TOWARDS A RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PROTO WEST HIMALAYISH AGREEMENT SYSTEM

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1. INTRODUCTION[1]

West Himalayish (WH) languages display a range of verb agreement systems. Patterns range from the subject agreement system to remnants of a person-based split-ergative agreement system and a no-agreement system. The purpose of this paper is to present a description of the verb agreement systems in six WH languages (Kinnauri, PaTani, Tinani, Gahri, Darmiya and Rangpa). This description, it is hoped, will show the regularity in the verb agreement systems in WH languages, suggesting the possibility that verb agreement could be reconstructed for Proto West Himalayish (PWH). It will also suggest that the no-agreement system and the subject (and the object) agreement system are recent developments in the languages which have them, and that the split-ergative system (similar to the one reconstructed for Proto Tibeto-Burman (DeLancey 1989)) is older, probably reconstructable for PWH.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 WH LANGUAGES: THEIR GENETIC AND GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION

The WH group of languages belongs to the Tibeto-Burman (TB) language family. There have been several attempts to classify the TB languages, for example Shafer (1955, 1966), Benedict (1972), Thurgood (1985), and Nishi (1990). Classification of TB languages is still uncertain. Table 1 gives the classification of the WH subgroup based on our current knowledge. The postulation of Tibeto-Kinnauri as a separate branch is based on Benedict (1972), and the classification of WH is from Nishi (1990). The parenthesised languages under West Himalayish are my additions (see Saxena 1992 for details).

73

TABLE 1: CLASSIFICATION OF THE WEST HIMALAYISH SUBGROUP

Tibeto-Burman
    Bodic
        Tibeto-Kinnauri
            Tibetan: Western, Central, Khams, Southern, Amdo, Monpa
            West Himalayish:
                (a) Kinnauri-PaTani, (Tinani)
                (b) Thebor-Gahri, Rangpa, Chaudangsi, (Darmiya)

WH languages considered in this paper are PaTani, Tinani, Gahri, Darmiya, Rangpa and standard Kinnauri (referred to here simply as Kinnauri). Kinnauri, PaTani, Tinani, and Gahri are spoken in Himachal Pradesh in India, and Darmiya and Rangpa are spoken in Uttar Pradesh in India.

2.2 DATA

While there is a number of individual Bodic languages for which documentation is lacking, the WH subbranch remains the most seriously underdocumented genetic unit within Bodic.

The available materials on Kinnauri are Bailey (1909), Joshi and Rose (1909), Neethivanan (1971), and D.D. Sharma (1988). Of the remaining languages of this group, we have only Konow (1909), Francke (1909), Zoller (1983), S.R. Sharma (1987), and D.D. Sharma (1989a,b). They are good attempts to describe some WH languages. However, with the exception of Zoller (1983), they miss some very important phonological and grammatical facts, and lack the kind of detailed information needed to do comparative and historical work.

For the present study, descriptions of Kinnauri and PaTani are based on the data which I collected during a fieldtrip to India in 1989-90. The description of Rangpa is from Zoller (1983). Descriptions of Tinani and Darmiya are based on the data provided in Sharma (1989a,b). And the description of Gahri is based on the data given in Sharma (1989a) and Francke (1909). The interpretation of the data from Sharma (1989a,b) and Francke (1909) is mine, except where mentioned. The morpheme and word boundaries in the examples below describe the analysis presented here. In some cases I have revised the free translations. The original transcription of the data is, however, retained.[2]

2.3 LITERATURE SURVEY

There has been some discussion concerning the development of verb agreement in TB (Konow 1909, Maspero 1947, Egerod 1973, Bauman 1975, Caughley 1982, DeLancey 1989). Konow (1909), Maspero (1947), Egerod (1973) and Caugley (1982) suggest that verb agreement in TB languages is a secondary development, whereas Bauman (1975) and DeLancey (1989) argue in favour of reconstructing verb agreement for PTB.

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2   The following is an exception. Sharma (1989a,b) uses two symbols each to represent velar nasal, and palato-alveolar voiceless affricate. For the sake of clarity, I will use the symbol ŋ for velar nasal, and č for palato-alveolar voiceless affricate.

Konow (1909) claimed that verb agreement in TB is due to the influence of the Munda languages. TB and Munda languages show some resemblances in their verb agreement systems.

Maspero (1947) and Egerod (1973) rejected the Munda hypothesis, and argued that verb agreement in TB is due to the Indic influence.

In the same vein, Caughley (1982) suggested that Tibeto-Burman languages with verb agreement systems have developed these "through innovation or areal influence". He based his suggestion on the observation that TB languages display a wide range of verb agreement patterns.

Bauman (1975) and DeLancey (1989), on the other hand, argue in favour of reconstructing verb agreement for PTB. To quote DeLancey (1989:317),

> There is in fact one paradigm, definable both by morphological form and paradigmatic structure, which is attested in at least one representative of almost every branch of the family, and that this paradigm, at least, must therefore be reconstructed for their common ancestor, PTB.

DeLancey (1989:316) reconstructed a person-based split-ergative agreement system for PTB: "...in which agreement in a transitive clause is associated with person rather than function, so that the verb agrees with 1 or 2p. subjects or objects". Table 2 presents the PTB verb agreement schema reconstructed by DeLancey. It illustrates only the agreement suffixes. The agreement markers are listed in this table, depending on the persons of the subject and the object. The horizontal lines indicate the person of the object, and the vertical lines indicate the person of the subject.

TABLE 2: PROTO TIBETO-BURMAN VERB AGREEMENT SCHEMA

	OBJECT		
SUBJECT	1	2	3
1		*-n*	*-ŋ*
2	*-ŋ*		*-n*
3	*-ŋ*	*-n*	*-u*

2.4 ORGANISATION OF THE PAPER

The purpose of this paper, as mentioned above, is to present data which suggest that verb agreement could be reconstructed for PWH. Data from Gahri, Darmiya and Kinnauri indicate that the person-based split-ergative agreement system is older than other prevalent agreement systems in WH languages, and could perhaps be reconstructed for PWH.

The organisation of the paper is as follows. Section 3 presents a typology of the finite verb morphology in WH, concentrating on agreement morphology. Section 4 presents a preliminary schema of the PWH verb agreement system. In this section, first, PWH verb agreement schema for intransitive verbs is presented. Next, for transitive verbs, data are

presented which suggest the antiquity of the person-based split-ergative system. And, finally, development of the subject agreement markers in WH will be considered.

While describing the finite verb morphology in these languages, the terms 'subject', 'object', 'split-ergative agreement system', 'subject agreement system', 'no-agreement system' and 'auxiliary' will be used. The term 'subject' refers to the only core argument of intransitive verb, and the agentive argument of a transitive verb. The term 'object' refers to the patient argument of a transitive verb. The term 'split-ergative agreement system' refers to the person-based split-ergative agreement system, where (DeLancey 1989:318) "the agreement is sometimes with object, i.e. in an ergative pattern and sometimes with subject, with the choice determined by the person of the two arguments". In the 'subject agreement system' on the other hand, the agreement is with the subject of the clause, regardless of the person of the two arguments. 'No-agreement system' indicates that there is no agreement morphology on the verb. And, the term 'auxiliary' is used here to refer to copulas when they occur in non-copula constructions, and to a set of morphemes which occurs at the end in non-copula constructions in some WH languages. Morphemes belonging to the latter group have the status of independent morphemes, but they do not function as verbs in these languages.

3. TYPOLOGY OF THE FINITE VERB MORPHOLOGY IN WH

WH languages are clause-chaining languages, where the verb of the final clause has tense, aspect and agreement morphology. In this section I will present a brief description of the finite verb morphology in Kinnauri, PaTani, Tinani, Darmiya, Gahri and Rangpa, concentrating on their agreement morphology. Since in many TB languages the agreement morphology is a reanalysis of the pronominals used in those languages, a table describing the pronominals of that language will follow the table showing the agreement morphology.

3.1 KINNAURI

A final verb in Kinnauri consists of a verb stem, a tense marker and a subject agreement marker. In some cases markers of aspect, object agreement and honorificity are also suffixed to the verb. The final verb in Kinnauri has the structure

$$V\text{-(OBJ)-TNS-SUB} \quad \text{or} \quad V\text{-(OBJ)-ASP AUX-TNS-SUB}.[3]$$

Tables 3 and 4 describe the Kinnauri subject agreement markers and the pronominal paradigm, respectively. A blank in a slot in tables indicates that there is no overt agreement marker in the language for that category, and ---- indicates that the form is not available.

The subject agreement markers are the same in copula and non-copula constructions. There is, however, some variation among Kinnauri speakers concerning the third person singular non-honorific subject agreement marker in non-copula constructions. None of my Kinnauri informants, except one, use overt agreement marker for third person non-honorific

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[3]   The descriptions of the abbreviations used in this study are as follows. ACC = accusative, AGR = agreement, ASP = aspect, AUX = auxiliary, COP = copula, DAT = dative, DEF = definite, DU = dual, ERG = ergative, EXC = exclusive, GEN = genitive, HON = honorific, IMPF = imperfective, INC = inclusive, INST = instrumental, LOC = locative, NOM = nominaliser, OBJ = object agreement, ORD = ordinary (-honorific), PERF = perfective, PL = plural, PROG = progressive, PST = past, SG = singular, SUB = subject agreement, TNS = tense, and V = verb.