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Expression of Goal and Source in Burmese: Is there an asymmetry?

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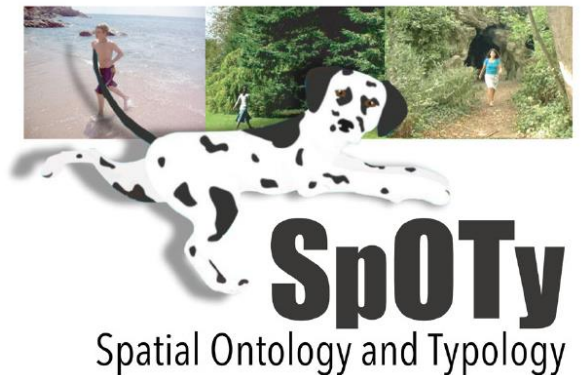
Outline

- 1. Methodology and data**
 - a. SpOTy Project
 - b. Burmese data
- 2. Burmese morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds**
- 3. The Asymmetry hypothesis in Goal and Source expressions**
- 4. Asymmetry in Burmese**

1. Methodology and data

SpOTy Project

- *Projet SpOTy (Spatial Ontology and Typology, Labex ASLAN, Université de Lyon, 2020-2024)*
- Aim of the project:
 - Typology of Motion expression
 - Ontology of spatial relations (cross-connected network)
 - Web application: incremental database and SPARQL/Sparnatural query tool
- Database:
 - 67 languages (20 phyla)
 - Genetically, geographically, and typologically diverse
 - However: sample is not balanced



1. Methodology and data

Data collected

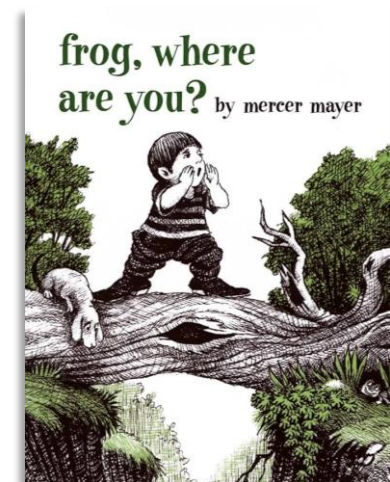
- For this presentation specifically:
 - Central Burma variety of Burmese
 - Collected in Yangon (Burma) between 2008 and 2010
 - Video stimulus *Trajectoire*, designed to elicit descriptions of motion events (Ishibashi et al. 2006, Vuillermet & Kopecka 2019), but also *Frog Story* (Mayer 1969) and narratives



Trajectoire: Woman runs away_from tree coming

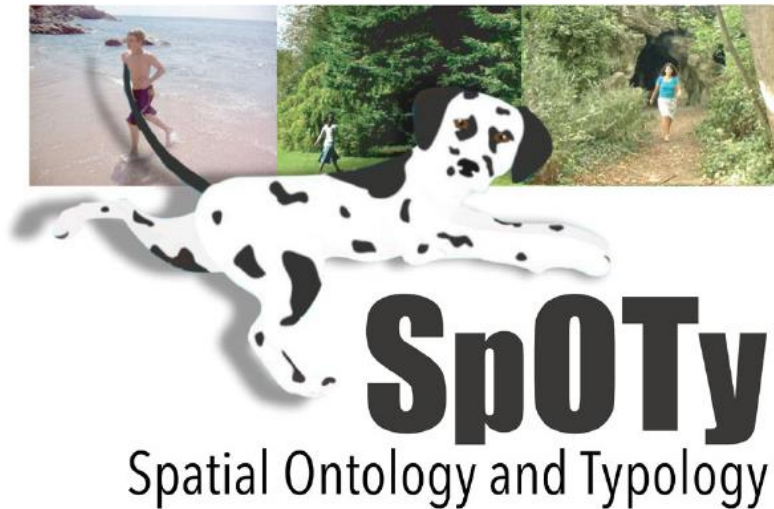


Trajectoire: Woman exits cave ascends stairs going_away



Frog Story

Outline



1. *Methodology and data*
2. **Burmese morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds**
 - a. About the Burmese language
 - b. Spontaneous motion event in Burmese
3. **The Asymmetry hypothesis in Goal and Source expressions**
4. **Asymmetry in Burmese**

2. Burmese Morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds

About the Burmese language

- National language of Myanmar (Burma). Native language of 2/3 of the population (\pm 35 M)
- Phonological features (*cf.* MSEA languages): complex vowel system, tone system, restricted set of final consonants
- Tendency to monosyllabicity, non-inflectional language (analytic), widespread compounding
- Optionality (pragmatically-driven) of many grammatical categories (grammatical tense, personal marking...)
- (SO)V language, postpositions

(1) ပြင်ပေးလိုက်မယ်။
pyiN² pe³ lai? =mε²
V_H: fix V_{AUX}:BENEF ASP:terminative=IRR
'(I) will fix (it) for (you)....'

2. Burmese Morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds

About the Burmese language

- Grammatical features

- ...
- (SO)V language, postpositions
- **Serial verb constructions (SVC)**

(2) ဝါးပြဲတွေသေနတ်ပစ်ပြေးတယ်။

də.myá¹ -twe² θənaʔ =ne¹ piʔ pye³ =tɛ²
 bandit -PL gun =with shoot, throw run =REAL

'The bandits shot with their guns and ran.'

- **'Directional' SVC** ⇔ includes at least one path verb

(3) ကောင်မလေး ဂူထဲကနေ ထွက်သွားတယ်။ [AA/08, 59_025]

kaʊN²ma²le³ gu² tʰɛ³ =ka¹.ne² tʰwɛʔ θwa³ =tɛ²
 young.woman cave interior =ABL go.out go/CFG =REAL

'A young lady goes out from the cave [away from the deictic center].'

Serial Verb Construction (SVC)

- No connector
- Same grammatical informations
- Shared argument(s)
- Describe a single event

2. Burmese Morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds

Spontaneous motion event in Burmese

- Spontaneous Motion : “Spontaneous motion refers to an event that semantically encode a figure (F) moving (path) from a ground (Source) to another ground (Goal) in a certain manner (manner/ caused)” (Talmy 1972:1, also 2000)

- Burmese Ground expression in spontaneous motion events:
 - Bare noun (*no post-position, no relator noun*)
 - Noun and postposition
 - Noun and relator noun
 - Noun and both relator noun and postposition

2. Burmese Morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds

Spontaneous motion event in Burmese

- Burmese postpositions:

*Table 1a:
Burmese postpositions
found in motion
events*

	Postpositions			Other non-spatial functions
Source	က	ka ¹	ablative	nominative, topic
	ကနေ	ka ¹ ne ²	ablative	-
Goal	ကို	ko ²	allative	accusative, dative, focus
	မှာ	ma ²	locative, allative	possessor, experiencer
Medial portion	အတိုင်း	ʔəTaiN ³	'along'	'according to', 'as'

- (4) ပင်လယ်ကမ်းခြေက ဂူထဲကို ဝင်သွားတယ်။ [TRAJAA_02]
 piN²le²-kaN³-ce²=ka¹ gu² t^hε³=ko² wiN² θwa³=tε²
 sea-shore-origin=**ABL** cave interior=**ALL** enter go=REAL
 '(She) went into the cave from the sea shore [away form the deictic center].'

2. Burmese Morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds

Spontaneous motion event in Burmese

- Burmese Relator Noun (RN) :
 - Configurational information about the Ground, topological features
 - 9 RNs found in our data

*Table 1b:
Burmese Relator Nouns
found in motion events*

Relator nouns		
ထဲ	t ^h ɛ ³	interior
ပေါ်	pa ²	top
အောက်	ʔaʔ	bottom
ခြေ(ရင်း)	c ^h e ² (yiN ³)	foot, origin
ဆီ	s ^h i ²	place, in presence of
ဘက်	bɛʔ	direction
ရှေ့	ʃe ¹	front
စပ်	saʔ	edge
ဘေး	be ³	side

Outline



1. *Methodology and data*
2. *Burmese morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds*
3. **The Asymmetry hypothesis in Goal and Source expressions**
 - a. **Cognitive hypothesis**
 - b. **Linguistic realization of the asymmetry**
4. **(A)symmetry in Burmese**



3. The Asymmetry hypothesis between the expressions of Source and Goal and its linguistic realization

Cognitive Hypothesis

- Differences and similarities in verbalization between the starting point (Source) and the endpoint (Goal) when describing a path followed by a Figure
- The Goal is cognitively more prominent (more salient)
- The Goal is favored over the expression of the Source in the descriptions of motion events

(Ikegami 1987, Bourdin 1997, Kopecka & Ishibashi 2011, Kopecka & Vuillermet 2021)



3. The Asymmetry hypothesis between the expressions of Source and Goal and its linguistic realization

Linguistic realization of the asymmetry

(A) Semantic Asymmetry

- Conflation : tendency to encode Goal (allative) and Location (essive/locative) in the same morpheme. Conflation of Location and Source is rare.

(Creissels 2008)

Catalan :
LOC-ALL conflation
(Creissels 2006: 20)

(5) a. Els hem trobat / enviat **a** la botiga
O3PL AUX.S1PL find / send **LOC/ALL** DEF.F.SG shop
'We found / sent them at / to the shop'

b. Vénen **de** la botiga
come.S3PL **ABL** DEF.F.SG shop
'They are coming from the shop'



3. The Asymmetry hypothesis between the expressions of Source and Goal and its linguistic realization

Linguistic realization of the asymmetry

(A) Semantic Asymmetry

- Greater semantic granularity: more morphemes for Goal-encoding than Source-encoding. (Bourdin 1997:190)

Table 2: Motion-encoding prepositions in Central Thai

# of forms	Forms	Orientation
6	ยัง jaŋ / สู่ sù: / ถึง t ^h ǎŋ / หา hǎ: ทาง t ^h a:ŋ / จนถึง con.t ^h ǎŋ	Allative, different meaning (to, up to, towards) and uses (places, objects, people)
2	จาก cà:k / แต่ tè:	Source



3. The Asymmetry hypothesis between the expressions of Source and Goal and its linguistic realization

Linguistic realization of the asymmetry

(B) Morphosyntactic asymmetry

- Goals markers are morphologically less complex (Kopecka & Vuillermet 2021:10)

French: complexity of Source markers (Creissels 2006: 22)

(6) a. Je vais **chez** mon oncle
S1SG go **AT.HOME.OF** my uncle
'I am going to my uncle's.'

b. Je viens **de** **chez** mon oncle
S1SG come **ABL** **AT.HOME.OF** my uncle
'I am coming from my uncle's.'



3. The Asymmetry hypothesis between the expressions of Source and Goal and its linguistic realization

Linguistic realization of the asymmetry

(B) Morphosyntactic asymmetry

- Encoding of Goal is more straightforward: Goal markers may be optional
(Bourdin 1997: 187, Ikegami 1987)

*Stieng (Austro-Asiatic, Cambodia):
optionality of the Goal preposition
(Bon 2014:551)*

- (7) a. sədian lap **di** ga:h
person enter **to** forest
'The person enters (to) the forest.'
- b. sədian lap **∅** ga:h
person enter **∅** forest
'The person enters the forest.'



3. The Asymmetry hypothesis between the expressions of Source and Goal and its linguistic realization

Linguistic realization of the asymmetry

(C) Syntactic Asymmetry

- Syntactic constraints on Goal / Source arguments. (Kopecka & Vuillermet 2021)
- (8)
- a. I climbed from my room up the ladder onto the room.
 - b. I climbed onto the room.
 - c. I climbed up the ladder
 - d. *I climbed from my room.



All these examples point in the same direction: from differences in the way languages express Source and Goal to a tendency to favor the Goal or the endpoint when expressing a motion event.

Outline



SpOTy

Spatial Ontology and Typology

1. *Methodology and data*
2. *Burmese morphosyntactic devices used to express Goal and Source grounds*
3. *The Asymmetry hypothesis in Goal and Source expressions*
4. **Asymmetry in Burmese**
 - a. **Semantic asymmetry**
 - b. **Morphosyntactic asymmetry**
 - c. **Syntactic asymmetry**

4. Asymmetry in Burmese

(A) Semantic asymmetry: Case conflation

- Locative postposition မှာ ၎်ma² can be used with :

- Static Locative Ground

(9) ကလေးတွေ ကမ်းခြေမှာ ကစားနေတယ်။

kəle³-twe² kaN³c^he²=ma² gəza³ ne²=tɛ²
child-PL shore=LOC play IPFV=REAL

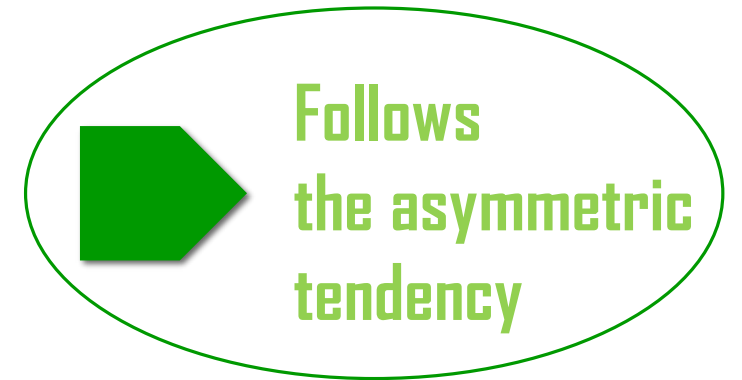
'The children are playing at the beach.'

- Goal Ground

(10) အဲတောစပ်မှာ ရောက်တဲ့ အခါကျတော့ ... [FROG_13]

?ɛ³ tɔ³ sa? =ma² yaɔ? =tɛ¹ ?əkha2 ca1=Tɔ1 ...
DEM forest edge=LOC arrive=REAL moment fall=WHEN

When he arrived at the edge of the forest,...



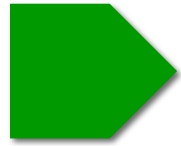
4. Asymmetry in Burmese

(A) Semantic asymmetry: Put on / Take off

- In the clothing lexicon, verbs show more semantic granularity with ‘put on’ (Goal-oriented) than ‘take off’ (Source-oriented)

Put on (Goal oriented)	Take off (Source oriented)
စီး <i>si</i> ³ ‘put on, wear (shoes, etc.)’	ချွတ် <i>c^hu?</i> ‘take off, remove’ (shoes, clothes, hat, etc.)
စွပ် <i>su?</i> ‘put on (socks, gloves, mask, etc.)’	
ရန် <i>yaN</i> ³ ‘(of monk) wear or put on robe’	ဖြုတ် <i>p^hyou?</i> ‘take off, uncouple, unhitch’
ရုံ <i>youN</i> ¹ ‘wear or put on (a cloak or robe)’	
ဝတ် <i>wu?</i> ‘wear, put on’	
ဆောင်း <i>s^haŋN</i> ² ‘wear a hat’	
ပန် <i>paN</i> ² ‘wear in the hair’	

Table 3: Verbs for ‘put on’ and ‘take off’



Follows the asymmetric tendency

4. Asymmetry in Burmese

(B) Morphosyntactic asymmetry: Inventory size

- More postpositions dedicated to Source than Goal:

- 1 Goal postposition
- 2 Source postpositions

Postposition	Meaning	# of Goal	# of Source
ကနေ ka ¹ ne ²	Ablative	-	53
က ka ¹	Ablative	-	74
မှာ ma ²	Locative	2	-
ကို ko ²	Allative	96	-

Table 4: Postpositions used for Goal and Source Grounds



**Asymmetric but in favor of Source
(against general tendency)**

4. Asymmetry in Burmese

(B) Morphosyntactic asymmetry: Inventory size

- However, no semantic distinction between the 2 Source postpositions

(11) a. ကောင်မလေးတစ်ယောက် ဂူထဲကထွက်သွားတယ်။ [TRAJHNTH_44]
kaɔN²ma²le³ tə=yɑɔʔ gu² t^hɛ³=ka¹ t^hwɛʔ θwa³=tɛ²
young.woman one=CLF cave inside=**ABL** exit go=REAL
'A young woman goes out of a cave.'

b. ကောင်မလေး ဂူထဲကနေ ထွက်သွားတယ်။ [TRAJAA_36]
kaɔN²ma²le³ θə=yɑɔʔ gu² t^hɛ³=ka¹ne² t^hwɛʔ θwa³=tɛ²
young.woman one=CLF cave interior=**ABL** go.out go=REAL
'A young woman goes out of a cave.'

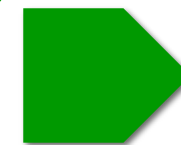
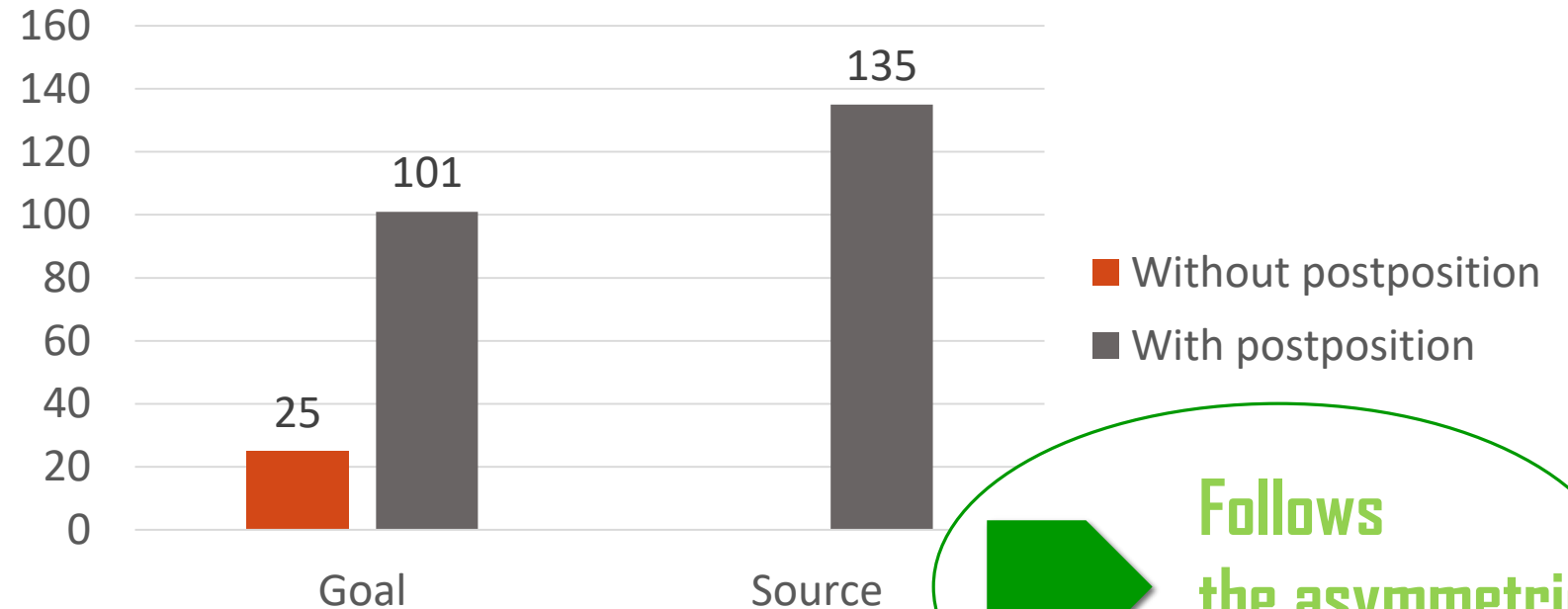
 **Against general tendency**

4. Asymmetry in Burmese

(B) Morphosyntactic asymmetry: Optionality

- Out of 126 Goal expressions, 25 are not marked with a postposition > Goal-marking is optional
- Source-marking is compulsory

Number of Goals and Sources with and without postposition



**Follows
the asymmetric
tendency**

4. Asymmetry in Burmese

(B) Morphosyntactic asymmetry: Complexity

- Source marking is **NOT** fundamentally more complex than Goal marking

Table 5: Number of Source and Goal Grounds, according to the type of construction

Construction	# of Goal	# of Source
Bare noun	2	-
N – Rel	19	-
N – Rel – Rel	4	-
N – PostP	9	13
N – Rel – Post	85	109
N – Rel – Rel - PostP	7	13

As seen before, only Goals can appear without a postposition

Similar proportion of Goals and Sources for the three constructions involving postpositions

 **Symmetric (against general tendency)**

4. Asymmetry in Burmese

(B) Morphosyntactic asymmetry: Complexity

- We note that all Relational Nouns appears in both Goal and Source expressions

Table 6: Number of relator nouns occurring with Goals and Sources (only showing forms with at least 5 total occurrences)

Postposition	Meaning	# of Goal	# of Source
ထဲ t ^h ε ³	Inside	51	47
ပေါ် pɔ ²	Top	17	27
ကြား ca ³	Between	10	14
စပ် sa [?]	Edge	10	7
ဆီ s ^h i ²	Place, in presence of	13	3
အောက် ʔaɔ [?]	Underside	3	11

 **Symmetric**
(against general tendency)

4. Asymmetry in Burmese

(C) Syntactic asymmetry: Biclausal constructions

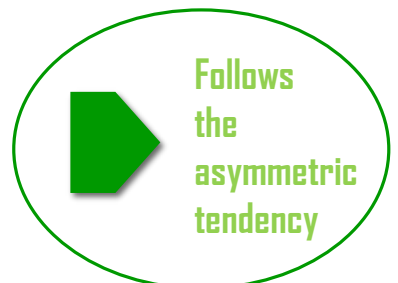
- Biclausal construction for Source expression

- Source is often expressed in a different, non-finite clause, in an iconic sequence (Schapper 2011)

➤ Source is syntactically more complex than Goal

(12) a. ကောင်မလေးတစ်ယောက် သစ်ပင်ခြေရင်းကနေပြီးတော့ မြက်ခင်းပေါ်ကို ပြေးလာတယ်။ [TRAJHNTNTH_13]
[kaʊN²ma¹le³ tə-yaʊ? θi²piN² cʰe²yiN³=ka¹ ne²=pyi³tə¹] myε²kʰiN³ pə²=ko² pye³ la²=tɛ²
young.woman one-CLF tree foot=TOP stay=SUB.TIME lawn on=ALL run come=REAL
'A young woman comes running onto the lawn from the foot of the tree.'
(lit. 'having stayed at the foot of the tree, the young woman ran onto the lawn')

b. ကောင်မလေးတစ်ယောက် ဂူထဲကနေပြီးတော့ ထွက်သွားတယ်။ [TRAJHNTNTH_22]
[kaʊN²ma¹le³ tə-yaʊ? gu² tʰɛ³=ka¹ ne²=pyi³tə¹] tʰwε² la²=tɛ²
young.woman one-CLF cave inside=ABL stay=SUB.TIME exit come=REAL
'A young woman came out of the cave.' (lit. 'having stayed inside the cave, a young woman came out.')



4. Asymmetry in Burmese

(C) Syntactic asymmetry: Constraints on arguments

- Syntactic constraint: Goal-oriented verbs may licence Source arguments

Verb ဝင် wiN² 'enter':

(13) a. လူတစ်ယောက် ဂူထဲကို ဝင်သွားတယ်။ [TRAJHNTN_03]
 lu² tə-yaaʔ gu² t^hɛ³=ko² wiN² θwa³=tɛ²
 person one-CLF cave inside=ALL enter go=REAL
 'A person went into the cave.'

With **Goal** Ground

b. ပင်လယ်ကမ်းခြေက ဂူထဲကို ဝင်သွားတယ်။ [TRAJAA_02]
 piN²lɛ²-kaN³-ce²=ka¹ gu² t^hɛ³=ko² wiN² θwa³=tɛ²
 sea-shore-origin=ABL cave interior=ALL enter go=REAL

With **Source** and **Goal** Grounds

'(She) went into the cave from the sea shore [away from the deictic center].'

c. အပြင်ကနေ ဝင်သွားတယ်။ [Elicited]
 ʔəpyiN²=ka¹ne² wiN² θwa³=tɛ²
 outside=ABL enter go=REAL
 She entered from the outside.'

With **Source** Ground

Symmetric
 (against general tendency)

5. Conclusion

Expression of Goal and Source in Burmese: Is there an asymmetry ?

- **Spatial symmetries:**
 - Source-marking is not more morphologically complex than Goal marking
 - Goal-oriented Verbs may licence Goal and Source arguments
- **Spatial asymmetries favoring Goals:**
 - Locative postposition can be used for Goal Grounds
 - Goal markers are optional
 - Source marking can be more syntactically complex than Goal marking, using biclausal constructions
- **A spatial asymmetry favoring Source ?**
 - More postpositions are *dedicated* to Source: ka^1 and ka^1ne^2
 - However, they convey the same meaning (true synonyms) and do not add any semantic granularity into the postpositional system

5. Conclusion

Domain	Cross-linguistic tendency	Case of Burmese
Semantic	Conflation Locative-Allative rather than Locative-Ablative	Locative postposition မှာ ṁa² can be used for Goal Grounds
	More semantic granularity for Goal markers	No semantic granularity
Morphosyntactic	Goal marking is less complex	Goal marking is not less complex
	Goal markers are optional	Goal markers are optional
	More markers for Goals than Sources	More forms dedicated to Source marking
Syntactic	Verbs tend to allow for Goal arguments but not Source arguments	Goal and Source Arguments licensed by verbs
	More complex syntax for Source expression	Yes, with biclausal constructions

Thank you for your attention!

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