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Comparatives of Inequality in Southern Min: a Study in Diachronic Change from 15th to 21st Centuries

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ABSTRACT Our aim in this article is to evaluate Southern Min comparative constructions of inequality in terms of the evolution of different structural types from 15th to 21st centuries. The study is based on data observed in local operas and missionary texts, written mainly in Southern Min. An examination of the five extant versions of the *Lì Jìng Jì* 荔鏡記 and the *Lì Zhī Jì* 荔枝記, in addition to seven other local operas reveals that there have been three main comparative structures in use in Southern Min since the 16th century: (i) *Zero-marked A-VP-B*; (ii) *Adverbial A-khah⁴ 較-VP-B*, and (iii) *Surpass A-VP-ke³ 過 -B*, in which A and B represent the two terms of comparison. In contemporary Southern Min dialects such as Taiwanese, however, the use of the *Surpass* comparative schema has waned, while, interestingly, a new hybrid structure combining the Northern Sinitic *Compare* comparative with *pi²* 比 and the *Adverbial* structure can be commonly found – one that is not attested at all in the earlier texts: (v) *Hybridized A-pi² 比-B-khah⁴ 較 -VP*. We discuss the diachronic changes in structural preferences in detail as well as the possible motivations behind these.

Keywords: Southern Min, Diachronic syntax, Comparatives of inequality, *Surpass* verbs, Hybridization, Sinitic

1. Introduction

A comparative construction involves a grading process: two objects are positioned along a scale or continuum with respect to a certain property. One object or person can have either *more*, *less* or an *equal* degree of the given dimension or quality when judged against a second object or person. There are consequently comparatives of inequality (including comparatives of superiority and comparatives of inferiority) and comparatives of equality. Examples:

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- (1) Carla is taller than Nicolas (inequality/superiority subtype)
- (2) Carla is less tall than Nicolas (inequality/inferiority subtype)
- (3) Carla is as tall as Nicolas (equality)

We will single out the comparative of inequality (*chàbǐjù* 差比句 in Chinese) as our target in this research on the diachronic evolution of the construction in Southern Min. In other words, we will not deal with comparatives of equality (known as either *píngbǐjù* 平比句 or *děngbǐjù* 等比句 in Chinese). As there are no comparatives of inferiority involving a comparative morpheme like the English ‘less ADJ than’ or the French ‘moins ADJ que’, either in Standard Mandarin or in Southern Min, this means that our study will concentrate on comparatives of inequality for the superiority subtype.²

Chappell and Peyraube (2011, 2015) claim that synchronically two main comparative construction types predominate in Sinitic languages:

Type I: *Compare* type – dependent marked: NP_A-CM-NP_B-Verb

Type II: *Surpass* type – head marked: NP_A-Verb-CM-NP_B

[where CM=comparative marker; NP_A=comparee; NP_B=NP acting as standard; Verb=adjective or verb which codes the dimension of the comparison].

Examples and a brief description for each of these two types follow:

Type I: Standard Mandarin

- (4) 她 比 我 高
 tā bǐ wǒ gāo
 3SG CM 1SG tall
 ‘She is taller than me’.

The preposition *bǐ* 比 has its origin in a verb ‘to compare’, used in serial verb constructions from the period of Early Medieval Chinese (3rd-4th c. AD). See Peyraube 1990. Dependent-marking structures like Type I are often considered to represent the most prototypical of all comparative constructions (Dixon 2012:343ff, Heine 1997:110).

Type II: Hong Kong Cantonese

² To express a comparison of inferiority, Chinese (Mandarin as well as Southern Min) relies on negation of the comparative of superiority.

- (5) 佢 高 過 我
 k^hø¹³ kou⁵⁵ ku⁵³ ŋ¹³
 3SG tall CM 1SG
 ‘She is taller than me’.

The second structural Type II is commonly represented as the *Surpass* schema in Sinitic languages because the comparative marker has its origin in a verb meaning ‘surpass’ or ‘exceed’. It is also called the ‘Action’ schema in Heine 1997:112 due to its transitivity: ‘*she tall surpasses me*’.

Nevertheless, cross-linguistic research on the major comparative strategies and cognitive schemata points to the existence of more than just these two types. See the six different structures distinguished by Stassen (1985, 2005, 2011) and the eight cognitive schemata identified by Heine (1997), which are compared in Chappell and Peyraube 2015. Chappell (2015) observes that at least seven of these recognized types can be identified for Sinitic languages.

Our analysis will investigate four syntactic structures in Southern Min for these comparatives of inequality which are associated in their turn with five cognitive schemata, as follows, with A representing the comparee and B, the standard of comparison:

Table 2.1 Comparatives in Early Southern Min

SYNTACTIC STRUCTURE	COGNITIVE SCHEMA
Type I: A - CM 比 - B - Verb	<i>Compare</i> comparative
Type II (a): A - Verb - CM 過 - B	<i>Surpass</i> comparative
Type II (b _{i/ii}): A - Verb - CM 如/似 - B	<i>Surpass-Similarity</i> comparative
Type III: A - Verb - B	<i>Zero-marked</i> comparative
Type IV: A - CM 較 - Verb - B	<i>Adverbial</i> comparative

We have divided Type II into two subtypes, depending on whether the postverbal marker is *guò* 過 or *rú* 如/*sì* 似, which belong to two different cognitive schemata, identified as *Surpass* and *Similarity* in Heine 1997. Finally, in a brief examination in §4 of the synchronic situation, we will point out which of the comparative structures in Table 2.1 are still used in contemporary Southern Min and also consider a **newly arisen** hybridized comparative form which combines Type I with Type IV, i.e. Type V.

Table 2.2 A new comparative in contemporary Southern Min

Type V: A - CM _(i) 比 - B - CM _(ii) 較 - Verb	<i>Hybridized</i> comparative
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Note that the labels, A=NP_A and B=NP_B, representing respectively the ‘comparée’ and the ‘standard’ of the comparison, are not necessarily NPs in Chinese languages. They may be pronouns, demonstratives, or even VPs or clauses. Furthermore, in our survey of all these constructions in the given texts, we did not count any examples where either the comparée (A) or the standard of the comparison (B) were missing from the immediate context, even if mentioned in the preceding text, and certainly not, if they were implicit.

Type I is dependent-marking, Types II and IV are head-marking, whereas Type III has no marking whatsoever and thus reveals itself to be a rather unusual comparative structure. Type V will be shown to combine both head-marking and dependent-marking strategies.

Examples of these four types (and five schemata) found in Early Southern Min are given next while the entire corpus may be consulted in the appendices:³

Type I: *Compare* comparative: A+比+B+Verb

(6) 阮 不 比 王魁 負心 (29.191 Jiājìng 嘉靖)

gun² m⁷ pi² ong⁵khue¹ hu⁷sim¹

1SG NEG CM Wang.Kui unfaithful

‘I am not as unfaithful as Wang Kui’.⁴

Type II (a): *Surpass* comparative: A+Verb+過+B

(7) 你 只 計 賽 過 孫 吳 (23.054 Jiājìng 嘉靖)

li² tsit⁸ ke³ sai³ ke³ sun¹ ngo⁵

2SG DEM strategy be.better CM Sun.Tzu Wu.Qi

‘Your strategy is better than those of Sun Tzu or Wu Qi’.

Type II (b/i): *Surpass-Similarity* comparative: A+Verb+如/似+B

(8) 一 場 姻愛 勝 如 春夢 (27.019 Wànli 萬曆)

tsit⁸ tiunn⁵ ian¹ai³ seng³ ji⁵ tshun¹bang⁷

one CLF love.affair be.better CM romantic.dream

‘A love affair is better than a romantic dream’.

Type III: *Zero-marked* comparative: A+Verb+B

(9) 人 說 一 某(么) 強 十 被, 十 被 甲

³ For the corpus of Early Southern Min, we simply provide the figures for each type of comparative structure, as found across the thirteen texts. Necessarily, there is repetition of examples for the five texts based on the *Romance of the Litchi* or the popular story of Chen San and Wu Niang. We do not aim to carry out a statistical analysis of the corpus examples but rather are interested in patterns of diachronic change reflected in these five texts which span three centuries.

⁴ This is not a comparative of inequality but a negation of a comparative of equality.

lang⁵ sueh⁴ tsit⁸ bo² kiong⁵ tsap⁸ phe⁷ tsap⁸ phe⁷ kah⁴
 people say one wife better.than ten quilts ten quilts cover

也 寒 (5.047 Jiājìng 嘉靖)

a⁷ han⁵

still cold

‘People say having a wife is better than ten quilts, ten quilts cover you but you’re still cold’.⁵

Type IV : *Adverbial comparative*: A+可+Verb+B

(10) 官人 許 前頭 一 陣 娘仔， 生得 句 可
 kuann¹lang⁵ hi² tseng⁵thau⁵ tsit⁸ tin⁷ niu⁵a² sen¹tit⁴ koh⁴ khah⁴
 gentlemen DEM front one group woman be.born.to even CM

親淺 伊 (8.069 Jiājìng 嘉靖)

tshin¹tshian² i¹

beautiful 3SG

‘There are beautiful women in front of the gentleman who are even more beautiful than her’.

The Type III *Zero-marked* comparative, while clearly pan-Sinitic in nature, is a structure apparently not found in other languages of the world (see Haspelmath and the Comparative Constructions Consortium 2013), whereas Type IV is rare not only in Sinitic but also cross-linguistically (Chappell 2015). While giving brief descriptions of all four types (and five cognitive schemata) in Southern Min, we will concentrate our study on the two subtypes of *Surpass*, illustrated in (7) and (8) since they turn out to be common comparative construction types in Early Southern Min, as well as the *Adverbial* type in (10) in order to discuss their diachronic development.

2. The diachronic corpus for Early Southern Min

We have consulted a large corpus of works on Early Southern Min, including principally the operas known under the titles of both *Lì Jìng Jì* 荔鏡記 and *Lì Zhī Jì* 荔枝記 (see the English translations below) for which five extant versions are in existence spanning three centuries (see Table 2.3 below). We have also made use of a late 16th century religious text, the *Doctrina Christiana* and a 1620-1621 sketch grammar of Southern Min written in Spanish, in addition to seven other local operas (see Tables 2.3 and 2.4 below).

The relevant information on the corpus is presented below, while details on these

⁵ In this Type III, the VP has more than often the meaning of ‘be better (than)’. See §3.3.

sources including available reprints are to be found in the reference list at the end:

I. The folk operas of the *Lì Jìng Jì* 荔鏡記 and the *Lìzhī Jì* 荔枝記 in Chinese character text:

1. *Lì Jìng Jì* 荔鏡記 (*The romance of the mirror and the litchi*) 1566 Jiājìng 嘉靖 edition but presumably written under the Yuan dynasty of 14th century or at the latest in the beginning of the Ming (14th – 15th c.). Supposedly written in both Cháozhōu and Quánzhōu dialects.
2. *Lì Zhī Jì* 荔枝記 (*The romance of the litchi*) 1581 Wànlì 萬曆 edition. Written in the Cháozhōu dialect.
3. *Lì Zhī Jì* 荔枝記 (*The romance of the litchi*). 1651 Shùnzhi 順治 edition. Written in both the Cháozhōu and Quánzhōu dialects.
4. *Lì Zhī Jì* 荔枝記 (*The romance of the litchi*). 1831 Dàoguāng 道光 edition. Written in both the Cháozhōu and Quánzhōu dialects.
5. *Lì Zhī Jì* 荔枝記 (*The romance of the litchi*). 1884 Guāngxù 光緒 edition. Written in both Cháozhōu and Quánzhōu dialects.

II. Other local operas in Southern Min

6. *Jīn huā nǚ* 金花女 (*Lady Jinhua*) (1572-1620). Written in the Cháozhōu dialect.
7. *Sū Liuniáng* 蘇六娘 (*Dame Su Liuniang*) (1572-1620). Written in the Cháozhōu dialect.
8. *Yù Yán Lì Jīn* 鉦妍麗錦 (1572-1620) (*Elegant brocades of precious beauty*).
9. *Bǎi Huā Sàì Jīn* 百花賽錦 (1572-1620) (*Exquisite brocades of a hundred flowers*).
10. *Yáng Guǎn Gē* 楊管歌 (1572-1620) (*Yangguan music*).
11. *Mǎn Tiān Chūn* 滿天春 (1604) (*All-embracing spring*).
12. *Tóngchuāng Qínshūjì* 同窗琴書記 (1782) (*The Romance of the lute and the classmates*). Written in the Quánzhōu dialect.

III. Spanish missionary materials

13. *Doctrina Christiana en letra y lengua china* (*The Christian doctrine in the alphabet and language of China*), blockprinted, ca.1597-1605, Manila.⁶
14. *Arte de la lengua Chiō Chiu* (*Grammar of the Chiō Chiu language*), 1620-1621, manuscript.⁷

2.1. The data

In the five extant versions of the *Lì Jìng Jì* 荔鏡記 and its associated text, the *Lì Zhī Jì* 荔枝記, we find 126 instances of the four types of comparative constructions, noting that the only four examples of Type I with *bǐ* 比 occur in negated sentences, which we discuss next.

Table 2.3 Four types of comparative structures in the folk operas *Lì Jìng Jì* 荔鏡記 and *Lì Zhī Jì* 荔枝記

Schema Text	Type I	Type II			Type III	Type IV	Total
	A+比+B+ Verb	II (a) A+Verb+過 +B	II (b _i) A+Verb+如 +B	II (b _{ii}) A+Verb+似 +B	A+Verb+B	A+可+Verb +B	
	<i>Compare</i>	<i>Surpass</i>	<i>Surpass-Similarity</i>		<i>Zero-marked</i>	<i>Adverbial</i>	
嘉靖 (1566)	負心 hu ⁷ sim ¹ (1)	強 kiong ⁵ (2) 賽 sai ³ (3) 澀 siap ⁴ (1)	短 tuan ² (1) 緊 kin ² (1) 甜 tinn ¹ (1) 悶 bun ⁷ (3) 大 tua ⁷ (1) 重 tang ⁷ (2)	薄 pok ⁸ (1) 深 tshim ¹ (1) 忙 bang ⁵ (1)	強 kiong ⁵ (4) 勝 seng ³ (1) 弱 jiok ⁸ (1) 賽 sai ³ (3)	強 kiong ⁵ (2) 重 tang ⁷ (1) 親 淺 tshin ¹ tshian ² (1)	

⁶ Different copies of the *Doctrina Christiana* are held at the Vatican Library and at the British Library. The translation of the Spanish version of the *Doctrina Christiana* into a Min dialect in character form is attributed by van der Loon (1966) to Dominican missionaries in the Philippines, including Fathers Juan Cobo (ca. 1592) and Miguel Benavides (1550-1605), with the aid of unknown Chinese collaborators. We make use of the reproduction by van der Loon (1966) which collates the character text with two romanized versions. The page numbers for all examples from this document refer to this edition. The *Doctrina Christiana* was intended for use in missionary work to propagate the Christian faith to the Chinese community in Manila and comprises prayers, articles of faith, the Ten Commandments and the catechism among other items. See also Chappell and Peyraube 2014.

⁷ This is a handwritten manuscript held in different versions at both the University of Barcelona library and the British Library. The date is given as: 萬曆四十八年 *Wàn Lì sìshíbā nián* ‘the forty-eighth year of the reign of the Emperor Wan Li, which is 1620 or 1621 when converted to the Gregorian calendar. We thank Professor Mei Tsu-Lin of Cornell University for bringing this to our attention. There are at least two versions of the *Arte* in existence. Only the University of Barcelona version includes this page and not the British Library copy. Note that we have not counted examples from the *Arte* in the tables for the simple reason that it is not a prose text but a grammar, just like Piñol y Andreu’s (1928) grammar.

			遠 hng ⁷ (2)				
	1	6	11	3	9	4	34
萬曆 (1581)		強 kiong ⁵ (2) 賽 sai ³ (1) 澀 siap ⁴ (1)	勝 seng ³ (1) 富 hu ³ (2) 光 kong ¹ (1) 緊 kin ² (1) 冷 leng ² (2) 大 tua ⁷ (3) 悶 bun ⁷ (1)	勝 seng ³ (1)	強 kiong ⁵ (5) 賽 sai ³ (1) 出 tshut ⁴ (1) 超 tshiau ¹ (1)		
	0	4	11	1	8	0	24
順治 (1651)	負心 hu ⁷ sim ¹ (1)	強 kiong ⁵ (2) 勝 seng ³ (1) 賽 sai ³ (2)	深 tshim ¹ (2) 重 tang ⁷ (1)		強 kiong ⁵ (3) 賽 sai ³ (2)	強 kiong ⁵ (6) 重 tang ⁷ (1)	
	1	5	3	0	5	7	21
道光 (1831)	負心 hu ⁷ sim ¹ (1)	強 kiong ⁵ (2) 賽 sai ³ (1) 勝 seng ³ (1)	深 tshim ¹ (2) 大 tua ⁷ (2) 緊 kin ² (1) 重 tang ⁷ (1)		強 kiong ⁵ (2) 賽 sai ³ (2) 勝 seng ³ (1) 出 tshut ⁴ (1) 超 tshiau ¹ (1)	強 kiong ⁵ (4) 重 tang ⁷ (1)	
	1	4	6	0	7	5	23
光緒 (1884)	負心 hu ⁷ sim ¹ (1)	強 kiong ⁵ (3) 勝 seng ³ (1) 賽 sai ³ (1)	深 tshim ¹ (2) 大 tua ⁷ (2) 緊 kin ² (1) 重 tang ⁷ (1)		強 kiong ⁵ (2) 賽 sai ³ (2) 出 tshut ⁴ (1) 超 tshiau ¹ (1) 勝 seng ³ (1)	重 tang ⁷ (1) 強 kiong ⁵ (4)	
	1	5	6	0	7	5	24
Total	4	24	37	4	36	21	126

In another seven local operas recounting a different set of stories from the *Lì Jīng Jì*, there is a total of 80 comparatives, distributed in the following manner:

Table 2.4: The four comparative structures in seven local operas from the Ming and the Qing periods

Schema Text	Type I	Type II			Type III	Type IV	Total
	A+比 +B+ Verb	II (a) A+ Verb + 過 +B	II (b _i) A+Verb+ 如+B	II (b _{ii}) A+Verb+ 似+B	A+Verb+B	A+可+ Verb +B	
	<i>Compare</i>	<i>Surpass</i>	<i>Surpass-Similarity</i>		<i>Zero-marked</i>	<i>Adverbial</i>	
滿天春 1604 <i>Mǎn Tiān Chūn</i>		強 kiong ⁵ (6) 賽 sai ³ (5) 勝 seng ³ (1)	寬 khuann ¹ (1) 大 tua ⁷ (1) 怒 no ⁻⁷ (1) 准(幼)iu ³ (1) 嚴 giam ⁵ (1) 痛 thong ³ (1) 亂 loan ⁷ (2) 焦悴 tsiau ⁵ tsui ⁷ (1) 重 tang ⁷ (1) 緊 kin ² (1)		賽 sai ³ (2) 重 tang ⁷ (1) 超 tshiau ¹ (1) 勝 seng ³ (1)		
	0	12	11	0	5	0	28
金花女 (明 萬曆) 1572-1620 <i>Jīn huā nǚ</i>		勝 seng ³ (1) 賽 sai ³ (1) 高 kuan ⁵ (1)	幼 iu ³ (1) 勝 seng ³ (1) 冷 leng ² (2) 細 se ³ (1) 薄 pok ⁸ (1)		強 kiong ⁵ (1)		
	0	3	6	0	1	0	10
鈺妍麗錦 1572-1620 <i>Yù Yán Lì Jīn</i>		賽 sai ³ (1)	紛紛 hun ¹ hun ¹ (1) 重 tang ⁷ (1) 疼 thiann ³ (1) 深 tshim ¹ (1) 遠 hng ⁷ (1)				
	0	1	5	0	0	0	6
百花賽錦 1572-1620 <i>Bǎi Huā Sài Jīn</i>		賽 sai ³ (1)	疼 thiann ³ (1) 深 tshim ¹ (1) 遠 hng ⁷ (2) 緊 kin ² (1)		賽 sai ³ (1)		
	0	1	5	0	1	0	7

楊管歌 1572-1620 <i>Yáng Guǎn Gē</i>					強 kiong ⁵ (1) 重 tang ⁷ (1)		
	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
蘇六娘 (明 萬曆) 1572-1620 <i>Sū Lùniáng</i>		勝 seng ³ (2)	大 tua ⁷ (1) 冷 leng ² (2) 細 se ³ (1) 幼 iu ³ (1) 重 tang ⁷ (1) 急 kip ⁴ (2)				
	0	2	8	0	0	0	10
同窗琴書記 (清乾隆) 1782 <i>Tóng chuāng qín shū jì</i>		賽 sai ³ (9) 強 kiong ⁵ (1)	大 tua ⁷ (1) 深 tshim ¹ (2) 緊 kin ² (1) 急 kip ⁴ (2)		賽 sai ³ (1)		
	0	10	6	0	1	0	17
Total	0	29	41	0	10	0	80

Finally, the comparative of inequality was investigated in the religious text, the *Doctrina Christiana*.

Table 2.5 The four comparative structures in the *Doctrina Christiana* (1607)

Schema	Type I	Type II			Type III	Type IV	
	A+比+B+ Verb	II (a) A+ Verb + 過+B	II (b _i) A+Verb+如 +B	II (b _{ii}) A+Verb+ 似+B	A+Verb+B	A+可 +Verb +B	
	<i>Compare</i>	<i>Surpass</i>	<i>Surpass-Similarity</i>		<i>Zero-marked</i>	<i>Adverbial</i>	
	0	勝 seng ³ (6)	0	0	0	0	

Over all thirteen texts (12 operas and the *Doctrina Christiana*), there were 212 examples of the four different structural types of comparatives: Type I, *Compare*, had just 4 examples (which is actually the same example in four different versions) but these were all negated (§ 3.1); Type II was in fact the most numerous with 141 examples, 59 belonging to the *Surpass* cognitive schema with *guò* 過 and 82 belonging to the *Surpass-Similarity* subtype with *rú* 如 or *sì* 似 (§ 3.2). Type III, *Zero-marked*, had 46 examples (§ 3.3) and Type IV, *Adverbial*, had just 21 examples (§ 3.4).

In the next section, we discuss each of the comparative structures one-by-one.

3. A diachronic evaluation of the historical data for the four comparative structures

3.1 Type I: Dependent-marking-Compare comparative:

A + 比 + B + Verb (4/212)

The status of the Type I construction, A+比+B+Verb, proves to be highly marginal, as although there are 174 examples of sentences in our corpus of thirteen Early Southern Min texts containing pi^2 比 (=Mandarin *bǐ*), the majority prove to be examples of its lexical use as a full verb or as a noun, if not, of some other more minor functions, including its function as a preposition. Used as a verb, it has the meanings of ‘to compare with/to’ or ‘to give an example’ (87/174), as a noun including use in nominal expressions (63/174) and as a preposition ‘with’ or ‘according to’ (16/174) in addition to the four examples (4/174) where it is used as a comparative marker and three examples (3/174) that were excluded (see Tables 2.6 and 2.7 in Appendix IV for more details). Examples of these main uses are provided below:

(i) pi^2 continues its use in Southern Min as a full lexical verb meaning ‘to compare’, as it did in Medieval Chinese (3rd-12th centuries):

- (11) 林大 卜 比 陳三， 林大 不 值 一 文錢...
(22.052 Jiājìng 嘉靖)
lim⁵tai⁷ beh⁴ pi² tan⁵sann¹ lim⁵tai⁷ m⁷ tat⁸ tsit⁸ bun⁵tsinn⁵
Lim.Tai want compare Tan.Sann Lim.Tai NEG worth one penny
‘(If one) wants compare Lim Tai with Tan Sann, Lim Tai is not worth a penny...’

(ii) Another lexical use of pi^2 is found in the form of a compound, bu^5pi^2 無比 ‘incomparable’, serving as an adjective:

- (12) 富 貴 是 無比 (4.016 Jiājìng 嘉靖)
hu³ kui³ si⁷ bu⁵pi²
wealthy noble COP incomparable
‘To be wealthy and noble cannot be surpassed’.

The only examples of pi^2 akin to a comparative marker of inequality are just the four examples where it co-occurs with a verb expressing a quality, hu^7sim^1 負心 ‘unfaithful’. Significantly, all these are found in the identical utterance and context in

four of the five different versions of the *Lì Jìng Jì* 荔鏡記 and the *Lì Zhī Jì* 荔枝記 and, moreover, one that is negated by m^7 不. We reproduce the sole *Daoguang* example (see also example (6) above from the *Jiajing* version).

- (13) 我 不 比 王魁 負心 (31.032 Dàoguāng 道光)
 gua² m⁷ pi² ong⁵khue¹ hu⁷sim¹
 1SG NEG CM Wang.Kui unfaithful
 ‘I am not as unfaithful as Wang Kui’.

There are no examples of pi^2 as a comparative marker found in any of the other seven operas, not to mention in the Spanish grammar, the *Arte*, nor in the *Doctrina Christiana*.⁸

Evidently, our conclusion is that there is no real use of pi^2 for expressing a comparative of inequality of Type I in Early Southern Min.⁹ Hence, it is only in combination with a negative adverb that we find pi^2 forming a comparative of inferiority ‘less than’. Since there are only four examples of this use across our thirteen main texts which span three centuries, it necessarily has to be considered an extremely marginal use.

In fact, there is nothing surprising about this. The comparative structure with pi^2 began to appear sporadically during the Tang dynasty (618—907) (there are, for example, only twelve occurrences in the Tang poems, and only one of these is an example of a real comparative marker, see §3.2.1 below). It only became an established form in the Chinese language during the Qing period (1644—1911). In fact, we have to wait until the very end of the Ming dynasty for Type I to be seen in use as much as Type II (b_i/ii) *Surpass-Similarity* with *rú* 如 or *sì* 似, as in the vernacular novels of Feng Menglong (1574-1645). The *Surpass-Similarity* comparatives represent the predominant structure during the Tang, Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties. See Zhang 2004a and Chappell and Peyraube 2015.

3.2 Type II: Head-marking comparatives: A + Verb + CM + B (141/212)

The second type of comparative in which the verb is modified by a postposed comparative marker, has been divided into two subtypes, according to the cognitive schema involved. These are the *Surpass* and the *Surpass-Similarity* comparatives.

⁸ There is in fact only one example in the *Doctrina Christiana*: 無有可比 (*no romanization*) used to translate the Spanish original *sin comparación* ‘without comparison’ (Section 23a, van der Loon 1966:175).

⁹ Lien (1999) and Yue-Hashimoto (1999) have both also observed its absence as a comparative marker for different set of sample texts. The adoption of this comparative form is one of the main topics in Wu 2012 who, relying on Chen 2010, asserts that in works from the late 19th century in the Fuzhou dialect, examples of pi^2 are very rare (there is in fact only one occurrence across two texts).

3.2.1 Type II (a): Head-marking: **The Surpass Comparative: A + Verb + CM + B** (59/141)

Type II (a) with the *Surpass* schema is typically coded by *ke*³ 過 in the Early Southern Min texts (= *guò* in Standard Mandarin) and represents a common comparative marker that is distributed across Central and Southern Sinitic languages today (see Li 2003). Although there is a large number of comparative examples in our corpus which use the marker *ke*³ 過 (59/212), the great majority (56/59) co-occur with three main verbs: *kiong*⁵ 強 ‘be better than’ (18 occurrences) < ‘be strong’, *seng*³ 勝 ‘win’, ‘vanquish’ (13), *sai*³ 賽 ‘compete’ (25), as in the following examples.

- (14) 你 只 計 賽 過 孫 吳 (23.054 Jiājìng 嘉靖)
li² tsit⁸ ke³ sai³ ke³ sun¹ ngo⁵
2SG DEM strategy be.better CM Sun.Tzu Wu.Qi.
‘Your strategy is better than those of Sun Tzu or Wu Qi’.

- (15) 繼祖承宗 勝 過 求 名
(14.013 Jīn huā nǚ 金花女)
ke³tso²seng⁵tsong¹ seng³ ke³ kiu⁵ beng⁵
succeed.ancestor.succeed.ancestor be.better CM seek renown
‘It’s better to have descendants than to seek renown’.

- (16) 正是 腹 飢 添 一 斗， 強 過
tsiann³si⁷ pak⁴ ki¹ thinn¹ tsit⁴ tau² kiong⁵ ke³
indeed stomach hungry add one MW be.better CM
十 年 糧 糧 (30 Mǎn Tiān Chūn 滿天春)
tsap⁸ ni⁵ niu⁵si⁸
ten year food
‘It is said that giving a *dou* (6 kilos) of grains when one is hungry, is better than ten years of food’.

There are only three examples with a main verb other than these *surpass*-class verbs. These include *siap*⁴ 澀 ‘be puckery, astringent’ (2) and *kuan*⁵ 高 ‘high, tall’ (1).

- (17) 飯 無 心 食， 澀 過 吞 砂
(21.028 Wànli 萬曆)
png⁷ bo⁵ sim¹ tsiah⁸ siap⁴ ke³ thun¹ sua¹

food NEG mood eat be.puckery CM swallow sand
 ‘I am not in the mood for food; it tastes more astringent than swallowing sand’.

- (18) 為 著 功名 到 只 路 來, 山嶺
 ui⁷ tioh⁸ kong¹beng⁵ kau³ tsit⁴ lo⁷ lai⁵ suann¹nia⁵
 for obtain renown come DEM road come_{DEICTIC} mountain
 高 過 上 天台 (431.017 *Jīn huā nǚ* 金花女)
 kuan⁵ ke³ tsiunn⁷ thian¹tai⁵
 high CM climb heaven
 ‘In order to obtain worldly renown, I chose this way to come, but the mountains
 are higher than climbing up to heaven’.

Let us next digress to discuss the diachronic development of the *Surpass* comparative in Sinitic languages to provide a background for our analysis of *guò* in Early Southern Min.

□ In terms of its history, the use of *guò* as a comparative marker is rare in Late Medieval Chinese. There is only one attested example in a Tang poem, as in (19) below, out of a total of thirteen uses. Peyraube (1989) claims that *yú* 於 < ‘at’ remains the most common comparative marker during the Tang period (7th-10th c.), used in the structure ‘A+V+ *yú* 於+B. In the following example, both these markers are used in parallel clauses:

- (19) Type II structure with both *Location* and *Surpass* schemata
 貧 於 楊子 兩 三 倍 老 過 榮 公
 pín yú yángzi liǎng sān bèi lǎo guò róng gōng
 poor CM Yangzi two three times old CM Rong Master
 六 七 年 (白居易詩：送劉五司馬赴任硤州兼寄崔使君)
 liù qī nián
 six seven year
 ‘Two or three times poorer than Master Yang, six or seven years older than Mr. Rong’. (*Bai Juyi shi*, 9th c.)

There are 12 examples of *guò* found in the Tang poems that could be interpreted as a comparative marker and only one in the *Dūnhuáng Biànwén* 敦煌變文 (Transformational texts). In this respect, Zhang (2005) claims convincingly that almost all of these *guò* are indeed verbs meaning ‘to surpass’, with the only exception being the one above in (19) (Ōta 1958, Peyraube 1989, Peyraube and Lin 2011). This

single example of *guò* as a comparative marker goes almost unnoticed with respect to the 376 examples of **Type II** which use the markers *yú* 於, *rú* 如 or *sì* 似 in *Surpass-Similarity* schemata in the same documents from Late Medieval Chinese.

Zhang (2005) thus confirms Peyraube's (1989) analysis and also concludes that *guò* never grammaticalized from a verb into a comparative morpheme in Medieval or even in Modern Chinese (13th-18th centuries). This is also the viewpoint of Wei (2007) and Wu (2010).

Guò 過 meaning 'to surpass', or even *shèng* 勝 'to defeat', would both have been very good candidates to replace *yú* 於 < LOC as the comparative marker of inequality in Type II structures during the Late Archaic and Early Medieval periods.¹⁰

In this postverbal position, they did not undergo grammaticalization early enough to compete with the Type I *Compare* comparative (with *bǐ* 比) which had already arisen during the late Tang and was gradually replacing the other variants of Type II, in particular, the *Surpass-Similarity* cognitive schema, coded by *rú* 如 and *sì* 似.

In contrast to this, in Southern China, where the Type I structure had not yet infiltrated, Chappell and Peyraube (2015) hypothesize that *guò* 過 did have ample time to grammaticalize into a comparative marker and so ultimately to replace the other markers used in the same syntactic structure, namely *rú* 如 and *sì* 似.

Nevertheless, it could also plausibly be proposed that we have a case of contact-induced grammaticalization. Southern Sinitic languages, including Early Southern Min, may have borrowed this structure from a neighbouring language, or certain of the Southeast Asian languages could have borrowed it from Southern Sinitic, as Ansaldo (2010) has proposed, *inter alia*. This is because the *Surpass* comparative is one of the syntactic features (and cognitive schemata) which identifies a linguistic area comprising Tai-Kadai, Austroasiatic, Hmong-Mien, and many Sinitic languages. Chappell and Peyraube (2015) argue that the necessary historical evidence for establishing contact-induced grammaticalization in either direction **is lacking**.

As observed earlier, only 3/59 examples in our corpus have adjectives preceding *guò* 過, while all the other examples with *guò* 過 combine with either *kiong*⁵ 強, *seng*³ 勝 or *sai*³ 賽, which all mean 'be better than' and consequently belong to the

¹⁰ We also find several cases where it is rather *shèng* 勝 that has the function of a comparative marker (there are 23 examples to be found in the Tang poems, according to Zhang 2005), as in:

湖	魚	香	勝	肉	官	酒	重	於	錫
						(劉禹錫：曆陽書事七十韻)			
hú	yú	xiāng	shèng	ròu	guān	jiǔ	zhòng	yú	xíng
lake	fish	delicious	CM	meat	government	alcohol	precious	CM	malt.sugar

'Fish from the lake is more delicious than meat; alcohol produced by the government brewery is more precious than malt sugar'. (Tang dynasty 唐長慶4年 824 AD).

lexical field of *surpass* verbs. The fact that *guò* 過 forms a verb complex, acting as the second verb attached to one of these three aforementioned verbs and that both V_1 and V_2 have the same meaning of ‘surpass’ recalls other diachronically significant structures found in Pre-Medieval Chinese (Han period, 206 BC – 220 AD), where V_1V_2 are both similarly filled by components from the same lexical field. For example, in an early form of the dative, the serial verb construction V_1V_2 is formed by two verbs of giving (Peyraube 1996), before V_2 is later reanalyzed as a grammatical marker introducing the dative noun (or recipient). This seems to suggest for our data that *guò* 過 has not reached the final stage of conventionalization in the process of grammaticalization as a marker of the *Surpass* comparative but serves to lexically reinforce the first *surpass*-class verb in the majority of 56/59 examples. In sum, the Type II (a) structure with *surpass* verbs is not a full-fledged comparative of inequality, given that we have only three authentic examples. It represents instead a lexical means of coding this constructional meaning.

This contrasts with the use of grammaticalized *surpass* verbs as comparative markers in many contemporary Central and Southern Sinitic language such as Cantonese and other Yue dialects, as well as Hakka.

3.2.2 Type II (bi) and Type II (bii): *Surpass-Similarity* Comparative: A + Verb + CM + B (82/141)

There is a total of 82 *Surpass-Similarity* comparatives across the sample of thirteen texts, of which 78/82 use the comparative marker *rú* 如 and 4/82 uses *sì* 似. An example of this head-marking subtype follows:

(20) 人 說 酒 腸 寬 如 海， 果然 色胆 大
(22 *Mǎn Tiān Chūn* 滿天春 (下))

lang⁵ sueh⁴ tsiu² tng⁵ khuann¹ ji⁵ hai² ko²jian⁵ sek⁴tann² tua⁷
people say alcohol intestine large CM ocean truly desire big

如 天
ji⁵ thinn¹
CM heaven

‘People say that his capacity for drinking is larger than the ocean; his sexual desire is plainly bigger than the sky’.¹¹

These examples all conform to the structure found in Late Medieval Chinese (7th - 12th c.) using either *rú* 如 or *sì* 似, which became the foremost markers of the

¹¹ This example could also be interpreted as a comparative of equality: ‘People say that his capacity for drinking is as large as the ocean; his sexual desire is plainly as big as the sky’.

comparative of inequality during the Jin (1115-1234) and Yuan (1206-1368) dynasties (Peyraube 1989, Huang 1992, Zhang 2004b, Jiang 2011):

(21) Comparative of inequality using Type II *Similarity* schema in Early Modern

Chinese: NP_A – VERB – CM (RÚ 如, SÌ 似) – NP_B

這 但 輕 如 你 底 (馬致遠 1250-1321:任風子)

zhè dàn qīng rú nǐ dǐ

DEM load light CM 2SG POSS

‘This load is lighter than yours’. (Mǎ Zhìyuǎn: *Rèn fēngzi*, 14th c.)

The majority of the examples in this category use an adjective that denotes a dimension or quality (79/82) while the remaining three (3/82) co-occur with *seng*³ 勝 ‘win, vanquish’. The figures for the 82 relevant examples are listed below:

(22) *seng*³ 勝 (3) ‘win, vanquish’, *tuan*² 短 (1) ‘short’, *kin*² 緊 (7) ‘fast’, *tinn*¹ 甜 (1) ‘sweet’, *bun*⁷ 悶 (4) ‘depressed’, *tua*⁷ 大 (11) ‘big’, *tang*⁷ 重 (8) ‘heavy’, *tshim*¹ 深 (11) ‘deep’, *hng*⁷ 遠 (5) ‘far’, *hu*³ 富 (2) ‘rich’, *kong*¹ 光 (1) ‘bright’, *leng*² 冷 (6) ‘cold’, *khuann*¹ 寬 (1) ‘large’, *no*⁷ 怒 (1) ‘angry’, *iu*³ 准(幼) (3) ‘soft’, *giam*⁵ 嚴(1) ‘strict’, *thong*³ 痛 (1) ‘pain’, *tsiau*⁵tsui⁷ 焦悴 (1) ‘gaunt’, *se*³ 細 (2) ‘thin’, *hun*¹hun¹ 紛紛 (1) ‘numerous’, *thiann*³ 疼 (2) ‘pain’, *kip*⁴ 急 (4) ‘hurry’, *pok*⁸ 薄 (2) ‘indifferent’, *bang*⁵ 忙 (1) ‘busy’ and *luan*⁷ 亂 (2).

(23) 越自 添得 我 悶 深 如 海

(*Bǎi Huā Sàì Jīn* 百花賽錦 17)

uat⁸ju² thinn¹tit⁴ gua² bun⁷ tshim¹ ji⁵ hai²

even.more add 1SG depress **deep** CM ocean

‘With even more added, my depression is deeper than the ocean’.

This *Surpass-Similarity* model (with Type II (bi) and Type II (bii) combined) is thus relatively common in our Early Southern Min texts. It conforms in any case to the same model used most frequently in Pre-Modern Standard Chinese during the Yuan dynasty and up until the end of the Ming, that is, from 13th to the end of the 16th century. Mainly based on the Northern dialects, it represents 61% of comparative constructions of inequality during the Yuan.¹² It is only from the 17th century onwards that this model falls into disuse in the North to the advantage of Type I (*Compare* comparative with *bǐ* 比).

It needs to be pointed out that examples belonging to Type II (bi) and Type II (bii)

¹² See the complete set of statistics, adapted from Huang 1992 in Chappell and Peyraube 2015.

are often ambiguous. The comparative markers *rú* 如 and *sì* 似 may also be used to express the comparative of equality as well as the comparative of inequality (superiority subtype). See example (20) above. Nor is there anything surprising about this, since such was the case in the Late Medieval and Pre-Modern standard language, at least from the 10th century onwards (see Peyraube and Wiebusch 1995). It is probable, moreover, that from the Yuan dynasty (13th century), the large majority of comparatives with the form (A)+Adj+*rú/sì*+B were used to express the comparative degree of inequality (superiority subtype), simply due to the fact that the canonical form in Classical Chinese for the expression of this relation of superiority with *yú* 於, (A)+Adj+*yú*+B, had clearly fallen into disuse and there was no other means available. On the other hand, to express the relation of equality, the form with the comparative marker between the two terms of comparison, A and B, and preceding the adjective became common, that is, the form, A+*rú/sì*+B+Adj, as in the following example:

(24) Comparative of equality using the *Similarity* schema:

NP_A–CM–NP_B–VP, comparative marker = *rú* 如:

臉 如 紅 杏 鮮 妍 (*Xiǎo Sūn Tú* 小孫屠, 14th c.)

liǎn *rú* hóng xìng xiǎn yán.

face CM red apricot fresh beautiful

‘(Her) face is as fresh and beautiful as a red apricot’.

These are indeed the cases which deserve to be discussed, for any ambiguity has entirely disappeared. Furthermore, such examples, attested from the Song (10th-13th centuries) make use of a very limited number of adjectives or verbs including *qiáng* 強, *shèng* 勝, and *sài* 賽, for which we observed above that they had lost a good part of their original lexical meaning in acquiring that of ‘be better than’, instead being used for unequivocally expressing the comparison of inequality (superiority subtype) in the construction (A–*qiáng/shèng/sài*–*rú/sì*–B VERB). These cases are numerous in Late Medieval and Pre-Modern Standard Chinese, as Peyraube and Wiebusch (1995) have pointed out; see also Zhang 2005 for more details. And such is the case in our Early Southern Min texts.

3.3 Type III: *Zero-marked comparative: A + Verb + B* (46/212)

According to Li (2003), the zero-marked comparative with its comparee (A) and standard nouns (B) separated simply by the verb is to be found in all branches of Sinitic. It is also a common pattern in Classical Chinese (Late Archaic period, 5th- 2nd BC) and thus one that has firmly ‘taken root’ in this language taxon. The verb is typically an adjective expressing a physical dimension such as height, size, weight or

age and as a comparative, it can be classified as belonging to the *Action* schema, which is semantically transitive and also includes the *Surpass* schema (cf. Heine 1997). This absence of any comparative marker may be linked to the intrinsically comparative nature of adjectives in their absolute form in many languages. Hence, Mandarin *tā dà* 他大 (3SG-tall) does not only objectively mean ‘He is tall’ but also implicitly that ‘He is tall with respect to someone else or to others’, that is, to some shared benchmark for tallness (see also Huddleston and Pullum 2002:1161-1162 for the case in English). An example follows from contemporary Hui’an Southern Min (Quan-Zhang subgroup):

- (25) 我 肥 汝
 *ua*³ *pui*² *lu*⁰
 1SG fat 2SG
 ‘I am fatter than you’.

In a majority of Sinitic languages, however, unlike Hui’an Southern Min and unlike Classical Chinese, this comparative structure is accompanied by an obligatory measure phrase:

(26) Standard Mandarin

NP _A	Verb _{STATIVE}	NP _B	Q-CL	
哥哥	大	我	三	歲。
<i>gēgē</i>	<i>dà</i>	<i>wǒ</i>	*(<i>sān</i>	<i>sui</i>)
brother	old< ‘big’	1SG	three	year
‘My brother is three years older than me’.				

In the Early Southern Min data, this structure is less frequent than *ke*³ 過 (59), having only 46/212 examples across the texts consulted. Furthermore, it does not conform entirely to the specifications of this construction in contemporary Sinitic languages: only two examples out of the total of 46 present a case of adjectival main verbs, both formed with the verb *tang*⁷ 重 ‘be heavy’, ‘be important’ (see (27) and (28)). Nonetheless, it could also be considered that some uses of *tang*⁷ 重 belong to the lexical field of *surpass*, at least as much as those of *tshut*⁴ 出 ‘go out’ do, which also falls into this group.¹³ The two examples in question are reproduced below:

¹³ The case is less clear for *tshut*⁴ 出 than for *tang*⁷ 重, since the ‘surpass’ or ‘better than’ interpretation relies even more heavily on the context. We have also included *jiok*⁸ 弱 in this group which has the basic meaning of ‘weak’ but in the comparative is interpreted as ‘be worse than’.

- (27) 我 只 罗巾， 尔 收記 在 心，
 gua² tsit⁴ lo⁵kin¹ li² siu¹ki³ ti⁷ sim¹
 1SG DEM scarf 2SG keep.remember at heart
 只 罗巾 情 重 千 金 (4 *Mǎn Tiān Chūn* 滿天春)
 tsit⁴ lo⁵kin¹ cheng⁵ tang⁷ tshian¹ kim¹
 DEM scarf love important thousand gold
 ‘My scarf keep it in your heart; the love represented by this scarf is more important than a thousand pieces of gold’. (*Mǎn Tiān Chūn* 4)

- (28) 救 阮 一 命 重 再生 (*Yáng Guǎn Gē* 楊管歌)¹⁴
 kiu³ gun² tsit⁴ mia⁷ tang⁷ tsai³seng¹
 save 1SG.GEN one life be.important reborn
 ‘Your saving my life is more important (to me) than a rebirth’.

The other 44 are all verbs which belong to the lexical field of *surpass* once again, including *kiong*⁵ 強 (18), *seng*³ 勝 (4), *sai*³ 賽 (14), *tshut*⁴ 出 (3), and *tshiau*¹ 超 (4), if not ‘to be worse than’, *jiok*⁸ 弱 (1). Here are two such examples with non-grammaticalized verbs with this general meaning of ‘to surpass’, or more simply, ‘to be better than’:

- (29) 咱 今冥 勝 入 洞房 (14 *Mǎn Tiān Chūn* 滿天春 [上])
 lan² kim¹mi⁵ seng³ jip⁸ tong⁷pong⁵
 1PL.INCL tonight be.better.than enter bridal.chamber
 ‘For us this night is better than the wedding night’.

- (30) 秀才 阿， 救 阮 命 強 再生
 (*Yáng Guǎn Gē* 楊管歌)
 siu³tsai⁵ ah⁴ kiu³ gun² mia⁷ kiong⁵ tsai³seng¹
 bachelor PRT save 1SG.GEN life be.better.than reborn
 ‘Bachelor, you saved my life, which is better than being reborn’.

Hence, we conclude that the zero-marked comparative is a marginal structure as far as the Early Southern Min local operas and other historical documents are concerned. The structure as we know it from modern Sinitic languages and also from Archaic Chinese is not at all put into service in these texts but rather a lexical form is preferred, chosen from within the semantic domain of *surpass* verbs.

¹⁴ The authors have access to the digitalized version of this opera which explains the lack of a page number here.

Could this in fact be seen as a precursor or early form of the modern zero-marked comparative? Our judgement is negative on this point. It would be counter-intuitive to argue that a semantic generalization has taken place whereby the main verb slot expands from just a small number of *surpass* verbs to include adjectives coding a semantically specific dimension. This would be quite the reverse process for any hypothesis of grammaticalization. Reinforcing our argument is the fact that this structure has existed since the Archaic Chinese period and without any recourse to the use of such a group of *surpass* verbs.

3.4 Type IV: *Adverbial comparative*: A + *khah*⁴ 可 + Verb+B (21/212)

Type IV is claimed to be a rare comparative strategy in the languages of the world (see Haspelmath and the Comparative Constructions Consortium 2013) but one that is, nonetheless, attested in Southern Min and in Hakka, among the Sinitic languages. Furthermore, it seems that this syntactic form is only found in these two branches. In Hakka dialects, the preverbal adverb is frequently a cognate of *guò* 過 ‘more’, while in Min dialects it is typically a cognate of *jiào* 較 ‘more’, represented by various characters, homophonic to its pronunciation in the given dialect. These include *khah*⁴ 可 in our historical texts, as well as 恰 in various reference grammars.

This fourth type of comparative belongs to the Action schema as well. It makes use of an adverb as its comparative marker with the basic meaning of ‘more’, *khah*⁴ 較 in Southern Min dialects, which occurs in a transitive clause to code the comparative meaning. An important feature of the adverbial comparative is that, like the Type III *Zero-marked* comparative, it is mainly used with adjectives such as ‘tall’, ‘old’, ‘fat’, and ‘rich’; see (25) and (26) above. Despite this, the clause has transitive SVO syntax which normally is not permitted with predicative adjectives since the latter pattern in the same way as intransitive: they do not normally take a direct object argument.

In any case, these special features allow us to identify the construction as a comparative, namely, the transitive syntax with a main verb that comes typically from the adjective class, used in conjunction with a comparative marker derived from a degree adverb ‘more’: Adverb_{CM} + Verb_{STATIVE}.

(31) Southern Min (Hui’an)

NP _A	CM _{more}	Verb _{STATIVE}	NP _B
伊	恰	富	我
i ³³	k ^h aʔ ⁴	pu ⁵⁵	gua ⁵⁵
3SG	more _{CM}	rich	1SG
‘She is richer than me’. (<i>Literally: she-more-riches-me</i>)			

This comparative type can be considered as an identifying feature of the contemporary Min group of dialects, as it is found in most of its subgroups: in Mindong (Eastern Min), in Minbei (Northern Min), and in Minzhong (Central Min) (Wu 2012). In fact, Wu (2012) claims it is a shared innovation of the Min dialects. In the historical documents, the character 可 is predominantly used to represent this morpheme. In spite of this, its source is likely to be *khah*⁴ 較, an adverb which means ‘more, a bit, fairly’.

In the early 17th century Southern Min grammar, the *Arte de la lengua Chiō Chiu*, composed by the Spanish missionary Melchior de Mançano, *kha*³ 可 is given as the particle which forms the comparative, by placing it in front of the positive or plain form of the adjective:

- (32) 汝 可 好 我
 lù cǎ^c hò guà
 2SG CM good 1SG
 ‘You’re better than me’. (*eres mejor q̃-yo*) (*Arte*: folio 5b)

Piñol y Andreu (1928:82ff) is also of the view that for the Southern Min dialect of Amoy 廈門 (Xiamen), as spoken in the early 20th century, this form of the *comparativo de superioridad* ‘comparative of superiority’ is the most common in use, being constructed with the adverb *khah* ‘more’ preceding the positive form of the adjective, as in Spanish.¹⁵ Its comparative and adverbial uses have also been noted by Douglas (1853:258). He cites the following example:

- (33) 汝 較 肥 我
 lí khah pâi guá
 2SG CM fat 1SG
 ‘You are fatter than me’.

We find a small number of different stative verbs that may act as the main verb in the data from the operas, including *tshin*¹*tshian*² 親淺 ‘beautiful’ (1), *tang*⁷ 重 ‘heavy’ (4), and *kiong*⁵ 強 ‘strong’ (3). Here are two such examples:

- (34) 官人 許 前頭 一 陣 娘仔， 生得 句 可
 kuann¹lang⁵ hi² tseng⁵thau⁵ tsit⁸ tin⁷ niu⁵a² senn¹tit⁴ koh⁴ khah⁴
 gentlemen DEM front one group woman be.born.to even CM

¹⁵ Original Spanish: ‘...directamente con el adverbio *khah* (más) antepuesto al positivo, como en castellano’.

親淺 伊 (8.069 Jiājīng 嘉靖)

tshin¹tshian² i¹

beautiful 3SG

‘There are some beautiful women in front of the gentleman who are even more beautiful than her’.

(35) 伊 有 力氣， 向 可 強 我 (15.033 Guāngxù 光緒)

i¹ u⁷ lat⁸khi³ koh⁴ khah⁴ kiong⁵ gua²

3SG have strength even CM be.strong 1SG

‘He is young and strong; he is even stronger than me’.

Example (35) presents a case of *kiong*⁵ 強 being used as an adjective ‘strong’ in this construction, rather than as a *surpass* verb ‘be better than’, as we saw is also possible when it occurs in the Type II *Surpass* comparative with *ke*³ 過 or in the Type III *Zero-marked* comparative. There are in fact sixteen such examples of *kiong*⁵ 強 across the thirteen texts where it co-occurs with *khah*⁴ 較. However, in only 3/16 examples *do khah*⁴*kiong*⁵ 可強 mean ‘stronger than’ while the remaining 13/16 have the interpretation of ‘be better than’. Therefore, in total, only 8/21 predicates are used with their basic lexical meaning in this comparative type, since the majority, the remaining thirteen (13/21), are represented by precisely these semantically extended uses of *kiong*⁵ 強, as in example (36) below:

(36) 有 人 愛 可 強 無 人 愛 (17.114 Shùnzhì 順治)

u⁷ lang⁵ ai³ khah⁴ kiong⁵ bo⁵ lang⁵ ai³

have people love CM be.better NEG people love

‘To be loved is better than not to be loved by others’.

In terms of lexical main verbs, the Type IV Adverbial construction appears to be the most productive, compared with the other three types, which are either marginal, as for the Type I *Compare* comparative, or in an incipient state of development, as for the Type II *Surpass* comparative, given that it mainly uses lexical verbs from the *surpass* class, and similarly for the Type III *Zero-marked* comparative.

Incidentally, Li (1994) independently remarks that between the 16th and the 19th centuries, the Type IV comparative was one of the most commonly used in Southern Min, adding that the adverb *khah*⁴ had completely lost its original lexical meaning to become purely a comparative morpheme. He quotes example (34) above to support his claim.

Chen (2015) puts forward the very interesting conjecture that the origin of the

Adverbial comparative in Southern Min could be the absolutive form of the comparative which includes just the comparee noun, the degree adverb *khah*⁴ 較 and the main verb:

- (37) 伊 恰 巧 點仔
 i¹ **khaʔ**⁷⁻⁸ kiau³ tiəm³⁻²a³
 3SG CM clever a.bit

‘He is a bit cleverer (than me)’.

(Chen’s example from the Hui’an 惠安 dialect of Southern Min, Quanzhou county)

One could also claim that Type IV appeared in Early Southern Min under the influence of the common language of the period (*gòngtóngyǔ* 共同語) which already used a preverbal comparative marker (Zhang’s hypothesis 2005), as in the case of *bǐ* 比. However, we do not agree with Zhang’s viewpoint, since the use of the *bǐ* 比-comparative is not found in any of our thirteen texts which span the period from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Furthermore, the comparative morpheme *bǐ* 比 derives from a **verb** which introduces the standard noun phrase in preverbal position, never functioning as an adverbial modifier of the main verb, while this is the precise source of *khah*⁴ 較.

3.5 Conclusion

In this analysis of the comparatives of inequality used in Early Southern Min, four main construction types have been described and discussed. All four express the superiority dimension of ‘more than’ for inequality comparatives, there being no special syntactic form to express the comparative of inferiority: ‘less than’.

<i>Structure</i>	<i>Schema</i>	
Type I:	A + CM 比 + B + Verb	(<i>Compare</i> comparative)
Type II (a):	A + Verb + CM 過 + B	(<i>Surpass</i> comparative)
Type II (b _{i/ii}):	A + Verb + CM 如/似 + B	(<i>Surpass-similarity</i> comparative)
Type III:	A + Verb + B	(<i>Zero-marked</i> comparative)
Type IV:	A + CM 較 + Verb → B	(<i>Adverbial</i> comparative).

Amongst these, we have shown that head-marking comparatives which belong to two main types (including subtypes) are the most frequent and favoured forms. Furthermore, these are the syntactic structures for the comparative which harmonize

with SVO word order:

- Type II (a): A + Verb + CM 過 + B (*Surpass* comparative)
Type II (b_{i/ii}): A + Verb + CM 如/似 + B (*Surpass-similarity* comparative)
Type IV: A + CM 較 + Verb + B (*Adverbial* comparative)

Nonetheless, there are some further important points to be noted about all four major comparative types examined. Verbs coding the state of superiority such as *kiong*⁵ 強 ‘be better than’ < ‘strong’, *seng*³ 勝 ‘be superior to’ < ‘vanquish, win’, and *sai*³ 賽 ‘surpass’ < ‘compete’ are favoured above all in the structure corresponding to Type III, the *Zero-marked* comparative, A + Verb + B, for which we found only two adjectives (2/46) used as the main verb. Therefore, this type cannot be considered as a full-fledged construction during the Early Modern period for Southern Min. Its significance lies in the fact that these lexical verbs are all sources of grammaticalized markers of the comparative in contemporary Sinitic languages and dialects (cf. Huang Borong et al 1996: 678-681).

Type II (a), the *Surpass* comparative with the structure: A + Verb + CM 過 + B, has a main verb which, similarly to Type III, belongs to the lexical field of *surpass* verbs meaning ‘be better than’ or ‘be superior to’. Hence, this verb should also not be deemed to be a fully conventionalized comparative of inequality. Only a few examples are to be had, 3/59 to be exact, where the main verb does not code the notion of *surpass* itself. Moreover, this comparative model never gained the upper hand, since it has totally disappeared in contemporary Southern Min.¹⁶ As observed above, *guò* 過 undoubtedly retained its verbal status as V₂ reinforcing its preceding *surpass*-class verb in a serial verb construction V₁-V₂ and never grammaticalized into a comparative marker, as was the case for other Southern Sinitic languages.

Type II (b_{i/ii}) appears to be a form that is linked to the literary register. This construction using *rú* 如 or *sì* 似 as a comparative marker clearly adopted the model which was standard for the common language of the time and which prevailed from the end of the Song dynasty (1279 AD). Moreover, we find the same properties in Early Southern Min which characterized this form in the Yuan (1206-1368) and the Ming (1368-1644) — the frequent use of verbs or adjectives which themselves possess the meaning of ‘surpass’, combined with the ambiguity of certain examples for which it is difficult to know if the comparative marker expressed superiority or inequality). Type II (b_{i/ii}) was maintained until the 20th century, side-by-side with Type

¹⁶ This is typical of Southern Min dialects within Fujian province and Taiwan. Many Southern Min dialects in Guangdong and Hainan provinces do use however the *Surpass* model, for example, Tunchang 屯昌, Leizhou 雷州, and Shantou 汕頭. In the latter case, this is certainly an areal feature shared with the co-territorial Yue and Hakka dialects. See Li 2003 and Wu 2012.

IV which subsequently prevailed in Southern Min while it continued to evolve, resulting in a marginalization rather than a complete disappearance, of Type II (b_{i/ii}).

It can also be incidentally observed that Type II (b_{i/ii}) has been maintained right up until today in the dialects of Shandong. Luo (1992) thus notes that the form with the postverbal comparative marker *sì* 似 (but also *qǐ* 起 or *de* 的) remains used just as much as Type I with the preverbal comparative marker *bǐ* 比. He also remarks that speakers of these dialects do not use these two forms as simple alternatives. In other words, they are often in complementary distribution, depending on the nature of the verb which precedes the comparative markers. Such a differentiation is not attested in our texts from Early Southern Min.

Type IV, the *Adverbial* comparative, makes use of the largest number of different adjectival main verbs which do not lexically code superiority or the notion of *surpass*. Hence, even though the number of corpus examples is small, this would seem to suggest that the *Adverbial* comparative was already well-established in the earliest period for which we have texts for Southern Min. It is also the syntactic structure for the comparative which is described in the early 17th century Spanish grammar of Southern Min, the *Arte* (see example (32)).

Finally, the Type I *Compare* comparative with the structure A + CM 比 + B + VP does not exist in our texts for Early Southern Min, except in negated form for four sentences. It is an entirely marginal structure.

4. Comparatives in contemporary Southern Min

In this section, we describe two main types used in contemporary Southern Min: **The** Type IV *Adverbial* with *khah*⁴ 較 ‘more’ and a new hybridized form which does not occur in our Early Southern Min texts.

The number of different structures for the comparative of inequality in Southern Min dialects may be very high, as Chen (2015) ably demonstrates for the Hui’an variety 惠安話 (Quan-Zhang subgroup). Hui’an makes use of six different forms, noting that the purely Mandarin Type I with *pi*² 比 is the least frequent. By way of contrast, this is precisely the structure which Lien (1999) shows to be increasingly favored by younger generation speakers of another variety of Southern Min, Taiwanese, in the highly urbanized Hsin-chu area of northwestern Taiwan.

In both these varieties of Southern Min, one of the high frequency comparatives is an unusual structure that proves to be the outcome of inter-dialectal contact: this is the hybridized comparative in Southern Min which uses both markers *pi*² 比 and *khah*⁴ 較 ‘more’, that is, double marking. It has the form: NP_A [CM_(i) 比 NP_B] CM_(ii) 較 Verb.

In other words, it is a blend of the borrowed Northern Mandarin structure which

uses the comparative marker *bĩ* 比 ‘compared to’, a preposition in a prepositional phrase preceding the predicate, while retaining the characteristically Southern Min comparative marker, *khah*⁴ 較 ‘more’, in its VP constituent where it directly modifies the verb, originally as an adverb of degree, but in this form functioning as a second comparative marker. This results in a new hybrid form, Type V, with double marking, that is, a combination of Types I and IV, the *Compare* and the *Adverbial* comparatives.

Inter-dialectal contact thus leads to hybridization through the incorporation of the native comparative marker into a new syntactic structure, borrowed from Mandarin. It further reveals the interesting phenomenon of the co-existence of both dependent- and head-marking strategies in one and the same structure. A simple elicited example is provided below to show the structure clearly in (38) and an example from authentic discourse is given in (39):

Type V: NP_A [CM_(i)比 NP_B] CM_(ii)較 Verb

Hybridized comparative construction in Taiwanese Southern Min

- (38) 我 比 伊 較 高
 gua² pi² i¹ khah⁴ kuan⁵
 1SG CM_(i) 3SG CM_(ii) tall
 ‘I am taller than him’.

- (39) 阮遐 價數 喔，可能 有 比 板橋
 gun²hia⁵ ke³siau³ oh kho²leng⁵ u⁷ pi² pang¹kio⁵
 1PL.EXCL-there price PRT probably have compare Pang.kio
 市裏 較 貴 淡薄 啊。(Jesse’s narratives, lines 485-487)
 tshi⁷lai² khah⁴ kui³ tam⁷poh⁸ a
 city-inside more expensive a.little PRT
 ‘As for our prices, compared with downtown Pang-kio, they were probably a little more expensive’.

In a sociolinguistic survey of the Hsin-Chu variety of Taiwanese Southern Min, which has developed on the basis of the mainland Quanzhou dialect, Lien (1999) shows that while two structures prevail, the comparative marker *khah*⁴ 較 is in the process of disappearing from both hybridized forms, noted by its optionality in the syntactic patterns given in (40).

(40)

- (i) A *pheng*²² 并 B (*khah*⁴ 較) PREDICATE
(ii) A *pi*⁵³ 比 B (*khah*⁴ 較) PREDICATE

Furthermore, the local marker *pheng*²² 并 in this variety of Southern Min is also slowly being replaced by *pi*⁵³ 比. As remarked upon above, younger generation speakers who have received higher education, either to senior high school or university level, favour the purely Mandarin form with only the marker *pi*⁵³ 比 for which tone change is in progress from the Southern Min value *pi*⁵³, which is the high falling citation Tone 2 or *Yángpíng*, to *pi*²¹⁴, the contour *Shǎngshēng* Tone 3 of Standard Mandarin. Older generation male speakers favour the form with only the marker *pheng*²² 并, while older generation female speakers prefer the form with both *pheng*²² 并 and *khah*⁴ 較. Nonetheless, the frequency of use of the second hybridized form with *pi*⁵³ 比 and *khah*⁴ 較 remains relatively stable, according to Lien's survey of 150 speakers.

In a considerable number of Hakka dialects, we also find cases of the Type V *Hybridized Comparative*: for example, in Meixian Hakka, the prestige variety spoken in northeastern Guangdong province (see Wu 2012 for a list). The two comparative markers are the Mandarin preposition *pi*³¹ 比 'compared to', once again, in a position preceding the predicate, and the Hakka adverb *kuo*⁵³⁻⁵⁵ 過 'more' directly modifying the verb, a marker which is distinct from that found in Early Southern Min. Its adverbial meaning of 'more' is undoubtedly derived from the verbal meaning of 'surpass' or 'exceed' of *kuo*⁵³⁻⁵⁵ 過. (Note however that this is not a case of the *Surpass* comparative, in which the comparative marker, *kuo*⁵³⁻⁵⁵ 過, would necessarily follow the main verb and not precede it.)

(41) Hybridized comparative construction in Meixian Hakka

NP _A [CM _(i)	NP _B]	CM _{(ii)more}	Verb	
这隻 比	那隻	過	好	
e ³¹ tsak ¹ pi ³¹	e ⁵³⁻⁵⁵ tsak ¹	kuo ⁵³⁻⁵⁵	hau ³¹	
DEM-CLF	CM _(i) <'compare'	DEM-CLF	CM _{(ii)MORE} <'surpass'	good
'This one is better than that one'.				
(Literally: this-one-compared-to-that-one-more-good)				

Li (2003) also remarks upon the fact that in Hakka dialects of the Fēngshùn district in Guangdong province (廣東豐順), there are hybrid forms of the type NP_A + CM_(i) + V + CM_(ii) + NP_B using the comparative markers 較 as CM_(i) and 過 as CM_(ii). For example:

- (42) 梅縣 較 冷過 湯坑
méixiàn **jiào** lěngguò Tāngkēng¹⁷
Meixian CM_(i) froid-CM_(ii) Tangkeng
‘It’s colder in Meixian than in Tangkeng’.

This could represent a sixth type which hybridizes Type IV *Adverbial* with Type II *Surpass*. More research is needed to confirm its distribution and characteristics.

The Type V hybridized comparative is thus essentially a feature of Southern Min and some of the Hakka dialects, while Type VI might turn out to be a feature of just certain Hakka dialects.¹⁸ We find many examples of the first type in the corpus data from present-day Taiwanese Southern Min but none in the 12 operas which span the late Ming dynasty and most of the Qing dynasty (late 16th-late 19th centuries) and whose texts have been thoroughly scoured for all the comparative structures in Early Southern Min. Nor do we find it in any of the late 16th and early 17th century missionary documents such as the *Doctrina Christiana*. This seems to suggest that the hybridized form is a very recent development. It remains an important issue for investigation to see if it is at all possible to pinpoint when the hybridized form first began to be observed and noted by scholars in 20th century documents concerning the Southern Min language.

In conclusion to our diachronic study, a final word is in order to highlight the clear historical preference for Southern Min languages and dialects to use two major head-marking types of comparative, namely, the Type II *Surpass* and Type IV *Adverbial* structures. Both of these can be classified as belonging to the transitive Action schema in Heine’s (1997) typology of comparatives of inequality. The change to the purely dependent-marking structure with *pi*⁵³ 比 of Northern Chinese in the form of the Type I *Compare* comparative is only a relatively recent phenomenon of the late 20th century, and is potentially taking place via hybridized structures, as hypothesized by Lien (1999), which first retain the native comparative markers before eventually omitting these.

Needless to say, the native preference for Type II *Surpass* and Type IV *Adverbial* structures evidently corresponds to the comparative structures which preserve harmony with SVO word order, in contrast to the Northern Sinitic form with the dependent-marking *bǐ*.

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¹⁷ Mandarin PĪNYĪN in small capitals are used here as the IPA values are not given in the source article.

¹⁸ For more details, see Chen 2015, on this double-marked comparative in the Hui’an dialect of Southern Min, and also Lien 1999, Li and Lien 1995 for Taiwanese Southern Min.

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¹⁹ This document has been attributed to the two missionaries named as authors in the reference list (see van der Loon 1966) who were undoubtedly aided by their Chinese collaborators who remain unknown to us. Van der Loon estimates the period for the completion of this religious text as between the years of 1597 and 1605, according to the historical sources he consulted.

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Appendix I:

LI JING JI 荔鏡記 AND LI ZHI JI 荔枝記 OPERAS (5 versions):

126 examples of comparative structures

Type I

	Type I: Compare Comparative A+比+B+ Verb	Total: 4
1.	阮不比王魁負心。	29.191 嘉靖
2.	我不比王魁負心。	18.088 順治
3.	我不比王魁負心。	31.032 道光

4.	不比王魁負心。	26.059 光緒
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Type II

	Type II	Total:65
	(a) <i>Surpass</i> Comparative A+Verb+過+B	Total: 24
5.	好元宵強過別冥。	5.117 嘉靖
6.	阮娘仔伊是千金閨女，都不強過阮奴婢。	28.132 嘉靖
7.	娘是千金人閨女，都不強過阮隨婢。	27.089 萬曆
8.	啞娘是千金閨女，天不都強過阮奴婢。	17.181 順治
9.	亞娘是千金閨女，天不都強過阮奴婢？	30.070 道光
10.	亞娘是千金閨女，天不都強過阮奴婢。	25.116 光緒
11.	阮說娘是千金之女，強過阮奴婢。	27.094 光緒
12.	三人直過藍橋路，賽仙景，強過皇帝都。	33.009 萬曆
13.	一么強過九領被。	3.073 順治
14.	一某強過九領被。	3.023 道光
15.	一某強過十領被。	2.054 光緒
16.	看伊人物爽利，賽過廟裏天妃。	9.011 嘉靖
17.	你只計賽過孫吳，許時有乜記號？	23.054 嘉靖
18.	恁今同姒(事)卜相痛，賽過姊妹弟共兄。	54.024 嘉靖
19.	桃花面貌，密榴口齒，恰親像許嫦娥，賽過西施。	15.024 萬曆
20.	知阮啞娘昨冥即共三哥一冥恩愛，賽過百日恩情。	19.035 順治
21.	共君結托賽過相如配文君。	33.094 順治
22.	共君結托，賽過相如配文君。	47.041 道光
23.	共君結托賽過相如配文君。	42.032 光緒
24.	飯今袂食，澀過吞沙。	25.052 嘉靖
25.	飯無心食，澀過吞沙。	21.028 萬曆
26.	小妹只計勝過孫吳。	10.144 順治
27.	小妹你只計勝過孫吳。	21.050 道光
28.	小妹只計勝過孫吳。	17.065 光緒

	(b) <i>Surpass-Similarity</i> Comparative A+Verb+如+B	Total: 37
29.	世事短如春夢。	1.001 嘉靖
30.	見說廣南遠如天。	10.011 嘉靖

31.	光陰相催 緊 如箭。	11.001 嘉靖
32.	荔枝清香 甜 如蜜。	17.018 嘉靖
33.	惹得我 悶 如江海。	17.126 嘉靖
34.	我只處心 悶 如江海。	21.036 嘉靖
35.	悶 如長江水。	23.007 嘉靖
36.	陳三色膽 大 如天。	28.114 嘉靖
37.	情 重 如山恩深似海。	34.021 嘉靖
38.	崖州一路 遠 如天邊。	48.185 嘉靖
39.	感恩德 重 如天。	53.029 嘉靖
40.	伊人 富 如石崇。	10.126 萬曆
41.	富 如石崇，我不去爭。	10.127 萬曆
42.	一場姻愛 勝 如春夢。	27.019 萬曆
43.	你只功勞 大 如天。	27.038 萬曆
44.	陳三色膽 大 如天。	27.081 萬曆
45.	秋月窗前 光 如水。	28.111 萬曆
46.	今卜行， 緊 如箭。	29.003 萬曆
47.	心 悶 如遭，想著冤家目汁流。	31.005 萬曆
48.	三更過了，腳尾 冷 如霜。	40.041 萬曆
49.	夫妻人情 冷 如霜，那畏莫久長。	40.137 萬曆
50.	我兄威勢 大 如天。	47.040 萬曆
51.	越添得我悶 深 如江海。	7.117 順治
52.	情 重 如山恩深如海。	21.131 順治
53.	情重如山恩 深 如海。	21.131 順治
54.	心茫茫，步 緊 如箭。	13.017 道光
55.	伊今關門落樓去，越添我悶 深 如江海。	16.041 道光
56.	看只賊婢膽 大 如天。	24.102 道光
57.	情 重 如山，恩深如海。	34.069 道光
58.	情重如山，恩 深 如海。	34.069 道光
59.	一場官司 大 如天。	37.048 道光
60.	越添得我悉 深 如江海。	14.056 光緒
61.	情 重 如山，恩深如海。	29.097 光緒
62.	情重如山，恩 深 如海。	29.097 光緒
63.	看只賊婢膽 大 如天。	20.155 光緒
64.	一場官府 大 如天。	32.079 光緒
65.	步 緊 如箭。	11.014 光緒

	(bii) <i>Surpass-Similarity</i> Comparative	Total: 4
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	A+Verb+似+B	
66.	人情 薄 似秋雲。	1.002 嘉靖
67.	情重如山恩 深 似海。	34.021 嘉靖
68.	一心 忙 似箭，兩腳走如飛。	47.054 嘉靖
69.	收古記， 勝 似黃金。	15.041 萬曆

Type III

	Type III: Zero-marked Comparative A+Verb+B	Total: 36
70.	算來讀書 強 別事。	4.023 嘉靖
71.	一么 強 十倍，十倍甲也寒。	5.047 嘉靖
72.	阮處門風更 強 恁所在。	21.023 嘉靖
73.	新年願卜 強 舊年。	32.158 嘉靖
74.	母豬肉 強 食筍。	07.098 萬曆
75.	人說潮州稅戶，亦袂 強 阮做官人個。	18.026 萬曆
76.	阮厝門風更 強 恁厝個。	18.027 萬曆
77.	我乞人飼天 強 你。	19.257 萬曆
78.	阿娘，學們天要 強 伊，肯不親像伊？	24.132 萬曆
79.	新年 強 舊年。	2.077 順治
80.	我厝門風，更 強 恁只所在。	10.037 順治
81.	強 你。	11.75 順治
82.	我厝門風更 強 恁只所在。	21.011 道光
83.	新年 強 舊年。	4.024 道光
84.	新年 強 舊年。	3.039 光緒
85.	我厝門風更 強 恁只所在。	17.008 光緒
86.	一陣阿妹 賽 觀音。	6.245 嘉靖
87.	一位娘子 賽 觀音。	8.040 嘉靖
88.	明日遊馬 賽 蓬萊。	54.032 嘉靖
89.	三人直過藍橋路， 賽 仙景。	33.009 萬曆
90.	一位娘仔 賽 觀音。	4.632 順治
91.	高樓上 賽 觀音人物，都在珠簾底。	7.056 順治
92.	高樓上 賽 西施，人物在珠簾底。	16.019 道光
93.	高樓上 賽 西施。	14.024 光緒
94.	那因亞娘昨冥共三哥恩愛， 賽 其再作夫妻。	27.009 光緒
95.	那因亞娘共三哥恩愛， 賽 其再做夫妻。	32.010 道光
96.	嫁女必 勝 吾家，娶婦必弱吾家。	14.307 嘉靖
97.	願得年年頭大勢，新年便得 勝 舊年。	33.027 道光

98.	新年便得勝舊年。	28.040 光緒
99.	嫁女必勝吾家，娶婦必弱吾家。	14.308 嘉靖
100.	人物出眾，又超群。	10.112 萬曆
101.	人物出眾又超群，面貌又聰俊。	10.022 道光
102.	人物出眾又超群。	8.036 光緒
103.	人物出眾，又超群。	10.112 萬曆
104.	物出眾又超群，面貌又聰俊。	10.022 道光
105.	人物出眾又超群。	8.036 光緒

	Type IV: <i>Adverbial Comparative</i> A+可+Verb+B	Total: 21
106.	也句可強你睛盲頭(青冥頭)。	22.366 嘉靖
107.	啞娘那卜學伊，都不可強伊。	26.242 嘉靖
108.	伊後生人好氣好力，句可強我。	8.106 順治
109.	會可強你。	11.752 順治
110.	許你那帶只處，可強當人命。(只：直)	14.286 順治
111.	那卜學伊，都不可強伊？	15.239 順治
112.	有人愛可強無人愛。	17.114 順治
113.	得人惜，可強乞人怨。	17.123 順治
114.	伊有氣力，向可強我。	18.020 道光
115.	那卜學伊，句可強伊。	27.086 道光
116.	有人愛可強無人愛。	30.043 道光
117.	得人惜可強得人怨。	30.047 道光
118.	伊有力氣，向可強我。	15.033 光緒
119.	那卜學伊，可強伊。	23.128 光緒
120.	有人愛，可強無人愛。	25.063 光緒
121.	得人惜可強得人怨。	25.071 光緒
122.	我打一雙金釵句可重伊人个，乞你。	14.111 嘉靖
123.	我冥旦打一雙可重伊個，乞你帶。	5.382 順治
124.	我明旦打一對可重伊的乞你帶。	10.052 道光
125.	我冥旦打一對可重伊個乞汝帶。	8.088 光緒
126.	官人許前頭一陣娘仔，生得句可親淺伊。	8.069 嘉靖

Appendix II:

Seven Further Operas: *Mǎn Tiān Chūn* 滿天春, *Jīn huā nǚ* 金花女, *Yù Yán Lì Jǐ* 鉦妍麗錦, *Bǎi Huā Sàì Jīn* 百花賽錦, *Yáng Guǎn Gē* 楊管歌, *Sū Liùniáng* 蘇六娘, *Tóng chuāng qín shū jì* 同窗琴書記

80 examples

Type I

	Type I: <i>Compare</i> Comparative A+比+B+ Verb	Total: 0
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Type II

	Type II	Total: 70
	(a) <i>Surpass</i> Comparative A+Verb+過+B	Total: 29
127.	結佐兄妹十六年， 勝過 是好姻緣。	39 滿天春
128.	繼祖承宗 勝過 求名。	14.013 金花女
129.	阿娘只識藥，天 勝過 醫官。	02.136 蘇六娘
130.	見娘身體，伏事 勝過 生時。	07.015 蘇六娘
131.	伊人府地官家門楣，兼又人物生得伶俐 賽過 潘安標致。	34 滿天春
132.	莫說是凡間女子，就是月裡姮娥 賽不過 他。	34 滿天春
133.	豈不知恁丈夫人人口甜 賽過 糖密，都那是眼前花。	8 滿天春
134.	又見許紅芍藥花開，粉蝶兒穿採成陣， 賽過 十L錦。	8-9 滿天春
135.	原來是山蒼岸柳苑囿蒼蒼 賽過 牡丹芍藥。	29 滿天春
136.	玉樓上， 賽過 觀音寺。	176.017 金花女
137.	共君結托 賽過 相如配著文君。	31 鈺妍麗錦
138.	刈得我障諂 賽過 清風劍。	8 百花賽錦
139.	遍處是 賽過 蓬萊無二。	4.047 同窗琴書記
140.	遍處是 賽過 蓬萊無二。	4.054 同窗琴書記
141.	同房舍，又同鄉里， 賽過賽過 親生兄弟。	8.079 同窗琴書記
142.	師徒情分， 賽過 親生。	9.076 同窗琴書記
143.	論相惜， 賽過 親生。	9.079 同窗琴書記
144.	師徒情分， 賽過 親生。	9.083 同窗琴書記
145.	三年同衾枕， 賽過 夫妻情。	13.022 同窗琴書記
146.	兄弟相見， 賽過 得金寶。	14.153 同窗琴書記
147.	杭州同學時，恩情 賽過 親生。	17.04 同窗琴書記
148.	咱今對景消愁，都不 強過 鬱除相思病損。	10 滿天春
149.	共我爹討一官媒，共咱明婚正娶，一來全其節，又都不 強過 只招商店內苟合。	11 滿天春
150.	招伊結親義，都不 強過 招商店內只處無人見。	12 滿天春
151.	天時地利人和最美，我今為恁說合， 強過 尔	12 滿天春

	明昏正娶。	
152.	正是腹飢添一斗， 強过 十年糧糧。	30 滿天春
153.	叔做太守兄運使，阮厝門風 強过 恁厝个我那不坦，[女+卜]子你內頭揔不知。	36 滿天春
154.	求得文學胸中志， 強過 掌上珠共金。	4.215 同窗琴書記
155.	為著功名到只路來，山嶺 高過 上天台。	431.017 金花女

	(b) <i>Surpass-Similarity</i> Comparative A+Verb+如+B	Total: 41
156.	共恁恩爱 重 如山。	7 滿天春
157.	我只心內 乱 如系。	15 滿天春
158.	我身上 痛 如刀刺。	12 滿天春(上)
159.	爹爹見尔衣衫襤褸， 発怒 如雷。	34 滿天春(上)
160.	心頭 焦悴 如刀刺。	39 滿天春(上)
161.	自古道，酒令 嚴 如軍令。	13 滿天春(下)
162.	人說酒腸 寬 如海，果然色胆大如天。	22 滿天春(下)
163.	人說酒腸寬如海，果然色胆 大 如天。	22 滿天春(下)
164.	那亏我独自心頭 乱 如系。	24-25 滿天春(下)
165.	恨許番軍催 緊 如箭。	31 滿天春(下)
166.	覩物趣 准 如面。	39-40 滿天春(下)
167.	爹媽早世， 幼 如孩。	64.005 金花女
168.	行過山崗驛遞，雄山峻嶺， 勝 如登天。	577.008 金花女
169.	至親情分 薄 如紙。	221.01 金花女
170.	忍心絕倖 冷 如水。	221.01 金花女
171.	風飛雪白， 細 如絲。	510.008 金花女
172.	我一身 冷 如冰。	640.01 金花女
173.	○○○向般人可 ○○○ 紛紛 如醉。	1 鉦妍麗錦
174.	為尔相思一病 重 如山。	14 鉦妍麗錦
175.	管乜弓鞋短小路 遠 如天。	15 鉦妍麗錦
176.	越自添得我悶 深 如海。	22 鉦妍麗錦
177.	只悶人心肝 疼 如刀刺。	26 鉦妍麗錦
178.	阮身上 疼 如刀刺。	15 百花賽錦 (上)
179.	步□□□□ 遠 如天。	4 百花賽錦(中)
180.	趕浮云飛走 緊 如箭。	4 百花賽錦 (中)
181.	那恨我只弓鞋短細，路 遠 如天。	5 百花賽錦(中)
182.	越自添得我悶 深 如海。	17 百花賽錦
183.	床寬被闊， 冷 如霜。	01.018 蘇六娘

184.	二頭消息冷如霜。	02.079 蘇六娘
185.	頭毛掙落細如絲。	02.150 蘇六娘
186.	肉今割落幼如麵。	02.151 蘇六娘
187.	五年恩愛，共伊人，重如山。	06.106 蘇六娘
188.	事急如火，事急如火。	08.015 蘇六娘
189.	事急如火，事急如火。	08.015 蘇六娘
190.	桃花賊婢，罪過大如天。	09.009 蘇六娘
191.	思深如海。	7.069 同窗琴書記
192.	思量我恨深如海。	9.022 同窗琴書記
193.	階下百拜辭先生，周旋恩德大如天。	12.061 同窗琴書記
194.	只去路塗，心急如箭。	12.062 同窗琴書記
195.	心急如箭。	13.009 同窗琴書記
196.	日月緊如梭。	14.211 同窗琴書記

	(bii) <i>Surpass-Similarity</i> Comparative A+Verb+似+B	Total: 0
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Type III

	Type III: <i>Zero-marked</i> Comparative A+Verb+B	Total:10
197.	听伊言談，志氣超群。	1 滿天春(下)
198.	紅顏胭脂，色賽牡丹，真貴氣。	3 滿天春(下)
199.	我只罗巾，尔收記在心，只罗巾情重千金。	4 滿天春
200.	咱今冥勝入洞房。	14 滿天春(下)
201.	德行如金石，志節賽冰霜。	40 滿天春
202.	『三分親強別人』。	347.008 金花女
203.	《百花賽錦》	百花賽錦
204.	秀才阿,救阮命強再生。	楊管歌
205.	救阮一命重再生。	楊管歌
206.	郊外好所在，真個賽蓬萊。	1.127 同窗琴書記

Type IV

	Type IV: <i>Adverbial</i> Comparative A+可+Verb+B	Total: 0
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Appendix III: Doctrina Christiana 6 examples

Type II

	Type II (a) <i>Surpass</i> Comparative A+Verb+過+B	Total: 6
207.	僚氏賜福乞你。勝過衆婦人。	
208.	惜僚氏勝過各衆物。	
209.	一件惜僚氏勝過各衆物。	
210.	僚氏里賜福與汝。勝過衆婦人。	
211.	受大敖羅里耶。勝過衆天人。	
212.	賜汝大福。勝過衆天人。	

Appendix IV:

174 EXAMPLES OF pi^2 比 IN ALL FUNCTIONS

Table 2.6 Four functions of pi^2 比 in in the folk operas *Li Jing Ji* 荔鏡記 and *Li Zhi Ji* 荔枝記

Schema Version	Verb			Preposition		Comparative marker	Nominal expressions		Difficult to interpret	Total
	‘compare with’	‘compare to’ (metaphor)	‘give an example’	‘according to’	‘with’		Noun	Nominal expressions		
嘉靖 (1566)	4	6	0	2	0	1	8	1	0	22
萬曆 (1581)	2	1	0	0	4	0	3	1	0	11
順治 (1651)	7	0	1	2	0	1	5	1	0	17
道光 (1831)	5	0	2	4	0	1	6	1	0	19
光緒 (1884)	5	0	2	4	0	1	6	5	1	24
Total	23	7	5	12	4	4	28	9	1	93

Table 2.7 Four functions of pi^2 比 in seven local operas from the Ming and the Qing periods

Schema Version	Verb			Preposition		Comparative marker	Nominal expressions		Difficult to interpret	Total
	‘compare with’	‘compare to’ (metaphor)	‘give an example’	‘accordin g to’	‘with ,		Noun	Nominal expression s		

滿天春 1604 <i>Mǎn Tiān Chūn</i>	15	8	5	0	0	0	4	2	2	36
金花女 (明萬曆) 1572-1620 <i>Jīn huā nǚ</i>	6	1	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	11
鉦妍麗錦 1572-1620 <i>Yù Yán Lì Jǐ</i>	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	3
百花賽錦 1572-1620 <i>Bǎi Huā Sài Jīn</i>	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	5
楊管歌 1572-1620 <i>Yáng Guǎn Gē</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
蘇六娘(明萬曆) 1572-1620 <i>Sū Liùniáng</i>	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	5
同窗琴書記 (清乾隆)1782 <i>Tóng chuāng qín shū jì</i>	8	1	0	0	0	0	7	4	0	20
<i>Doctrina Christiana</i>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
Total	37	10	5	0	0	0	16	10	2	81