Lahauli Verb Inflection

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1.   Lahauli is a language of the Tibeto-Burman family spoken on the northwestern border of India, in the Districts of Lahaul and Spiti in the Himachal Pradesh. Lahauli has several dialects; the variety chosen for study here is spoken in Nalda village, Post Office Muring and Tahsil Keylong. The informant, Shri Durga Das s/o Shri Lal Das, comes from a high caste and is a native speaker of the dialect; in addition, he knows Hindi and English.

2.   The sound system of this Lahauli dialect is as follows:

k	č	ç	c	ṭ	t	p		i	i:		u	u:
kh	čh	çh	ch	ṭh	th	ph		e	e:		o	o:
g	ǰ	ǰ	j	ḍ	d	b			ə			
gh	ǰh	(ǰh)	jh	ḍh	dh	bh			a a:			
ŋ	ñ			ṇ	n	m		a	level tone			
h	š			ṣ	s			à	falling tone			
	y	ṛ	r l	ḷ	z	v		á	rising tone			

Notes:
1. č ç c are palatal, retroflex, and dental affricates, respectively: [tš/tç tṣ/tṣ ts].
2. r is a trill; ṛ is a flap.

3.   The dialect has a rich variety of inflected verbal forms. To get a quick idea of these we may consider the following sentences. The verbal forms are italicized.

1.	ge	*kùkṣataɡ*	I sleep.
2.	dor	*kùkṣatar*	They sleep.
3.	ṣe	*sòriŋ dàpa*	The apple falls on the ground.
4.	ɡva	*pòkṣi*	The fox made off.
5.	kenə	*kə̀lŋačì pòkthu*	You (pl) escape through the window.
6.	di buṭh	*cìkthuni*	Cut this tree (pl).
7.	doku	*datho əndre beŋztoɡu*	They two sat inside the box.

8.	doi gə	*phuǰato*	He pushed me.
9.	yazi kəṭu	*sùǰato*	The woman washed the child.
10.	gi ti:	*ǰungə*	I want water.
11.	gi khùi	*chuzatag*	I tie the dog.
12.	gə	*apog*	I shall come.
13.	doi kə	*zaote*	She will devour you.

4.   This paper will discuss the inflectional morphology of Lahauli. The present study is very preliminary, and our statements are to be taken as tentative. For an in-depth study much more copious data is needed.

5.   The verbal forms present little difficulty so far as segmentation or identification of constituents is concerned. Assignment of grammatical or semantic functions to some constituents is somewhat tricky. This largely contributes to the tentativeness of our statements. The phonological shape of some segments is equally uncertain. The method we propose to use in our study is to take all available sets of paradigms of one verbal root and discuss these. This may seem a very compressed and fragmentary study of such an important segment of the grammar, but it will surely provide us a picture, though in bare outline, of the dialect's verb inflection system. There is another difficulty in our way. The English glosses of particular paradigms do not give a precise idea of the semantics of the paradigm. The distinctions which are found in Lahauli cannot be suitably labelled in the framework available to us. Thus, the glosses given in English are very rough approximations. The paradigms derived from the root šúl 'wash hands, feet, vegetables etc.' are given in the appendix.

6.   The forms taken together denote categories of person, number, tense, aspect and mood in addition to the meaning of the root. There are three categories of person (first, second, and third); three of number (singular, dual and plural); three of aspect (perfect (completive), progressive and habitual); and five moods (indicative, definitive, optative, imperative and contingent).

It may be pointed out that the formal distinctions of inclusive and exclusive in the case of first person dual, and plural and honorific in the case of second person, are not matched in the verbal forms.

7.   The inflected forms derived from the root šúl, taken here for analysis, are numerous, and they fall into fourteen paradigms. In addition there are a few more forms such as participles, agentive, and infinitive derived from šúl. Some of these forms show minimal formal differences,

e.g. *šúljatag* 'I wash' : *šúljateg* 'I was washing' : *šúljatog* 'I am washing'.

8.   The application of basic principles of morphological analysis allows us to recognize *šúl* as the root, and the following as person-number markers.

	singular	dual	plural
I	g	ši	ni
II	n	ši	ni
III	to~ø	gu	r

9.   Now with the two constituents of an inflected form (the root and the person-number suffixes) identified, we may proceed further to identify other constituents in these paradigms. The simplest in constituent composition are the forms in paradigms 13 and 14. The forms in the two paradigms differ minimally. An additional element *o* shows up finally in paradigm 14, otherwise the rest of the forms are identical. If this residue is stripped from the root and the person-number suffixes, what remains is the element *u*. Thus the constituents that combine to produce 13 and 14 are the root, person-number suffixes (both identified above) and the elements *u* and *o*. The element *u* is interpreted as the imperative, and *o* as the future marker. The element *o* is found to occur in paradigms 2, 6 and 7. Thus paradigms 13 and 14 may be labelled as Imperative Present and Imperative Future, respectively.

10.   Next we may examine paradigms 10, 11 and 12, which seem to form a group because they share an element *i* which is interpreted to denote the aspectual distinction of "completion." Paradigm 10 is not marked for any other category. Paradigms 11 and 12, on the other hand, are marked additionally for "contingency" of action in past and non-past respectively, by elements *ga* and *tə* occurring in final position.

11.   Paradigms 6, 7, 8 and 9 may be considered together. The element *b* occurring just after the root characterizes this group. Semantically we interpret it as denoting some sort of "habituality" of action. The element *o* in 6 and 7 and also in 2 has been identified above as a future marker. Thus the form *šúl-b-og* may be interpreted as denoting a future habitual action. The element *a* in the final position of 7 may be understood to denote permission or a request for permission. Thus *šúl-b-og-a* is interpreted to mean "I have a sort of habit to wash sometime in the future and for this I seek your permission, etc."

12. The forms in 8 and 9 differ minimally in *a* and *e*, which elements are shared by sets 1, 4 and 3, 5 respectively. The element *a* denotes present and *e* denotes past. The residual element *at* in 8 and 9 is also shared by 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Taking into consideration all the paradigms in which *a t* occurs, we are inclined to interpret it as denoting "definitive" action, i.e. the action actually does take place. Thus forms *šúl-b-at-a-g* and *šúl-b-at-e-g* may be translated as "I positively wash (or washed)" and "I habitually wash (or washed)", respectively.

13. Now we are left with paradigms 1 to 5. These fall into two groups, one sharing the element *-j-* and the other *-ǰ-*. All other elements in these paradigms have already been identified. Elements *-j-* and *-ǰ-* seem to denote progressive vs. non-progressive (static) action. We may suggest the following tentative glosses for various forms in this group: *šúl-j-at-a-g* "I am definitely engaged in the activity of washing that is progressing"; *šúl-j-at-o-g* "I am definitely engaged in the activity of washing that is progressing and to be continued in future"; *šúl-j-at-e-g* "I was definitely engaged in the activity of washing that was progressing"; *šúl-ǰ-at-a-g* "I definitely engaged myself in the activity of washing very recently"; and *šúl-ǰ-at-e-g* "I definitely engaged myself in the activity of washing in the remote past."

14. It may be noted that third person forms in paradigm 1 are identical to those of paradigm 2, which denotes future action. Likewise third person forms in set 4 are also marked with the future marker. We can account for such overlapping in tense markers if we look upon action taking place in the present moment not as an instantaneous event but rather as one that begins now and continues into the future.

15. In addition to the paradigms discussed above, there are a few more verbal forms derived from the root. One form is *šúljãtə*, glossed as "if I/he/you etc. have/had washed." This form may be segmented in various ways. The most plausible division may be into three constituents, namely *šul, jã* and *tə*. However we are not sure what grammatical or semantic roles could be assigned to *jã* or *tə*. For the present we leave it at that.

16. There are three participial forms. Their analysis presents no problem. Segments are separated here by the hyphen. The past passive participle is *šúl-si* 'washed', the present participle is *šúl-da ~ šúl-ta*, and the perfect participle is *šúl-ja ~ šúl-i* 'having washed'. The agentive marker is *šúl-ja:*. The infinitive is *šúl-j-i*, where *j* may be identified with the element that denotes the progressive aspect of action and *i* may