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PERSON-MARKING IN TB LANGUAGES OF NORTH-EASTERN INDIA*

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It would be absurd to build up a typology of TB person marking only from NE (North-East) India examples. Yet, for historical reasons that are still not clear, the Brahmaputra middle valley (Assam) and its immediate surroundings have concentrated such a wide variety of TB languages[1] that a good undestanding of what happens in NE India can always serve as a tentative guideline. Nearly all known TB subgroups are found in North-Eastern India[2/3].

SUMMARY

1. *No marking in the VP: possible use of personal pronouns*
    1.1. *PRO behave just like nouns (Tani, Bodo-Garo)*
    1.2. *PRO tend to become V-suffixes (Tiwa)*
    1.3. *PRO behave differently in 1st vs. 2nd person (N.Naga)*
2. *Person marking in the VP, with "possessive" person-markers*
    2.1. *with prefix and suffix (Lushai-Hmar and Anal types)*
    2.2. *with prefix or suffix (Kamhau type, Thado type)*
    2.3. *with prefix only, marking O: some 'Naga' languages*
3. *Person marking in the VP phrase, conjugations*
    3.1 *Nocte type, and the Yaongyimchen (Yacham) case*
    3.2 *Northern Mishmi: the Digaru problem*

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* This paper is dedicated to my informants and friends in North Eastern India.

1 There are also, apart from Indo-Aryan languages (Assamese and Bengali), Mon-Khmer languages (the Khasi group), and Tai languages (the most important, in number of speakers, being Khamti). In addition, there are a fairly good number of Munda speakers, working in tea-gardens.

2 Loloish is represented by some hundreds of Lisu speakers. The Southern Mishmi languages belong, at least for some features, to the NE group. Jingpho is also represented, under the label Singpho. Burmese is spoken by the Mag group living in Tripura. Only Karen, I think, is not heard of.

3 Speakers of Qiangic and Baic languages are also not to be found in NE India, but only in China. [Ed.]

3.3 Southern Mishmi: Miju and the Meyor-Zakhring language

4. Final remarks

My coding of syntactic/semantic roles differs from Dixon's: **S** subject (answers to P: predicate); **U** unique actant with intransitive verbs; **A** agent with transitive verb; **O** patient with transitive verb. The main reason for this uncommon notation is that two different levels are merged in Dixon's scheme: A and O are semantic values that are variously encoded; S and P are morphosyntactic functions and are at a different level : an S may be A, or O, or U. This distinction has been well known among French linguists since Hagège (1980, 1982).

Persons are marked as follows: s[ingular]1, s2, s3; INC[lusive]; EXC, p[lural]1, p2, p3; d[ual]1, d2, d3. Transitive situations are diagrammed by arrows, e.g. 1>2 means 1 is agent while 2 is patient. "p1, p2, p3" is better than 1p, 2p, 3p, which is ambiguous (3rd plural or 3rd person, etc.).

1. NO PERSONAL AFFIX ON V

(Bodo-Garo, Tani, West-Kameng area, Karbi, most 'Naga' languages)

1.1. Personal pronouns behave like nouns - or nearly so.

1.1.1. Tani dialect group

Most of these people are high mountain dwellers, in Central Arunachal, although trade and so-called internecine strife have pushed or drawn many of them southward, down to the lower hills, or even (in the case of the Mishing) into the Valley. Among these groups, the Apatani are famous for their use of terraces, a very organized wet-rice cultivation in a secluded valley[4] which has reached a high density of population.

All Tani dialects [5] have a common set of personal pronouns, with a special suffix for the plural. Verbs are marked for Tense-Aspect-Mood, but not for person. About Tani dialects we have excellent papers, and a full Ph.D. dissertation by Jackson Sun (1993a), who seems now to have shifted his attention to more eastern peoples. The following examples are from Galo(ng)[6]:

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4 See Bower 1953. The same author has also written about the Zemi Nagas, who live in the North Cachar Hills, and with whom she lived for several years. See also Fürer-Haimendorf 1946.

5 According to Jackson Sun, none has tones; vowel length is phonemic. But P.T. Abraham (1985:5-6) indicates 3 tones for Apatani.

6 Some dialects say [galõ] and some say [galõŋ]. It is an eastern dialect. My informant here is Ito Riram, a good informant and a true Galõ; he knows his linear genealogy for 23 generations. These sentences have been checked with other informants.

(1)	*ŋo jup-do*	I sleep
(2)	*no jup-do*	you sleep

In some (not all) dependent clauses, which are formed with nominalized verbal roots, subject pronouns are marked as genitive:

(3)	*no-k*	*a:-dak-lo*	when you came
	s2-GEN	come-T-LOC	
(4)	*bɨ*	*in-bo-lo*	if he goes
	s3	go-VN-LOC	

-lo is a locative marker, added to nominalizing morphemes *-dak* or *-bo*.

1.1.2. The Bodo-Garo group (BG).

The Bodo-Garo languages constitute the most important TB group in North-Eastern India, both in number of speakers and in historical importance. Most BG speakers live in the Brahmaputra valley, or close by, except the Garos of Western Meghalaya (some live in the Valley) and the people of Tripura State. The BG settlements in the Valley probably antedate the Christian Era, and in Upper Assam two powerful BG kingdoms[7] resisted the Tai-Ahom inroads until the 16th c. Roughly speaking, this subgroup can be divided into three distinct branches: the Garo languages, the Boro-Dimasa-Kokborok (BDK) dialects[8], and the Deuri language isolated in several villages in Upper Assam. The real founder of Bodo-Garo studies is Robbins Burling, who speaks Garo.

In none of these languages (except Tiwa, also called Lalung), is there any person marking in the VP. In most of them, pronouns behave like nouns, and p1 (1st person plural) has a special pronoun, which is not a pluralized form of s1[9].

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7 These are called in Assamese *Chutiya* and *Kachari*. The autonyms are Jimosaya (Deuri) and Dimasa, respectively

8 Burling recognizes a fourth subgroup, called 'Koch', but from what I know and from Burling's published evidence, some of his 'Koch' languages belong to my BDK group, while some belong to a wider 'Garo' subgroup. More information is needed to clear it up. The special feature of BDK languages is that they have diphthongs.

9 Garo from Burling 1961; Boro from Bhattacharya 1975; Dimasa and Deuri from my notes; Kokborok from Pai 1976.

(5)

	s1	s1	p1	p2
Garo	***aŋ-a***	***naʔ-a***	***ciŋ-a*** ***aʔn-ciŋ***	***naʔ-sim-aŋ***
Boro	***áŋ***	***nóŋ***	***zoŋ***	***noŋ-sór***
Dimasa	***áŋ***	***níŋ***	***ʒeŋ***	***ní-si***
Kokborok	***aŋ***	***nɯŋ***	***tʃɯŋ***	***nɔ-rɔk***
Deuri	***ã***	***no***	***dʒɔu***	***lɔu***

The following examples are from Deuri[10]:

(6) ***bŭro-maj*** ***ke-n***
which-ALL go-FT
Where are [you] going ?

(7) ***no*** ***bŭro-si-na*** ***la-ha-n***
s2 take-N-AC take-DIS-FT
Which will you take (marry) ?

(8) ***bej*** ***ba-si-na*** ***ã*** ***la-ha-n***
girl that-N-AC s1 take-DIS-FT
I will take that one.

In many BG languages, there is a morpheme for marking the subject or, more often, the topic. In Deuri, this topic marker is *-wa* (*-ja*, *-a*). In Garo, this morpheme is *-a*, and is always suffixed to the "nominative" case of pronouns. This is now a typical feature of pronouns within the Garo nominal lexicon. In this respect, there is a morphological pronominal category in Garo.

1.2. A new development in Tiwa (Lalung)

The Tiwa people (known as Lalung by the Assamese) lived for a long time on the eastern slopes of the Jaintia kingdom (East Khasi Hills), often with Karbi (=Mikir) speakers. Because of Bengali influence on the Jaintia kingdom, many

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10 Deori was studied a century ago by W.B. Brown, a British officer in Lakhimpur. He spent two or three days in the beautiful Deori village where I have been living for two or three months. His book, *An Outline Grammar of the Deori Chutiya language*, Shillong, 1895, is clever and useful. An Assamese professor, Upendra Nath Goswami, published papers about Deori that have recently been made into a booklet (1994).