LIMBU *NOUS AUTRES* AND
1ST PERSON MORPHOLOGY[1]

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In a number of Eastern Kiranti languages, verb forms for 1st person patient scenarios have been replaced, in some cases optionally, by a construction in which a word for "man" represents the 1st person patient, and the verb form lacks the usual 1st person markers to index the object. This micro-areal phenomenon has been described by Ebert (1991:86-88; 1994:28-29) and named "impersonal 1st person patient marking". The precise extent of such marking, its integration into the verbal morphology, and the particular morphemes used vary from language to language. I will discuss this phenomenon in the Maiwa-Mewa Khola dialect, with reference to Limbu 1st person marking in general, including some evidence from the notes of Brian Hodgson (see accompanying article).

In Limbu, two morphemes are used in this construction: *yapmi* and *napmi*. It is not entirely clear from the sources if these form a doublet in all dialects, but this appears to be the case in the dialect of the Maiwa and Mewa Khola valleys (MM) on which I did fieldwork in 1987-88; they will not be distinguished here. Their uses fall into two categories: (1) as an independent quasi-pronoun meaning 'a person, someone, someone else', and (2) as a 1st person patient marker. I will begin with the first use, of which the second appears to be a grammaticalized extension.

INDEPENDENT *YAPMI*

Table 1 shows the definitions of *yapmi* and *napmi* in the available Limbu dictionaries and vocabularies. The definitions center around Nepali *mānche* and English 'man, person', but Subba and van Driem both cite the meaning 'other, someone else'. In fact, there is another Limbu word (possibly of Indo-Aryan origin), *mɔna*, glossed 'man, human being' by Subba, which is used when definite reference ('that man'), or reference to the quality of a person as a human

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[1] Abbreviations: **CTR** counter-expectancy; **DF** definite; **ERG**ative; **EMPH**atic; **INF**initive; **INST**rumental; **NEG**ative; **NOM**inalizer; **PA**st; **PL**ural; **PR**esent; **PV** preverb; **Q**uestion; **REFL**exive; **TOP**ic.

being ('what kind of man', example (1) below) is intended. This word appears also in the examples and texts of Weidert and Subba (e.g. 1985:121), van Driem, and the LSI, sources in which I have found only one example (see note 2 below) of independent *yapmi~napmi*, apart from van Driem's vocabulary entry. Example (1) is the only utterance in my materials in which *yapmi* functions as transitive A. It is marked in the ergative case. In this respect it does not look like a pronoun, since pronouns in Limbu do not take case markers:

H. A. R.. Senior (1908): *Man:* mané; yapmí; *generic* yapmísí [i.e. 'person.PL, man.PL'].

I. S. Chemjong (n.d. ?1960): yāpmī *man*; yāpmī khumā *to kidnap* [i.e. 'man to.steal'], yāpmī phoṅmā, *to agitate* [i.e. 'man to.rouse'], yāpmī keseppā, *murderer* [i.e. 'man killer'], etc.
nāpmī *man*.

A. Weidert and B. Subba (1985): [neither form is in the vocabulary; *yapmi* appears in verb conjugations].

G. van Driem (1987:477,545): ya·pmi *see* na·pmi.
na·pmi n. man.
na·pmi pro. 1) someone else, other; 2) first person patient in 21 forms.

B. B. Subba (1989): yapmi *man, person*;
napmi *other person*. [in Nepali, both are glossed *mānis* 'person, man'.]

Khel Raj Yonghang (1995): yapmi *mānis* [Nep. 'person, man', p. 58].
napmi *mānis* [p. 127].

Table 1. Yapmi in dictionaries of Limbu

(1)   "abhedaŋba   mɔna-si"   **yapmi-llɛ**   ammɛt   [J4:10]
       what.kind   person-3PL.PN   other-ERG   say.PR.3p→1pi
       Others will wonder what kind of people we are.

In my other examples, *yapmi* is used as a possessive modifier, "someone else's", *without genitive case marking*[2]. *The possessed noun does not bear the* usual 3rd person possessive prefix (*ku-*, etc.); apparently *yapmi* has this function:

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[2] But cf. van Driem's example (1987:45) na·pmi-rɛ-n (other-GEN-DF) "someone else's".

(2) yo   **yapmi him**-thikk-ɛtmu tyɛaŋ   [Hb5:50]
     below   other house-one-in   arrive.PA.1s

     I arrived at someone's house down below.

(3) "lo! theaŋ i~mɛkheksu"   pha   "kha-n ɛmphɛllɛ ni?"
     hey   why   PV~tie.3p→3   COMP   that-DF like.this EMPH

     – "**napmi himdaŋm'**-ɛn mu   taːru   khunɛ"   [A59]
     – other   wife-DF   CTR bring.3s→3s he

     "Hey! Why did they tie him up like this?"

     "He took another man's wife!"

The possessive construction in (2) and (3) is that of a pronoun. Compare, for example, *khunchi him* 'their[d] house' with the full nominal construction:

(4) kuŋ-gwa-rɛ   ku-him-mu   'at his uncle's house'
     3s-uncle-GEN   3s-house-LOC

There is one curious use of *yapmi* as a relational noun: *ku-yapmi* 'his/her spouse', reminiscent of English *other* or (especially) *significant other*. I did not record *yapmi* as representing an indefinite in expressions like Chemjong's 'murderer', etc. (Table 1), except in one compound, *napmi-sokma* 'index finger' ["other-pointer"]. Often, as has been remarked in other Kiranti languages, the indefinite person is represented by the 1st person inclusive, for example in *a-mu-mu-ba* [1.incl-poison-poison-NOM] 'poisonous' [lit. 'which poisons us[pi']] or *a-tuk* [1.incl-be.ill] 'one gets ill, you get ill'.

The above are essentially the only examples I have recorded of independent *yapmi*. In all it functions as a kind of indefinite quasi-pronoun 'someone, someone else', while *mɔna* serves as the full noun 'person, man'. (In Nepali, the noun *mānche* can be used in both senses.) I suspect this is the case in other Limbu dialects as well. Note, however, that the same word *yapmi* in Athpare and in Yamphu, languages closely related to Limbu, is clearly a full noun 'person, man' (Ebert 1997, Rutgers 1998:95).

1ST PERSON OBJECT *YAPMI*

The other use of *yapmi* is as a 1st person non-singular object pronoun. In this construction, the transitive verb has what looks like an intransitive form because it shows no object agreement (unless one takes *yapmi* itself as an agreement marker): it bears neither of the 1st person markers *a-* or *-igɛ* nor the 3rd person object-marking suffix *-u*. This is the only condition under which a transitive verb has the indicative form PA-ɛ, the regular 3rd person past for

intransitives (Table 2). Only past stem forms have been recorded in the Maiwa-Mewa dialect.

In the Maiwa-Mewa and Phedappe dialects, this construction coexists with the more common regular finite transitive indicative forms, which have personal agreement affixes showing agreement with the 1st person non-singular object, often in the same sentence:

(5) anigɛ   nurik   mɛmɛttigɛ-aŋ   *cïṭṭhī* **yapmi mɛhaktɛ**   [K14]
     wepe   well   do.3p→1pe-and   letter us   send.3p

     They treated us well and they sent us letters.

     [cf. (**anigɛ**) **mɛhaktigɛ** 'they sent to us^pe'].

In the following, the second object *phudoŋ* intervenes between *yapmi* and the verb, something which would be impossible with the prefixed pronominal agreement markers *a-, kɛ-, mɛ-*. Note the impersonal form *mɛbɛrɛ*, past in form, in parallel with the non-past personal form *amɛmbinɛn*.

(6) anigɛ   ammuːt   mɛːnn-i? **ammuːttɛ-aŋ**   khunchi ni
     uspe   call.PR.3p→1pi no-Q   call.PA.3p→1pi-and they   EMPH
     yapmi phudoŋ **mɛbɛrɛ** phɔgɔrɔ allɔ **ani-aŋ**   kɔ
     us   gift   give.3p   if   now   wepi-also   TOP
     egaŋ   uːtmasiŋ   *uhi*   khan *purai* pimasi   poksɛ...
     after   call.INF.PL   that.same   that fully give.INF.PL become.PA.3s
     khunchi khann-ɛn **amɛmbinɛn**   phɔgɔrɔ   [K151,154]
     they   that-DF   give.PR.3p→1pi.NEG   if

     They call us, right? If they call us^pi and give us gifts, then later we^pi too must call them and give them fully the same ... But if they don't give us^pi gifts ...

(7) him-mu   pa-ma-rɛ-aŋ   **napmi   mɛndɔrɛn**   kusiŋ
     house-in   father-mother-ERG-also   us   scold.3p.NEG   PV
     mɛnniːttun.   ɛmbhɛllɛ kɔ   khɛni kɔ   kɛipsi   kɛdɛi-aŋ   kɔ.[K243]
     know.3p→3.NEG   so   TOP   youP TOP   sleep.2p arrive.2p-and TOP

     [We used to sneak back into the house after dancing and go to work normally, so] at home our parents didn't scold us – they didn't know. But you guys just sleep after getting home.

     [cf. (**anigɛ**) **mɛndɔrigɛn** 'they do/did not scold us^pe'].