *ciɛ* *nɔh*  
 NEG COP POSS 2.SG, then COP **POSS** 3.SG  
 ‘If it’s not yours, then it must be his.’

### 3.2.2.b *pɔŋ* ‘to receive’ > ‘can’, physical potentiality

Grammaticalized as a preverbal auxiliary, *pɔŋ* indicates physical capability (65), (66), rather than learned or chosen ability, which is expressed with the verb *ci?* ‘able, possible’.

(65) *kɛh ʔaŋ pɔŋ pai duɪh klɔt,*  
if NEG can heal return alive,

*ki? ci? mɯk kaŋ ʔa?*  
3.PL may chop head 2.DU.INCL

‘If we can’t bring her back to life, they may cut off our heads.’

(66) *ʔaŋ pɔŋ jɯt kah kih tɿ? brɛ*  
NEG can lack PREP salt one meal

‘I can’t do without salt for a single meal’

However, like the grammaticalized forms of this verb in other Southeast Asian languages, the meaning can be hard to pin down, since in some contexts the meaning can veer towards ‘gets to’ or ‘has the opportunity to’, as in (67).

(67) *kɔn yi? pɔŋ lɔc dau? len kah mɔh pak.ŋai yi?*  
child 1PL.EXCL can join in army so is honour 1PL.EXCL

‘It is an honour for us that our son can serve in the army.’

Or: ‘... that our son has the opportunity to...’

### 3.2.2.c *yɔo?* ‘to see’ > try

Following the main verb, *yɔo?* ‘see’ expresses actions undertaken speculatively or tentatively as in (68). In (69) *yɔo?* ‘see’ appears at the end of the sentence as a resultative complement.

(68) *mai? c<sup>h</sup>aŋ yɔo? kɔ ʔin*  
2SG sing see song this

‘Try singing this song’

(69) *ʔe? sum s.mɛ ŋ<sup>h</sup>o? k<sup>h</sup>rao? nɯm ʔin yɔo?*  
1PL.INCL plant seed rice new year this see

‘We tried planting a new kind of rice this year.’

Unusually for Mainland Southeast Asian languages, the Wa verb *yəoʔ* ‘to see’ also grammaticalizes as an auxiliary verb preceding the main verb to express potentiality, usually in negative contexts, as in (70) and (71).

(70) *krɔʔ kah ʔaŋ yəoʔ tiʔ ʔih prɛʔ*  
 thin from NEG **see** CONJ eat food  
 ‘Thin from not being able to eat.’

(71) *yəm ʔiak ʔɣʔ dɿʔ, ʔaŋ yəoʔ tiʔ gəu lai*  
 thin from 1SG formerly, NEG **see** CONJ study writing  
 ‘When I was young, I didn’t have the chance to go to school’

### 3.2.2.d *tɔʔ* ‘to give’ > causative / preposition

*tɔʔ* ‘give’ has causative and permissive senses as an auxiliary verb, as in (72) and (73). An interesting comparison can be made with the contrasting uses of auxiliary ၵၶ: *peʔ* ‘give’ in Burmese, which may have both permissive and causative meanings, usually when preceding and following the main verb, respectively (see Okano 2005).

(72) *tɔʔ nəh hu khaŋ*  
 give 3SG go then  
 ‘May he go!’, ‘Tell him to go!’

(73) *maiʔ lai blək tiʔ tɔʔ nəh gəc*  
 2SG why only CONJ give 3SG watch  
 ‘Why did you only let him see it?’

*tɔʔ* is used in a benefactive sense in (74).

(74) *maiʔ hoc tɔʔ yiʔ ʔih prɛʔ tin*  
 2SG come give 2.PL.EX eat food here  
 ‘You bring food here for us to eat.’

### 3.2.2.e *ʔot* ‘live’ > progressive (PROG)

While *ʔot* seemingly does not occur with stative verbs with a continuous/durative meaning; it is frequently found with non-stative verbs to convey progressive aspect, as in (75) and (76).

- (75) *nɛ kin jʰɔm sauʔ nɔh, ʔot*  
 very serious illness 3SG PROG

*tiʔ s.kah kah.gʰaok.kah.duŋ*  
 CONJ talk ramblingly

‘His illness is especially serious and he is rambling all over the place.’

- (76) *ʔai ɸəo ʔot tiʔ tɔt sɯp*  
 Ai Pao PROG CONJ smoke tobacco

‘Ai Pao is smoking tobacco.’

### 3.2.2.f *ʔun* ‘to put, to set’ > completed/ resultative aspect

- (77) *kiʔ liak tiʔ ʔun krauŋ.*  
 3PL buy conj RESULT clothes

‘They’ve bought their clothes (and are all ready)’

- (78) *van ʔeʔ tiʔ ʔun khaoʔ ʔin kiʔ sɔn ʔaŋ ɸhrɔc*  
 preserve 2.PL.EX CONJ RESULT tree this PL so.that NEG chop

‘We preserve these trees in the forest so they are not cut down.’

### 3.2.2.g *kah* ‘undo’

The high-frequency verb *kah* is of particular interest. As a transitive verb, it has meanings ‘untie’, ‘solve’, ‘cure’:

- (79) *yɯh buan son, kah maoʔ mɔi*  
 do favour, untie rope cow

‘Please untie the rope tethering the cow.’

(80) *s.dah ʔin kah sawʔ ʔaoh*  
 medicine this cure illness hear  
 ‘This kind of medicine relieves heatstroke.’

(81) *pa kah duʔ bluih ɡum loʔ mai lai ka la*  
 REL solve meaning phrase short and speech foreign  
 ‘Explanation of the meaning of short phrases and foreign words.’

Grammaticalized, *kah* functions as a very high-frequency semantically versatile preposition which can express location ((82)(83)), instrumentality/causation ((84)(85)(86)) and location ((87),(88)), etc.:

Location:

(82) *ʔot nəh kah kauŋ liam*  
 live 3SG *kah* Menglian  
 ‘He lives in Menglian.’

(83) *yum lɛn kah nəŋ*  
 die soldier in/from battle  
 ‘The soldier died in battle/from fighting.’

Causation/instrumentality:

(84) *tʌuk nəh kah ʃʌm sawʔ tiʔ*  
 tired 3SG *kah* characteristic illness REFL  
 ‘He is tired because of his illness.’

(85) *sɔm kah tʰu*  
 eat\_rice *kah* chopstick  
 ‘eat using chopsticks’

(86) *ʔʌʔ mat yuh taiʔ tiʔ kah ɡɔn*  
 1SG cut do hand REFL *kah* knife  
 ‘I cut my hand with a knife.’

Direction:

(87) *la tha ʔin moʔ pa haok kah dauʔ mɤŋ tʌla*  
 train this is REL depart *kah* place Mandalay  
 ‘This train is the one which leaves for Mandalay.’



- (88) *ʔeʔ hu pɿaŋ kraʔ kah plak laiʔ*  
 2.PL.INCL go on road *kah* area market  
 ‘We went along the road towards market.’

When information from an adverbial *kah*-headed prepositional phrase is fronted for topicalization or focus, *kah* may be stranded. The information thus fronted may be a noun phrase ((89)(90)), a (nominalized) verb phrase ((91),(92)), or a complete subordinate clause ‘because his father scolded him’ (93). The adverbial force of *kah* may sometimes be effectively translated with ‘thereby’.

- (89) [*rɔm s.gəŋ ʔaŋ*]<sub>i</sub> *koi kaʔ tʃn kaŋ kah* [<sub>i</sub>]  
 [water clear that]<sub>i</sub> have fish big head **kah** [<sub>i</sub>]  
 ‘That clear water has big-headed fish in it.’

- (90) [*ʔɿɿʔ prim*]<sub>i</sub> *ʔaŋ pɿi ʔot kah* [<sub>i</sub>]  
 [house old] NEG people live **kah** [<sub>i</sub>]  
 ‘People don’t live in the old house.’

- (91) [*hɔc maiʔ*]<sub>i</sub> *ʔɿʔ kɿt gauʔ rɔm kah* [<sub>i</sub>]  
 [come 2SG]<sub>i</sub> 1SG vert happy heart **kah** [<sub>i</sub>]  
 ‘I’m very pleased that you came.’

- (92) [*hɔc koi nət*]<sub>i</sub> *tʃt.tiʔ kɔʔ ʔaŋ lʰat kah* [<sub>i</sub>]  
 [PERF have gun]<sub>i</sub> anything then NEG fear **kah** [<sub>i</sub>]  
 ‘Once you have a gun, there is nothing to fear.’

- (93) *jəo [ʔah kuŋ nɔh gah nɔh]*<sub>i</sub> *kum yjam kah* [<sub>i</sub>]  
 reason [talk father 3SG to 3SG]<sub>i</sub> so weep **kah** [<sub>i</sub>]  
 ‘Because his father told him off, he cried (about it).’

### 3.2.3 Serial verb constructions (SVC)

Nuclear serial verb constructions in Wa are typical of Mainland Southeast Asian languages. Modals can combine freely in contiguous series with a main verb, as in (94) and (95).

- (94) *ʔaŋ pɿi ciʔ sut mu koc pɿaŋ teʔ*  
 NEG person **can** pick.up CLF light on earth  
 ‘No one can pick up the sunlight on the ground.’

- (95) ʔɣʔ    **taŋ**    yɥh    s.rɥ  
 1SG    **must**    do    self  
 ‘I must do [it] myself.’

Several modals can occur together, as in (96).

- (96) s.mɛ    gat    **ciʔ**    **saŋ**    **pɔŋ**    dɔc    tɕi    mhɔm    s.glum?  
 seed    how    **can**    **will**    **get**    grow    flower    good    bunch  
 ‘How could seeds like these be cultivated into fine flowers?’

### 3.2.4 Coordinating conjunction *tiʔ*

While ‘asymmetrical’ serial verb constructions of this type are common in Wa, ‘symmetrical’ SVCs are not found. If the additional verb is not a modal or a verb which has undergone grammaticalization to at least a partial extent, or optionally if it is, the coordinating conjunction *tiʔ* (glossed here as CONJ) is used to co-ordinate two verbs (one of which may be a modal) or verb phrases, which may be either two aspects of a single action or consecutive, discrete actions, or somewhere between the two. In this respect it is strikingly similar to the Burmese conjunction ၆: *pyi*<sup>3</sup>, grammaticalized from the verb ၆: *pyi*<sup>3</sup> ‘finish’. In Burmese constructions VERB<sub>1</sub> *pyi* VERB<sub>2</sub>, the two verbs may refer to two distinct actions, or two aspects of a single activity (see Romeo 2008: ch. 7; Vittrant, this volume, table 13, p. 99).

*tiʔ* is homonymous with a reflexive pronoun *tiʔ* and interrogative *tiʔ* ‘what’, but nonetheless it is not clear what the source lexeme for conjunctive *tiʔ* might be; there is certainly no obvious verbal candidate. The following sentences (97)–(100) illustrate the function of *tiʔ*, in which the verbs conjoined form part of a single event with the same subject and shared tense, aspect, modality and polarity.

- (97) nɔh    ciʔ    tiʔ    plɛ    loʔ    mɔn    khɔn    loʔ    vaʔ  
 3SG    can    CONJ    translate    speech    Burma    from    speech    Wa  
 ‘He can translate from Wa into Burmese.’

- (98) paih    tiʔ    pheʔ    pliʔ  
 peel    CONJ    eat    fruit  
 ‘Peel and eat fruit [two activities co-occurring].’  
 (Or also ‘Peel fruit and [then] eat it.’)

- (99) *l̥ai pa mhaŋ maiʔ tiʔ v̥ai ʔaŋ koi*  
 book REL ask 2SG CONJ borrow not have  
 ‘The book you asked to borrow isn’t there.’

- (100) *g̥un tiʔ y̥h kaŋ*  
 endure CONJ do work  
 ‘work persistently.’

### 3.3 Clausal/sentential organization

It seems that word-order in Wa is VSO, although SVO is also common. It is difficult to know which of the two orders may be considered ‘basic’. It may be on the one hand that VSO word-order is basic, but that the verb-initial order is disrupted due to the influence of SVO Chinese, and perhaps also of SOV Burmese. On the other hand, it may be that SVO is the basic word-order, but VSO is frequently preferred for reasons of emphasis or focus. In the absence of compelling evidence to sway the argument one way or the other, it remains the case that VSO word order is very common in Wa, and this is a feature worthy of note since it distinguishes Wa from the norm in Mainland Southeast Asian languages. Xiao Zegong (1981) observes that the difference between the two orders is a matter of focus and emphasis.

Looking in closer detail, it seems that rather than having a preference for VSO order *per se*, Wa likes the subject to be the second element, following the verb in (101), both the verb and the modal ((102) and (103)), or the negative *ʔaŋ* (104). In addition to the appearance of this word order, topicalized material may be fronted, as in (105).

- (101) *hoc b<sup>h</sup>auŋ t̥iŋ k<sup>h</sup>aŋ plak l<sup>h</sup>aŋ*  
 come wind big from side north  
 ‘a strong wind came from the north’

- (102) *ciʔ g<sup>h</sup>raoh ʔɿʔ g<sup>h</sup>raoh kɔn.doi vaʔ ŋɛ*  
 can dance 1SG dance orphan Wa only  
 ‘I can only dance the Wa orphan dance’

- (103) *saŋ g̥ac ʔɿʔ ŋai maiʔ y̥aŋʔ*  
 want look.at 1SG face 2SG see  
 ‘I want to have a look at your face.’

(104) *ʔaŋ ʔɣʔ lai pɔŋ kɔŋ jʰɔm nɔh.*  
 NEG 1SG anymore can tolerate attitude 3SG  
 ‘I can no longer put up with his attitude.’

(105) *lɔk.cəŋ pa ʔaŋ ʔɣʔ sum cuɸ*  
 leggings which NEG 1SG want wear  
 ‘The leggings which I don’t want to wear.’

### 3.3.1 Ellipsis of arguments

In slight contrast to many languages in the Mainland Southeast Asian area, definite arguments in Wa tend to be pronominalized and retained, rather than being ellided altogether, even if they are recoverable from the context. Similarly, as illustrated in section 4.2.2.g above, the *kah* of *kah*-headed prepositional phrases is often retained, even in contexts where information is recoverable from the context.

### 3.3.2 Topicalization

The organization of sentences in Wa very frequently follows the ‘topic-prominent’ tendency which is normal for Mainland Southeast Asian languages. The data in sentences (89)–(92) above are relevant examples of sentences where topicalized material has been fronted. Wa does not mark topics overtly with grammatical markers.

### 3.3.3 *Pa*-headed nominalized clauses

Wa makes very frequent use of focus-cleft constructions using relativizer *pa*, analagous to the Chinese 是...的 *shì...de* construction (Zimmerman et al. 2008). In such constructions, the material in focus is nominalized with the relativizer *pa*, as in (106) and may additionally be fronted, as in (107).

(106) *[ŋhoʔ gaoʔ]<sub>i</sub> mɔh pa ʔui ʔeʔ jɹ tiʔ kah [∅]<sub>i</sub> hxi.*  
 [rice rice]<sub>i</sub> is REL feed we life REFL by [∅]<sub>i</sub> EXCL  
 ‘Rice is the thing that we sustain our life with!’

- (107) *pa daŋ kɔŋ pui kah* [Ø]<sub>i</sub> mɔh [pui pɛ̃]<sub>i</sub>  
*REL much hate people PREP* [Ø]<sub>i</sub> *is people deceive*  
 ‘What people despise most of all is liars.’

### 3.3.4 Question formation

The formation of questions in Wa follows the pattern observed by Clark (1985) to be typical of Mainland Southeast Asian languages. Yes-no questions can be formed using one of the sentence-final particles listed in (123), some of which are neutral interrogatives while others have certain attitudinal or pragmatic implications. *Wh*-questions are formed using an unremarkable set of *wh*-question words *in situ* with no sentence-final particle. In addition, questions may be formed using an tag-question particle, such as in (125).

## 4 Semantics and pragmatics

This section shows that Wa is predictably rich in those semantic domains which are expected to be so in Mainland Southeast Asian language.

### 4.1 Common semantic domains

#### 4.1.1 Food

Wa has four terms for rice, shown in (108), but food is referred to in general terms using the three terms in (109).

- (108) *kla* rice seedling  
*ŋ<sup>h</sup>oʔ* uncooked rice (husks on)  
*gaoʔ* uncooked rice (husks off)  
*ʔuɸ* cooked rice
- (109) *ʔuɸ* cooked rice  
*prɛ̃ʔ* food and drink  
*puan* food (other than grain)

Various basic words for eating are used, depending on what is being eaten, in addition to a good number of words for snacking. The verb *ih* is semantically broad, meaning ‘use’, but it is used generally for eating and drinking (as well as for wearing clothes, collecting, adhering to religion, etc). Some more restricted collocations are found in addition – see the examples in (110).

(110)	verb	example	translation
	<i>ʔih</i>	<i>ʔih pɾɛʔ</i>	‘consume food / drink.’
		<i>ʔih s.dah</i>	‘take medicine.’
		<i>ʔih s.bɛʔ</i>	‘wear clothes.’
		<i>ʔih kʰɔ</i>	‘use a hoe.’
	<i>sɔm</i>	<i>sɔm ʔuɸ</i>	‘eat rice.’
	<i>ŋəuʔ</i>	<i>ŋəuʔ plai</i>	‘drink alcohol.’
	<i>pʰɛʔ</i>	<i>pʰɛʔ pliʔ</i>	‘eat fruit.’
	<i>rʰuɸ</i>	<i>rʰuɸ</i>	‘drink tea, drink soup.’
	<i>ɣɔt</i>	<i>ɣɔt sɸp</i>	‘smoke tobacco.’
		<i>ɣɔt plai</i>	‘drink alcohol.’

#### 4.1.2 Washing

Another domain in the lexicon which is richly represented in Wa is that of washing, as illustrated in (111). The verbs in (111) all mean ‘wash’ or ‘clean’, but each is restricted to a specific semantic domain.

(111)	verb	semantic domain	example	
	<i>kʰoc</i>	face/hands	<i>kʰoc ŋai</i>	wash face
	<i>pʰak</i>	objects (also teeth)	<i>pʰak ʔɔ</i>	wash cooking pots
	<i>hum</i>	child	<i>hum kɔn ɲɔm</i>	bathe a child
	<i>s.gʰrah</i>	vegetables, food	<i>s.gʰrah tauʔ</i>	rinse vegetables
	<i>s.dauʔ</i>	clothes	<i>s.dauʔ kɾəuŋ</i>	wash clothes

#### 4.1.3 Cutting

Like other Southeast Asian languages, the Wa lexicon caters very generously for the semantic domains of cutting, carrying and drying. (112) is a selection of cutting words from the Wa Dictionary (Watkins 2013), excluding those which seem to be derived from nouns (e.g. *sa* ‘scythe > cut with a scythe’).

(112) <i>bəuʔ</i>	cut, sever.
<i>gʊ</i>	cut, chop.
<i>gam ~ gaŋ ~ gra</i>	chop wildly, hack (meat)
<i>geh</i>	hack, chop recklessly.
<i>gʰɔk</i>	carve, incise, cut.
<i>kiaʰ</i>	peel, cut off rind (with a knife).
<i>kip</i>	cut (with scissors).
<i>kit ~ kiʔ</i>	cut, chop, hit, whack
<i>krək</i>	scratch, cut, abrade.
<i>kʰak ~ kʰik</i>	cut, pare, peel
<i>kʰloi</i>	chop, slash, hack, notch, gouge.
<i>kʰluh</i>	cut off, chop off, break off
<i>kʰrɛ</i>	cut, chop
<i>lɛ ~ lək</i>	split off, cut off, pull away from
<i>mak ~ muak ~ muk</i>	cut, cut off, sever
<i>ʃia</i>	slit, slash, cut into strips
<i>ne</i>	cut into sections
<i>pat</i>	cut
<i>pʰɔi</i>	chop, cut
<i>piah</i>	slit, slash, cut into slices
<i>pit</i>	cut off, dock, cut short
<i>pɔt</i>	cut, scratch
<i>rʰip</i>	cut (with scissors)
<i>rʰih</i>	cut, scratch
<i>riʔ</i>	saw, cut (planks)
<i>s.grih</i>	cut open, break, split
<i>sit</i>	cut, slice, chop
<i>tat</i>	cut, cut off, break off
<i>tʰak</i>	cut, shovel
<i>tʰah</i>	cut wood (with an adze)
<i>tʰaŋ</i>	cut, chop
<i>tʰum</i>	cut (large timber)
<i>tuah</i>	cut off, cut, harvest
<i>vit</i>	slice horizontally, cut off
<i>vɔk ~ vɔc ~ s. vɔc</i>	slice off, hack away, chop off

#### 4.1.4 Carrying

Similarly, Wa verbs of carrying enable fine distinctions. Of particular interest is (113), a pair of back-carrying verbs *puih* and *kək*, which encode the gender of the carrier.

- (113) *puih*    carry with strap on forehead supporting basket on back (women)  
           *kək*     carry on back (firewood, etc. with ropes (men))

For other carrying verbs, the part of the body involved in the carrying or the method of lifting is specified, shown in (114).

- (114) *pu?*            carry (a load or person) on the back  
        *yək*            lift or carry between both hands  
        *kaŋ kao*        carry on the shoulders  
        *gu*             carry on the shoulder  
        *cah*            drape over the shoulders, carry on or over head  
        *kʰɔp*          carry (putting arms round)  
        *gao*            carry on back  
        *guŋ*            carry on back (e.g. a child)  
        *kləm ~ s.gɔŋ*    carry (on shoulder, in the hands, between two people)

(115) lists a number of more general verbs of carrying or transportation.

- (115) *giaŋ*    carry, bring, transport  
        *ba?*  
        *don*  
        *vɛ?*  
        *tui*  
        *tɔ*  
        *taŋ*     carry (using animals)

#### 4.1.5 Drying

Drying verbs, shown in (116), distinguish between verbs of drying in the sun, by a fire or more generally.





<i>p<sup>h</sup>ɛt</i>	bump into, bang against, touch
<i>riah</i>	push aside, move away, spread out
<i>s.ŋɛʔ</i>	push, shove
<i>t<sup>h</sup>uun ~ t<sup>h</sup>uʔ</i>	push
<i>t<sup>h</sup>eh</i>	knock, bump
<i>t<sup>h</sup>ui</i>	push
<i>t<sup>h</sup>uʔ t<sup>h</sup>iʔ</i>	push and squeeze, jostle
<i>vijŋ</i>	push aside, move away

#### 4.1.7 Spatial deixis

Spatial deixis in Wa allows the conventional distinction common in Southeast Asian languages between here, there and far, as in (118). Beyond this three-way distinction, further vowel alternations allow for a further ‘far distant’ distinction, but these forms are probably not basic to the language and seem to be subject to some dialect variation.

(118) <i>tin</i>	‘here’	<i>teh</i>	‘over there’
<i>tan</i>	‘there’	<i>tiun</i>	‘far away yonder’
<i>ten</i>	‘yonder’		

There is also a set of terms to encode spatial relations in a way which has clearly become well adapted to the geographical context in which Wa is spoken, referring to direction up and down slopes, upstream and downstream and so on, listed in (119).

(119) <i>bləoŋ</i>	slope leading up, seen from bottom
<i>ju</i>	slope leading down, seen from top
<i>ləoŋ ~ loŋ ~ liŋ</i>	upper side, uphill side
<i>seh ~ sɿuh ~ s.sɿh ~ s. sɿuh</i>	lower side, downhill side
<i>sen</i>	further down
<i>pɿaŋ</i>	top, above, on
<i>grum</i>	below, underneath
<i>təoŋ</i>	upstream
<i>cɿ</i>	downstream

l<sup>h</sup>ɛʔ    lih            juɯ,            ku    haok    bləŋ.  
 rain   descend   downhill,    gale   ascend   uphill.  
 ‘Rain goes downhill, a gale goes uphill.’

vujh plak    laŋ mɔh plai,            vai plak    seh mɔh prɛʔ.  
 face direction up   COP rice\_beer, face direction down COP food.  
 ‘Looking up there’s rice beer, looking down, there’s food.’ [An expression describing the abundance of a place or a festive occasion.]

## 4.2 Pragmatics & discourse

### 4.2.1 Final particles

As is the case in other Southeast Asian languages, the rich array of utterance-final particles is often the hardest syntactic category in the lexicon to describe adequately. The selection of phrase-final particles listed in (120), taken from Zhou and Yan (1984) and the Wa Dictionary (Watkins 2013), all await fine-grained analysis, but seem to fall into the broad categories shown.

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| (120) emphasis         | <i>pɔʔ, plɔi, t̥it, ha, hɔi, l<sup>h</sup>aoʔ, k<sup>h</sup>u, k<sup>h</sup>ɣ</i> |
| supposition/suggestion | <i>mai, neh, vai, ʔɔ ~ ʔɔʔ</i>  |
| confirmation           | <i>lɛ</i>   |
| declaration            | <i>ŋɛh</i>  |

- |                              |            |
|------------------------------|------------|
| (121) <i>j<sup>h</sup>ak</i> | <i>hɔi</i> |
| look                         | EMPH       |
| ‘Look!’                      |            |

- |                    |             |            |
|--------------------|-------------|------------|
| (122) <i>kɛt</i>   | <i>sauʔ</i> | <i>ŋɛh</i> |
| very               | hurt        | EMPH       |
| ‘It really hurts!’ |             |            |

Interrogative particles are listed in (123) and tag-question particles in (125).

- |                               |  |
|-------------------------------|--|
| (123) interrogative particles | <i>pɔh</i>                                     |
|                               | <i>lah ~ laih ~ lɛ ~ lɛh ~ l<sup>h</sup>ɛʔ</i> |
|                               | <i>nɛ</i>                                      |
|                               | <i>heh</i>                                     |

- (124) *saŋ hu maiʔ pəh*  
 want go 2.SG Q  
 ‘Do you want to go?’

- (125) tag question particles *hɔʔ, lɛʔ*

- (126) *pɔ̃ ɡɛ maiʔ yu.h.nan hɔʔ*  
 NEG.IMP play 2.SG like.that TAG.Q  
 ‘Don’t play around like that.’

#### 4.2.2 Politeness

Like other northern Mon-Khmer languages, but in contrast to many other South-east Asian languages, Wa pronouns, shown in (52) above, do not obligatorily encode hierarchy, formality or solidarity.

Much like other Southeast Asian languages, people address each other in Wa using forms of address based on birth-order names, kinship terms or relative generation rather than pronouns. Wa does not have an evolved system of honorific or humilific language, but (127) gives examples of respectful terms of address.

- |            |                |                                    |
|------------|----------------|------------------------------------|
| (127)      | gloss          | used to address                    |
| <i>taʔ</i> | grandfather    | older men                          |
| <i>yqʔ</i> | grandmother    | older women                        |
| <i>ʔac</i> | brother-in-law | man of same generation             |
| <i>paʔ</i> | you (2.DU)     | married woman with children        |
| <i>gɛx</i> | you (2.PL)     | mature married woman with children |

## 5 Conclusion/ summary

In conclusion, it can be said that Wa shares a large number of characteristics with other Mainland Southeast Asian languages, in particular Tai-Kadai and Mon-Khmer. There are, on the other hand, a number of typological features that are less typical in a Mainland Southeast Asian context, such as the rich inventory of initial consonants (especially aspirated voiced stops), preferred VSO word order, the placement of auxiliaries (or secondary verbs) in the preverbal position, etc. The influence of Wa’s neighbours, both the culturally dominant Chinese to the north and the Tai/Shan with whom the Wa live in close prox-

imity, is particularly marked. Apart from some lexical borrowing, Burmese has had relatively little influence on Wa.

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## Appendix 1: Summary of linguistic features

### Legend

- +++ the feature is pervasive or used obligatorily in the language
- ++ the feature is normal but selectively distributed in the language
- + the feature is merely possible or observable in the language
- the feature is impossible or absent in the language

	Feature	+++/++/+/-	§ ref. in this chapter
Phonetics	Lexical tone or register	+++	§1.1, p.434
Phonetics	Back unrounded vowels	+++	§1.1.2, p.436
Phonetics	Initial velar nasal	+++	§1.1.1, p.434–35
Phonetics	Implosive consonants	–	–
Phonetics	Sesquisyllabic structures	++	§1.2.1, p.437
Morphology	Tendency towards monosyllabicity	++	§1.2.1, p.437
Morphology	Tendency to form compounds	+++	§2.1, p.440
Morphology	Tendency towards isolating (rather than affixation)	+++	§1.2.1, p.437
Morphology	Psycho-collocations	++	§2.2, p.443
Morphology	Elaborate expressions (e.g. four-syllable or other set patterns)	+++	§2.3, p.444
Morphology	Reduplication generally	+	§2.3.2, p.444
Morphology	Reduplication of nouns	–	–
Morphology	Reduplication of verbs	–	–
Grammar	Use of classifiers	++	§3.1.2, p.449

	Feature	+++/++/+/-	§ ref. in this chapter
Grammar	Classifiers used in counting	+++	§3.1.2, p.449
Grammar	Classifiers used with demonstratives	++	§3.1.1, p.448
Grammar	Adjectival verbs	+++	not discussed explicitly
Grammar	Grammatical number	+	not discussed explicitly
Grammar	Inflection of verbs	-	§3.2.1, p.450
Grammar	Use of tense/aspect markers	++	§3.2.1, p.450
Grammar	Use of verb plural markers	-	-
Grammar	Grammaticalization of GET/OBTAIN (potential mod. resultative/perfect aspect)	+++	§3.2.2.b, p.452
Grammar	Grammaticalization of PUT, SET (completed/resultative aspect)	+	§3.2.2.f, p.454
Grammar	Grammaticalization of GIVE (causative, benefactive; preposition)	+	§3.2.2.d, p.453
Grammar	Grammaticalization of FINISH (perfective/ complete aspect; conjunction/temporal subordinator)	-	§3.2.1, p.450, see also §3.2.4, p.457
Grammar	Grammaticalization of directional verbs e.g. GO / COME (allative, venitive)	-	-
Grammar	Grammaticalization of SEE, WATCH (temptative)	++	§3.2.2.c, p.452
Grammar	Grammaticalization of STAY, REMAIN (progressive <u>and</u> continuous, durative aspects)	+++	§3.2.2.e, p.454
Grammar	Serial verb constructions	++	§3.2.3, p.456
Syntax	Verb precedes object (VO)	+	§3.3, p.458
Syntax	Auxiliary precedes verb	+	§3.2.2, p.451
Syntax	Preposition preceds noun	+	§3.2.2.g, p.454
Syntax	Noun precedes adjective	+++	§3.1.1, p.448
Syntax	Noun preceds demonstrative	+++	§3.1.1, p.448
Syntax	Noun precedes genitive		§3.1.1, p.448
Syntax	Noun precedes relative clause	+++	§3.1.1, p.448
Syntax	Use of topic-comment structures	++	§3.3, p.458–59

	Feature	+++/++/+/-	§ ref. in this chapter
Syntax	Ellipsis of arguments known from context	++	§3.3.1, p.460
Lexical semantics	Specific terms for forms of rice	+++	§4.1.1, p.460
Pragmatics	Use of utterance-final pragmatic particles	+++	§4.2.1, p.466
Pragmatics	Encoding of politeness	-	§4.2.2, p.467
Pragmatics	Encoding of honorifics	-	-

## Appendix 2: Text interlinearized

The following passage in Wa is taken from Wang and Chen (1993).

*du*    *ʔot*    *grɔŋ*    *koi*  
 place live situation exist  
 ‘dwellings and living conditions’

*hak.tɛʔ*    *nɛʔ*    *yaun*    *pa.rɔuk*,    *jiɛt*    *ʔot*    *kah*    *pjaŋ*    *gɔŋ*,    *ŋɔc*  
 land house village Wa, really be.at PREP top mountain, fragrant

*gɔŋ*    *du*    *s.dɔm*  
 mountain place level  
 ‘Villages in the Wa lands are located in the mountains, on a level place high up in the mountains.’

*yam*    *jauh*    *pui*    *tiʔ*    *paŋ*    *lah*    *blaih*    *yaun*  
 time start people CONJ grow street expand village  
 ‘When people found a village’

*pui*    *kɔn*    *pɪh*    *mɔc*    *yuh*    *klɔŋ*    *s.vɔi*  
 people children pray spirit make river before  
 ‘first of all the people pray to the river spirit’

*tɔm*    *mɔc*    *m<sup>h</sup>ɔm*,    *pui*    *tɔm*    *sum*    *nɛʔ*    *saŋ*    *yaun*.  
 advise spirit good, people then build house build village  
 ‘if the spirit gives good signs, people then put up their houses and build the village.’



*nɛʔ mɔc bɿaŋ kaŋ ʔot pɿaŋ yaʊŋ plak dɔm*  
 house spirit place head be.at on village side right  
 ‘The spirit’s tree (home) is at the top of the village on the right-hand side.’

*pɿi taŋ sɔk du ʔot pak ɣaŋ nɛʔ yaʊŋ tiʔ.*  
 people oneself seek place be.at open.up plot house village REFL  
 ‘People individually choose the plot to build their houses on.’

*ɣam diʔ, pɿi kɔn taŋ ɣaʰ mu lɯk ru, tiʔ ru*  
 time past, people child oneself allocate divide split clan, one clan

*ʔot tiʔ baoh.*  
 be.at one area

‘In the past, people were allocated a plot according to their clan, each clan in a separate area.’

*hak.tɛʔ hɔc pak pɿi, pɿi ciʔ tiʔ sɿaʊ; ʔaŋ ciʔ tiʔ cɔih,*  
 land PERF open.up people, people can CONJ use, not can CONJ sell  
 ‘Once people have developed the land, they can make use of it but cannot sell it.’

*sin pɿi lxi saŋ sum nɛʔ kah hak.tɛʔ s.buŋ pɿaʊʔ.tiʔ*  
 if people then want put.up house PREP land garden RECIP  
 ‘If people then want to erect a house on someone else’s land or garden’

*pɿi kɔn vɛʔ lon kɿh, ɣɛ cʰaʔ, blai eeb*  
 people child take lump salt, packet tea, liquor rice  
 ‘they take a block of salt, a packet of tea and some rice wine’

*hu cʰɔk.chɿŋ cau nɛʔ vɿi, lɔm.laʊ mai pɿaʊʔ.tiʔ,*  
 go ask master house before, discuss with RECIP  
 ‘and go to ask the head of the household first. They discuss with one another,’

*tɔm cau nɛʔ cu pɿi tɔm tɿuk pɔn sum nɛʔ kah.*  
 then master house allow person then only can put.up house PREP.  
 ‘and only then may the person build the house there.’

*bun pa.rauk, ʔaŋ pɿi saʔ tʰiaŋ ɣaŋ nɛʔ,*  
 tradition Wa, NEG person ever argue plot house,  
 ‘In Wa tradition, people never argue over house plots,’

*ca hɔc ciak pui saŋ ʔot gɯaŋ nɛʔ du ɱɔʔ,*  
 if PERF choose person want be.at plot house place what  
 ‘once someone has decided where he wishes to locate his house,’

*ca hɔc lɔm.lau pui nɔh mai pɔuʔ tiʔ pui mɔh cu pui nɔh,*  
 if PERF discuss person 3SG with RECIP person is allow person 3SG  
 ‘once he has discussed it with others, people will allow him to do it.’

*sin cɔ̄ dauʔ s.buɱ pui, sin plauʔ to s.buɱ,*  
 if connect place garden person, if destroy body garden,  
 ‘If it adjoins someone else’s garden and damages the structure of their garden,’

*plauʔ khauʔ pliʔ paŋ muah pui,*  
 destroy tree fruit tree banana person,  
 ‘and harms their crops or trees,’

*pui duɪh p<sup>h</sup>xiʔ plɪt pɔuʔ cao ʔan ʔih nɛ,*  
 person return compensate compensate fellow master that use only  
 ‘then that person pays back to the owner in compensation only the amount used up.’

*ʔaŋ pui doh kɛh s.mah.s.mɔ̄ koi kah.*  
 NEG person at.all bicker envy PREP  
 ‘People don’t argue or feel resentment over it.’

*nɛʔ pa.rauʔ sum tiʔ hɔt kah yuɪ gɔŋ,*  
 house Wa build CONJ follow PREP make mountain  
 ‘Wa houses are built to suit the shape of the mountains’

*kɔ̄ plak lauŋ hoc plak seh, jiat dia tiʔ hɔt pɔuʔ,*  
 start side high come side low just lined.up CONJ follow RECIP  
 ‘from high up to low down, lined up next to one another’

*kok.buan pui nɔh du s.ɲai jiat s.du m<sup>h</sup>ɔm nɛ.*  
 gaze.distance person 3SG place far just equal good very  
 ‘If one looks at them from a distance they look very neat and tidy.’

*cɣ nɛʔ ʔot pa.rauʔ koi ra cɣ sum tiʔ,*  
 type house live Wa have two type build REFL,  
 ‘The are two types of building style of Wa houses.’

*mɔ̌h nɛʔ lʰauŋ mai nɛʔ tɛʔ.*  
 COP house high and house earth  
 ‘which are “tall houses” and “earth houses”.’

*nɛʔ lʰauŋ ʔot pa.rɔ̌uk, dɛʔ ʔɔm nɛʔ lʰauŋ ʔot siam nan.*  
 house tall live Wa, near similar house tall live Tai like.that  
 ‘The tall houses which the Wa live closely resemble the tall houses inhabited by the Tai.’

*plak p̄iəŋ mɔ̌h du ʔot p̄i,*  
 side up COP place live person  
 ‘The people live upstairs’

*plak gruɔ̌m ɕiʔ tiʔ plac l̄ik soʔ ʔia sim, mɔ̌i Krak*  
 side down can CONJ contain pig dog chicken bird, cattle, buffalo,

*brɛ kʰɔ̌ŋ,*  
 animals keep  
 ‘while downstairs they can keep pigs, dogs, chickens, birds, cattle, buffalo and livestock.’

*jiʔ tiʔ gruʔ khiʔ kʰauʔ kah.*  
 can CONJ pile.up wood tree PREP  
 ‘and they can store firewood.’

*sum nɛʔ mɔ̌h s̄iau p̄i khauʔ, ʔoʔ, plɔ̌ŋ,*  
 build house cop use person wood, bamboo, thatch,  
 ‘To build their houses, people use wood, bamboo, thatch,

*mauʔ d̄ɔ̌.rɔ̌n mai mauʔ mʰa ʔin kiʔ.*  
 rope *Tripterygium.wilfordii* and rope bamboo.strip  
 ‘vine-rope and bamboo binding strips.’