INTRODUCTION: PERSON AND EVIDENCE IN HIMALAYAN LANGUAGES

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The present volume results from an initiative to foster cooperation among scholars of Himalayan languages in Europe. The initiative was launched five years ago and has brought about a series of annual workshop meetings and individual cooperative projects (cf. http://www.isw.unibe.ch/EuroHimal). The 1998 workshop, held in Heidelberg, was devoted to the role that notions of speech act participants play in the grammar of various Himalayan languages, and the present collection represents, with some additions and subtractions, the proceedings of this workshop. In the following I will discuss the rationale for the topics covered in this volume, especially the ways in which the indexing of speech act participants is related to evidentials and other epistemological operators. I close this introduction with a brief outline of the structure of the volume.

1. FROM EPISTEMOLOGY TO PERSON-MARKING

Modern Tibetan dialects have elaborate systems of epistemological coding through copulas and cliticized auxiliaries derived from them. Terminology and analysis varies, but what emerges as the functional core and the historical root of these systems is the marking of 'old, assimilated, first-hand, personal, intimate knowledge' vs. 'newly acquired, recent knowledge' (e.g. DeLancey 1992, 1997). What is at stake is knowledge of the situation, but, as Katrin Häsl er shows in her contribution to this volume, the notion of assimilated and personal knowledge can have various contextual side-effects, such as implying that the speaker (or, in questions, the addressee1) was herself volitionally engaged in events leading to the reported situation. Compare the following Dege dialect examples from Häsl er's chapter. (I regularize writing of the palatal glide to <y>.)

1 In the following I refer to the combined set of speaker in statements and addressee in questions as the 'conjunct person', following Hale (1980) in terminology, but without endorsing an analysis of this in terms of implicit quote frames. For discussion, see Tournadre's and Häsl er's chapters in this volume.
(1) a. kho ̀ ǹā yọ̀.  
3SG.ABS  here be [ASSIMILATED]  
‘He is here.’ (As an answer to “is he here?”, implying that the speaker makes a well-informed statement.)

b. khoṅō: sę; tō-̀yi nqo-si yọ̀.  
3PL.ABS food beg-NZR go-CONTINUOUS AUX.ASSIMILATED  
‘They are going to beg for food.’ (The speaker has told them to do so.)

In some dialects, notably in the best-known variety, i.e. what is labeled Standard Spoken Tibetan (SST) by Nicolas Tournadre (this volume), the epistemological operator no longer takes the situation per se as its argument, but is specifically focused on one of the **participants** in the clause. As a result, the marker no longer merely indicates that the conjunct person (the speaker in statements, the addressee in questions) has old, ingrained knowledge of the situation, but specifically, that she has such knowledge of a participant. This generally means that the conjunct person herself is, will be or was directly involved in the situation (cf. DeLancey 1992), and the marker thus assumes an ‘egophoric’ or ‘ego-modal’ function (Tournadre 1994, 1996, this volume). This is illustrated by the following examples from SST: ²

(2) a. ǹas dpe.cha yag.po lta-gi.yod. (Tournadre 1996: 275)  
1SG.ERG Tibetan.book well read-IMPERFECTIVE ASSIMILATED  
‘As for me, I am reading the sacred texts.’ (unlike the others)

b. khoṅ ńa.’i rtsa-la phebs-kyi.yod. (Tournadre 1996: 223)  
3SG.ABS 1SG.GEN at-DAT come-IMPERFECTIVE ASSIMIL.  
‘He comes to my place’ (frequent fact well-known to the speaker)

c. khor dṇul tog.tsam ’dug /*yod. (DeLancey 1997: 44)  
3SG.DAT money some be be [ASSIMILATED]  
‘He has some money.’

Unlike in Written Tibetan, Dege and most other dialects reported on in this volume, the auxiliaries yod (roughly, existential) and yin (roughly, equational) are here restricted to clauses in which the conjunct person is involved as a participant in one way or the other, and this is why yod is odd in (2c). As Tournadre (1996:

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² An interesting parallel to this is found on the Eastern borders of the Himalayas, in the Loloish language Sangkong: here, the grammaticalized reflex of a first person pronoun nga indexes either the speaker’s personal acquaintance with the situation or his or her direct involvement in it (Matisoff 1993).
220, note 9) points out, a Written Tibetan sentence like nam.khar skar.ma ma nije po yod ‘there are a lot of stars in the sky’ could only mean ‘I have a lot of stars in the sky’ in the standard spoken language! (cf. also Hein, this volume, on in in the Tabo/Spiti dialect.)

While in principle any participant can fall within the scope of Tibetan epistemological operators, in verb-headed clauses it is typically the agent that is at issue as the willful instigator of a situation. This manifests itself most strongly in SST, where the conjunct/egophoric or assimilated knowledge markers corresponding to WT yod and yin typically focus on the agent. While in the imperfective system, this is only a tendency (cf. (2b) above), other tense/aspect forms are more restrictive: the marker yin in the aorist and the future implies that the speaker was or will be a willful instigator. This is shown by the following contrast discussed by DeLancey (1990):

(3) a. ñas dkar.yol bcag-pa.yin.
   1SG.ERG cup break-AORIST CONJUNCT AGENT
   ‘I broke the cup (intentionally).’

b. ñas dkar.yol bcag-soñ.
   1SG.ERG cup break-AORIST
   ‘I broke the cup (accidentally).’

In the aorist system, the bias towards volitional instigators is further strengthened by the fact that in SST, yin not only contrasts with soñ but also with what Tournadre (1996, this volume) calls the ‘ego-receptive’ auxiliary byun. This auxiliary is as conjunct/egophoric as yin, but it focusses on patients, e.g. in ña na-byun ‘I got sick’ or g.yar-byun [x] lent me sth.’; the latter is directly opposed to g.yar-pa.yin ‘I lent [x] sth.’ (Tournadre 1996: 232). This is in line with the etymological root sense of byun, which is ‘to show up, come forth, emerge, become visible in front of the speaker’s eyes’ (Roland Bielmeier, Randy LaPolla, p.c.), and the auxiliary often simply indicates that the action is spatially directed towards the speaker (also cf. DeLancey 1990).

This bias towards agents seems to be further grammaticalized in the Central Tibetan variety Lhomi, which is spoken in the upper reaches of the Arun valley in Eastern Nepal. From Versalainen & Versalainen’s (1980) short description it appears that the bias is found in this language across all tenses and aspects, and that the semantic notion of agent is furthermore replaced by a syntactified notion of transitive or semitransitive actor. Thus, forms cognate with WT yin would appear to be true person-markers, indexing the conjunct person in actor role (‘...q designates a “tense and rising pitch contour”):
(4) a. ṅe ṭaku-la ra 'con-eng.
    ISG.ERG friend-DAT goat sell-CNJUNCT A³
    ‘I sold a goat to a friend.’

b. ṅa 'khim-laq 'lip-eng.
    ISG.ABS house-DAT come-CNJUNCT A
    ‘I arrived in the house.’

The agentive bias is a general concomitant of conjunct-marking in the Himalayas (but not necessarily elsewhere; see Curnow 2000). It is quite salient in Kathmandu Newar, where the conjunct form is restricted to scenarios with the conjunct person as agent in a controlled event (Hale 1980, Hargreaves 1991). The same bias is also detectable in Dolakha Newar, although this language grammaticalizes person in the sense of 1st vs. 2nd vs. 3rd rather than in the sense of a conjunct category (speaker in statements, addressee in questions): first person agreement tends to be limited to agentive subjects in Dolakha (Genetti 1994: 107, DeLancey 1992). These findings may shed light on typological curiosities found in other person-marking systems in the Himalayas, especially on Kiranti languages, which are bordered by both the Dolakha and Lhomi speaking areas.

First, verb agreement systems sometimes show traits of what one might call split-accusativity, the reverse of standard split-ergativity: whereas theories of alignment splits predict that higher-ranking persons trigger a nominative-accusative alignment of markers (e.g. Silverstein 1976, DeLancey 1981, Comrie 1981), verb endings in several Kiranti languages show ergative-absolutive or tripartite alignment in the first person singular that contrasts with traces of nominative-accusative or neutral alignment of persons lower on the hierarchy. In Hayu (Michailovsky 1988), for example, the suffix -ŋo (non-past; -sunŋ in the past) covers first person singular S and O referents (e.g., buʔ-ŋo ‘I get up’, puʔ-ŋo ‘he lifts me up’) whereas the A-function is covered by -ŋ/-N/-sunŋ if acting on a third person (e.g., puŋ ‘I lift him up’) and by the portmanteau morpheme -ŋo (-Nno in the past) if acting on a second person (puk-ŋo ‘I lift you up’). Third person referents, by contrast, show zero-marking in the singular in all functions and are coded by the equally role-neutral suffixes -tshe and -me in the dual and plural, respectively. There is even a trace of accusative alignment in the form of the suffix -ko ~ -ku, which is restricted to third person objects in past tense forms (e.g., pux-kuŋ ‘I lifted him up’, pux-ko ‘you/he lifted him up’ vs. zero-marked buŋ ‘he gets up’). Essentially the same distribution holds for Yamphu (Rutgers 1998), Limbu (van Driem 1997, Michailovsky, this volume), Belhare

³ I use the Dixonian abbreviations S for sole argument of intransitives, A for transitive actors, and O for (primary or direct) objects.