ETYMOLOGICAL NOTES ON TIBETO-BURMAN CASE PARTICLES

Scott DeLancey
University of Oregon

Benedict, in the Conspectus, notes the existence of comparative evidence for only one case-like particle of clearly PRB provenience, the well-known subordinating (i.e. genitive and relativizing) *-ki or *-gi. He briefly suggests that the lack of other such particles reconstructible for PTB can be taken as an indication that the general category cannot be ascribed to the protolanguage:

> It is a striking fact ... that relating morphemes of the type in question [i.e. case or case-like postpositions] seem to be of relatively recent origin in the several TB groups, strongly indicating that in the parent language these elements were largely lacking. (1972:95-6)

This conclusion is certainly debatable on general grounds; given that the syntactic category of postposition with case value is universal throughout the family, we could infer that the category should be reconstructible, even if the morphemes which fill it are not. (This argument is strengthened by the existence of cases, a few of which will be mentioned below, where we can see that as new case postpositions develop they replace older ones, rather than carving out an entirely new morphosyntactic category for themselves). What I hope to demonstrate in this paper is that the conclusion must be abandoned in any case, as we by now have a comparative case for at least three other PTB case particles which is as strong as that for *-ki.

Ideally, a reconstruction of PTB, or any other family, should include a reconstruction of the structure of the case-marking system and of the morphosyntactic coding of that system.[1] In the case of Tibeto-Burman this turns out to be an extraordinarily difficult project. Some of the problems inherent in comparative work on grammatical particles are notorious -- in particular, as unstressed and typically cliticized syllables, they are subject to irregular phonological developments which

make it difficult to equate particles in different languages with confidence. This added to the rather rudimentary level of our knowledge of sound correspondences for several branches of the family makes complete confidence in many equations impossible.

In addition, Sino-Tibetan presents a number of difficult, if fascinating, problems of its own. For example, most TB languages allow at least some concatenation of postpositions, and this results in the development of case particles which are etymologically bimorphemic. Some combinations seem to be peculiar local developments, as for example the Thulung genitive kam, which is apparently a fusion of ergative/instrumental ka and ablative m. Other patterns seem to be widespread. For example, we find an ablative marking transparently composed of a locative followed by genitive or ergative, as in the following languages:

	LOC	GEN	ERG	ABL
Meithei	da	gi		da-gi
Garo	o	ni		o-ni
Anal	thuŋ	gi		thuŋ-gi
Kabui	tho		roi	tho-roi
Ao Naga	nuŋ		i	nuŋ-i
Geman Mishmi	X		ka	X-ka

(Geman has a number of different locative particles, and hence a number of different ablative combinations; this is another problem which we will return to shortly). The simplest type of problem created by this tendency is this: suppose that we have good semantic grounds for equating a kə in one language with a ki in another, and we have sufficient control of the relevant phonological correspondences to state that the vowels do not correspond. We could, of course, abandon the equation, but that is unrealistic, since there are two perfectly good possible explanations for the phonological discrepancy: the kə could be a reduced form of earlier *ki, or the ki could be etymologically bimorphemic, deriving from something like *ka-i. The obvious problem then is which explanation to adopt; this leads into even less soluble problems, e.g., if we have independent evidence for both *ka and *i, can we take this ki as additional evidence for either or both? (As I will note below, such a set of questions leads us to the possibility that Benedict's *ki, generally accepted as the one securely reconstructed PTB case particle, may in fact not reconstruct in that form for PTB).

These problems make it difficult to securely equate morphemes in cognate languages phonologically. There are consierable problems with the semantic side of the equations as well, and again Sino-Tibetan has

extra difficulties of its own. The first and most obvious is the degree of detail available in the sources; throughout the LSI and other sources of that period, and not infrequently even in more modern works, we find particles listed with wholly inadequate glosses, e.g. 'with' (which doesn't tell us whether the particle marks instrumental, comitative, or both), 'by' (locational, agentive, or means?), or 'subject' (nominative, ergative, or topic?). Moreover, a comparison of most available reports with a reasonably complete grammar such as Matisoff's Lahu Grammar makes clear how much information -- about shades of meaning, conditions of use, syntagmatic combination and paradigmatic alternation, and so on -- is lacking in almost all available descriptions. While it is possible to do comparative work with such data -- just as it was possible to do phonological comparison using even the phonetically unreliable data of the LSI and similar reports -- the results will necessarily be of rather coarse quality.

Other complications arise from certain idiosyncracies of Sino-Tibetan case marking. The most important of these is a tendency not to distinguish ablative from locative/allative expressions. Syncretism of locative and allative is, of course, widespread in languages throughout the world (e.g. French à) and these cases are very seldom distinguished in TB languages. (As we will note below, locative/allative forms, in TB as universally, are a common source of dative/accusative marking). Conflation os these with ablative is cross-linguistically quite uncommon, but within Sino-Tibetan it is extremely common, and was almost certainly a feature of PST. A useful discussion of this phenomenon in Lahu is provided by Matisoff (1973: 162-8), who points out that in most cases the semantics of the verb will make clear whether the locative noun is a location, goal, or source. (Probably most languages make at least some use of this fact; cf. the interpretation in English of unmarked NPs directly following the verbs inhabit, reach, and leave). Unfortunately, this removes any possibility of semantic control over our equation of case marking particles in different languages. As we will see directly, it is very common to find ergative/instrumental markers developing from ablative expressions (syncretism of genitive and ablative is also quite common, though it is not clear which of these senses is more likely to be original), and dative/accusative markers from locative/allative forms. Thus, in a TB context, it is entirely possible to find the same etymon as an ergative postposition in one language and an accusative in another -- in other words, there are no limits on what constitute plausible semantic equations in this area. As we will see, the data bear out this prediction; all three of our secure case etyma, *ka, *na, and *i~*e, are attested in almost all possible case marking functions: locative/allative, ablative, ergative/instrumental, and genitive.

As we have already noted, in those languages which do explicitly mark the ablative relation, it is typically expressed by a locative plus another element. This additional marking may be identifiable with some other case marker, as in the examples cited above, or it may be specific to the ablative. There are several examples of TB languages in contact with Indic languages which have developed ablative formations which appear to add a borrowed element to the native locative, e.g. Limasa ni-pharang, Deori Chutiya yo-chapi. Elsewhere the ablative formative seems to be native, as in the Bahing dialect reported in the LSI, for which are listed locatives di and la, and ablatives ding and lang, which are clearly composite. We sometimes even find doubly composite forms, as in the LSI Rungc^{h}henbung report, which lists locative da and ablative dang-ka. This ka is an important etymon, to which we will return; the other ablative marker of particular interest is the *s found in the Written Tibetan ablative and ergative/instrumental forms, where the ablatives las and nas are clearly based on the locatives la and na. This s certainly reflects an earlier motion verb *sa 'go, leave' (the evidence for which is presented in DeLancey 1980). Its particular significance for our present purpose is that it provides a possible explanation (unfortunately only one of two equally plausible explanations) for the front vowels found in many ablative and ergative forms -- Kham ni, Idu ne, Sema ki, Empeo ge-ne, etc. -- which seem to be related to original locatives *na and *ka.

Before entering the jungle which I have been describing, we should establish some general principles which will aid in the historical study of case marking. There are two common historical sources for case markers, both attested in TB. One is the grammaticalization of nouns, particularly of nouns having some kind of locative sense. In Sino-Tibetan languages, as in many others, much of the semantic load carried in English and other Indo-European languages by large sets of prepositions is carried by locative nouns. In Tibetan, for example, the normal locution for 'in' is 'at the interior of', as:

1) k'aŋ-ba-ḥi naŋ-la
house-GEN interior-LOC
'inside the house'

Such nouns, inevitably, are a productive source of locative case markers;[2] we find, for example, obvious cognates of Tibetan naŋ functioning as case postpositions in Hayu locative noŋ and Nocte locative and dative/accusative naŋ (as well as, probably, in Primi ablative nãu and Newari ablative/ergative/instrumental nɔ̃). A second source of case adpositions is earlier verbs. This is well-known as a source of locative, allative, and ablative markers (and others) in Chinese and Tai, and there are strong indications that it is to be found in TB as well. Most typically, verbs meaning 'be at', 'reach', and 'leave' grammaticalize as markers of, respectively, locative,

allative, and ablative case. I will suggest below that some of the more widespread TB locative etyma have such a verbal origin, although probably of PTB date. At any rate, these two processes probably explain the multiplicity of idiosyncratic locative markers found throughout the family, which contribute to the impression that case markers cannot be reconstructed at the PTB level.

Markers for the "grammatical" cases -- dative/accusative and ergative/instrumental -- also have two widely attested types of origin. Probably the commonest source for them cross-linguistically is local cases; the widespread syncretism of dative and accusative case with locative/allative, and or ergative and instrumental with ablative, has long been known, and it is clear from those instances where the historical process can be reconstructed that the direction of change is always from the more concrete local to the more abstract grammatical sense. Like many other languages TB languages tend not to mark accusative case per se, but to use a dative marker for direct objects either to disambiguate unclear clauses (see e.g. the discussion of Lahu thà? in Matisoff 1973) or to mark pronominal or, more generally, definite animate direct objects (see e.g. the discussion of Kham lay in Watters 1973[3]). These dative markers in the majority of cases in TB are either identical with locative markers in the same language -- e.g. Tangkhul li, Nocte nan, Bunan rog, Tibetan la -- or strongly reminiscent of such morphemes in cognate languages, as, Chang la, Lisu (Hope) lǽ, Bisu na, Garo na, Rangkhol ka, Burmese kui. Similarly, the majority of ergative/instrumental forms are related to ablative markers either in the same language -- Lotha na, Geman Mishmi ka, Newari nɔ̃, Hani ne, Kanashi s, Manchati i -- or in cognate languages, as, Sani Yi lɪ, Lisu (Fraser) lye[3] (cf. Tib. las, but cf. also the Kuki-Chin instrumental etymology suggested below); Meithei, Tangkhul, Sema na, Naxi nɯ, Lai ne, Banjogi ni; Thulung ka, Jirel ki, Sunwar ke, Gyarong kə, Xide Lolo kɯ, Taruang go; Kanawari as, Nyamkat su, Murmi se.

Both dative and instrumental markers have another widely attested source in grammaticalized verbs. Dative markers derive from verbs meaning 'give' (e.g. Thai hay, Mandarin gei), and instrumentals from verbs meaning 'use' or 'pick up, take' (e.g. Thai chay, aw, Mandarin yung, na). This suggests sources for some TB case forms which have no apparent etymology in locative case markers. Thus e.g. Manchati dative bi and Jinghpaw hpè? are obviously relatable to the two 'give' verbs reconstructed by Benedict, *biy (STC 427) and *pe(k) (STC fn. 289; the Jinghpaw form thus counts as attestation of this root outside of Kuki-Naga). In several Kuki languages we find the phenomenon, rather unusual for TB, of distinct ergative and instrumental markers, with ergative in and instrumental la or le (in at least Banjogi, Rangkhol, Hallam and Chiru).[4] This suggests that one of the two is a secondary development, and since the ergative in has the better etymology (see below) and apparently the wider distribution, it is the la ~ le which needs to be explained.[5] Here again there is a likely verbal source close at hand, in a root *la(k), which is widely attested

in Kuki (see the LSI III.3, p. 14) with connections elsewhere in the family.[6] (It seems unlikely that the Loloish ergative/instrumental forms in l- noted above are connected with this etymology; while a 'take' verb is an obvious source for a pure instrumental such as the Kuki forms, it would seem less likely that it would develop an ergative sense).

In several such examples we find proof that a multiplicity of unrelated case postpositions in attested TB languages cannot be taken as evidence for the recent development of the category as a whole. While the Kuki instrumental, for example, is clearly a recent development, it just as clearly constituted simply the addition of one postposition to a category which already existed. In this case the development has an obvious functional explanation, in that the new form serves to disambiguate the expression of previously homophonous cases. In the Lahu dialect described by Matisoff the normal instrumental construction is a fully transparent, and thus clearly recent, serial verb construction with the verb yù 'take'. This construction must have replaced an earlier one. We find in some other Loloish languages (Xide Lolo, Sani Yi, Hani, Fraser's Lisu) an ergative/instrumental postpositional construction.[7] Both the retention of ergative marking and the etymological opacity of the markers argue that this is the older construction, and that not merely the Lahu verb used but the serial verb construction itself is a Lahu innovation (likely under Tai influence). In fact, the causal lɛ in Lahu (Matisoff 1973:171-2) is very probably cognate to Sani Yi ergative/instrumental lɪ, Lisu lye, and thus serves as a further indication that Lahu had an instrumental case marker prior to the development of the serial verb construction.

There are several other syncretic case marking patterns which are widespread both in TB and in languages in general. We cannot avoid some reference to these in attempting to reconstruct case marking patterns, though unfortunately their diachronic implications are not so well understood as are the locative/allative/dative and ablative/ergative/instrumental patterns. Genitive case is quite problematic in this regard; it is not unusual to find homophony between genitive and locative, ablative or ergative case. While there is some evidence for the conceptual relationship between possession and location, the question of the diachronic development of genitive from locative case (or vice versa?) is an open one, and we cannot for the present assume a historical directionality here. The ablative-genitive syncretism I simply regard as unexplained. A similar problem obtains with comitative (associative) case; we find it syncretized with locative, ablative, and (most frequently) instrumental (or ergative/instrumental). The locative/comitative syncretism is intuitively easily explained, since both assert the colocation of two entities. The comitative/instrumental syncretism is not universal, but is extremely common throughout the world (cf. English with), and has prompted considerable theorizing. From the sketchy reports available, it appears that there may be a number

of cases in TB of ablative/ergative/instrumental/comitative syncretism, which suggests that in reconstructing case markers we might be able to take the occurrence of an etymon as a comitative paritcle as evidence for historical connections to the ablative/ergative/instrumental complex. For the present, however, I will omit morphemes described in the sources only as comitatives from consideration, while treating comitative/instrumental markers, such as Burmese nay?, as instrumentals and hence plausibly connected with the ablative/ergative category.

With these considerations in mind, we can proceed to a consideration of some of the available data on TB postpositions, which will turn to be difficult but perhaps less intractable than has been assumed. In the three lists at the end of this paper I have assembled those postpositions from a range of TB languages which seem to fall into three sets: those with a velar stop initial, those with initial n-, and those with no consonantal initial.[8,9] (An unlabelled entry in the locative/allative/dative or the ablative/ergative/instrumental column appears to have all three functions; labelled entries are those described as contrasting with a distinct particle in the other functions -- i.e. an entry "ga LOC" means that the description from which the entry is taken lists a separate dative marker. Asterisked entries are inferred from obviously complex ablative constructions, but are not specifically listed in the sources, e.g. Tangkhul locative *ei is inferred from the obviously composite ablative ei-na. Such forms may well be extinct in the attested language, but can safely be inferred for historical purposes). The first two have extremely wide attestation in the family. While there is no doubt a good deal of extraneous material on my lists, the abundant examples of both *k and *n forms in every branch of the family clearly point to the existence of such forms in PTB.

This leaves us the task of reconstructing the original form and function of the etyma which underlie the modern forms. We are (or at least I am) not at present in a position to proivde a solid hypothesis, but let us note the following suggestive facts. If we sort the first list, the velar initial forms, into three classes according as the vowel is front, a-like, or back (or including a w), an interesting pattern emerges:

	LOC/ALL/DAT	ABL/ERG/INSTR	GEN
front vowel	1	9	6
a,ə	7	11	3
back vowel	20	2	4

It is immediately obvious that there is an association, which crosses genetic boundaries, between back vowel forms and the locative/dative sense, and between the front vowel forms and the ablative/ergative sense. We might then hypothesize a PTB locative *ko, and an ablative *ki. However, there are alternative hypotheses which cannot at present be eliminated.

Any explanation for the distribution of the back and front vowel forms must deal also with the a-forms. Conceivably these could all be explained as reduced forms of *ko and *ki, but this seems rather ad hoc. If any significant number of these forms have original *a, then we are presented with a third distinct etymon, *ka, which is better attested than the *ki. Unlike either the *ki or the *ko, but like many synchronically attested forms, this *ka seems to be indifferently locative/allative and ablative. This suggests another hypothesis, which I suspect is the correct one. The examples of the locative+genitive construction for marking the ablative relation mentioned at the beginning of this paper, and another ablative formation to be discussed below, show that one mechanism which is adopted to disambiguate an undifferentiated locative/ablative marker is the addition of some extra marking to it to specify ablative the ablative sense. If we accept at face value the evidence (which is, to be sure, not unproblematic) for a PTB locative/ablative *ka, then a possible explanation for the front vowel forms would be a bimorphemic *ka-i, with the *i representing the extra mark indicating ablative. (It is at least conceivable a priori that a similar explanation applies to the back vowel forms, but for the present I will not address the question of whether and how the a and back vowel forms should be assigned to distinct etyma).

This account of the *ki forms presents us with an additional problem, that of identifying the *i (or *e). As I have already noted, the commonest attested element used in such constructions is a genitive marker; however a glance at List III shows quickly that independent evidence for a genitive *i, while not altogether lacking, is exceedingly sparse.[10] For the present, at any rate, this hypothesis seems to have little to recommend it. As we will see below, there is a good case to be made for a PTB locative *e, and the most likely explanation for the *ka-i forms is one which involves this etymon, but the matter is far from clear.

We must also note an additional problem posed by the genitive case forms on the list. Note that in this list the evidence for PTB ablative/ergative *ki is somewhat stronger than that for the genitive *ki which is generally considered to be the only securely established PTB case particle. Note also that there are a few cases of ka-type genitives, so that we face the same problem with our genitive etymology as with the ablative. It could be that all of these genitive forms have developed from older ablatives, so that a solution of the problem of the ablatives will automatically take care of the genitives as well. In this case, of course, the secure PTB genitive *ka disappears, as the ablative to genitive shift could easily be an indepenent parallel development in several different languages. However, for the present this can only be speculation. (One thing which would be helpful here would be some detailed studies of the syntactic/semantic relationship between genitive and ablative expressions in various TB languages).

The same sorting of the second list, the n- initial forms, gives the following results:

	LOC/ALL/DAT	ABL/ERG/INST	GEN
front vowel	0	13	1
a,ə	5	8	0
back vowel	2	5	0

This shows one striking difference from, and one striking point of similarity to, the statistics for the *k forms. The obvious difference is the overwhelming preponderance of ablative senses for all three vowel types; the other side of this coin is the effectively complete absence of genitive forms. The striking similarity is the strong association between the front vowel forms and the ablative senses; there are almost three times as many front as back vowel ablative forms in the lists, and no non-ablative front vowel forms. The first of these facts, the general preponderance of ablatives, might be taken as suggesting an ablative sense for the ancestral form. However, the generality of the locative sense is securely established by the Tibetan, Jinghpaw and Kukish forms.[11] Since there is no attested semantic route by which a purely ablative form can develop a locative sense, and it is hard to imagine one, we must reconstruct this also as an indifferently locative/ablative marker. This makes the association between the front vowel forms and the specifically ablative sense even more striking, as it suggests again the previous existence of some additional marking which transformed original locative/ablative *na into specifically ablative *ne or *ni. Thus the distribution of vowel-meaning associations for the n- and k- forms both point toward the same conclusion. (We should note in passing that on this interpretation of this evidence, the absence of genitive forms in n- argues against the explanation suggested above for the similarity of the ablative and genitive *ki forms; for if the correct explanation were a tendency of ablative forms to develop a genitive sense, then we should expect the same tendency to affect the *ne etymon. It may well be that there is more evidence to be found for a *ne genitive than I have uncovered here, and such evidence, if it should be found, would support the hypothesis of genitive *ki as a secondary development. However, for the present that hypothesis must be considered rather weak).

Our results so far would lead us to hope that the ø-initial forms might provide a clue as to the identity of the *i for which the previous lists provide evidence; and these hopes are not in vain. The distribution of the vowel postpositions with respect to case meaning is as follows:

	LOC/ALL/DAT	ABL/ERG/INSTR	GEN
front vowel	7	10	6
a	10	5	1
back vowel	4	2	1

The pattern here is very similar to what we have seen before: a locative/allative *a, and a locative/ablative *e with a strong tendency toward a specifically ablative sense. This *e is thus the obvious source for the ablative front vowel in the *k and *n forms.

Our story so far, then, involves at least three etyma, *ka, *na, and *e, the last of which had a particular association with ablative sense, and two compounds, *ka-e and *na-e. From the wide distribution of ablative *ne forms, which occur in every branch of the family, we might infer that the *na-e compound existed already in PTB. There is, however, evidence against this, in modern forms which clearly represent the compounding of the same two morphemes in the opposite order. The clearest examples of this are Tangkhul ablative eina and a Hkahku Jinghpaw ablative/ergative e-na, which is also the historical source for the Standard Jinghpaw ablative nna (Diehl 1981). The Jinghpaw case is particularly interesting because we have attested, in the same stage of a single language, a locative e, a locative/ablative na, and an ablative concatenation e na. There can be no doubt that the Tangkhul form is cognate, and little doubt that the ubiquitous Kukish locative/ergative in reflects the same earlier compound. Thus there is comparative evidence not only for *e and *na, but for both possible combinations, *na-e and *e-na. There are two possible historical interpretations of this evidence. One possibility is that the PTB system was similar to that of modern Jinghpaw, but with greater freedom of concatenation, so that both of the sequences *na e and *e na were syntactically possible; one concatenation then became grammaticalized into a fixed ablative in some languages, the other in others, and neither (or *ka-e) in others. However, this seems theoretically unlikely. In the case of quasi-grammaticalized versatile verbs we can imagine free ordering, and there are attested examples (DeLancey 1980, 1983). But postpositions are a more grammaticalized syntactic category, and without synchronic evidence of a language in which they can be concatenated in any order, I would be reluctant to attribute such a grammatical system to a reconstructed language. A simpler and more likely hypothesis is either that no concatenations of case postpositions occurred in PTB or that the only one which occured (at least involving the forms which we are considering) was *ka-e. Then both *e-na and *na-e are later developments, and we will have to accept the idea that at least *na-e developed independently in several different branches of the family.

There are two further problems associated with this hypothesis about which I have little of substance to say at this point: the apparent multiplicity of locative particles in PTB, and the widespread association of ablative sense with *na and *e. The first of these is obviously not serious; probably most languages have a number of different locative expressions. Probably the commonest situation is that found in English, where geometry is lexicalized into the set of locative prepositions which includes at, in, on, by, etc. However, as I have noted above, the commonest mechanism for coding this kind of information in Sino-Tibetan uses a general locative in construction with nouns that encode the geometric information, and this construction presumably existed in PTB as well. Another possibility is suggested by the Kaman Mishmi system, which has separate locative particles for locations above (xai, tau) and below (li, lit) a contextual reference point. At any rate, the need to reconstruct a number of different locative particles for PTB is not in itself problematic; the identification of their semantic distinctions will have to await further research.

The problem of the ablative sense of *na and *e is more difficult. As I have pointed out, we should be reluctant to posit a historical development which requires the evolution of a locative sense for an original ablative. There is no problem, of course, with positing the development of both locative and ablative senses from an original undifferentiated locative, but this approach to the data fails to account for the consistent tendency across the family for these two particles to develop ablative sense -- we should expect rather a random distribution of locative and ablative senses across the reflexes of our various PTB locatives. We find, in fact, in modern Jinghpaw that the na particle has precisely the behavior which I am positing for its PTB ancestor, i.e. locative and ablative sense, but with a tendency toward ablative (see Diehl 1981); but while this is reassuring, in the sense that it affirms the plausibility of our reconstruction, it doesn't provide an explanation for the origin of that peculiar semantic configuration.

There is one suggestion which I will raise in connection with the *e, although it is more an outline of a research problem than a concrete hypothesis. There is widespread evidence for a PTB motion verb *e or *ye (some of which is discussed in DeLancey 1983). There is some evidence for a semantic distinction among motion verbs in PTB (and now in PST; see Pulleyblank 1983)between 'bounded' motion verbs, which make implicit reference to a goal, and 'unbounded' motion verbs, which make no such reference, but may be interpreted as making implicit reference to a starting point.[12] There is some reason, which I will not go into here, to believe that *e was the latter. If this should turn out to be the case, then such a motion verb would be a very likely source for a locative marker with a strong ablative sense. (Indeed, as suggested earlier, there is good reason to associate the widespread ablative -s with an unbounded motion verb *sa).

I have, at this point, fulfilled my original promise, and presented a set of exasperatingly messy data from which I have managed to draw few firm conclusions. I think it is clear, however, that the data establish the PTB provenience of at least a *nV and a *e and/or *a case postposition to join Benedict's *ki, and show that all three (i.e. including *ki) were originally markers of local cases. Beyond that I have done little but outline some of the more pressing problems which need to be addressed in the comparative study of TB case marking. I entertain the faint but unquenchable hope that some reader of this paper may be inspired to address some of these problems, and may make more progress in the matter than I have so far.

1) I am using "case" to refer to certain presumably universal, or at least universally available, semantic categories of clause organization, and "case-marking system" to refer to any morphosyntactic mechanism or combination of mechanisms which function in a language to encode those categories. Thus by these definitions every language, including even the likes of English and Chinese, has a case-marking system.
2) This tendency is accelerated in TB by the common tendency toward zero marking for the genitive.
3) Kham lay, and similar datives in a number of TB languages of Nepal, are generally considered to be borrowed from Nepali, along with the idea of accusative case. This is probably true to a point, but oversimplifies the problem considerably. The use of allative/dative markers with definite, animate, or potentially ambiguous direct objects is a common phenomenon throughout the world, and occurs in a number of TB languages (e.g. Burmese, Jinghpaw, and all dialects of Tibetan) which are considerably less subject to direct Indic influence than the Nepal languages, and the use of lai in Nepal is thus not a major departure from typical TB syntax. Moreover, there is a widespread (and probably PTB) locative la (not discussed in this paper) which serves that function in, for example, Tibetan. Thus even if the phonological form of lay in languages like Kham reflects Nepali influence, the borrowed form very probably simply moved into a syntactic slot which already existed -- and it could well be that this lay is actually just an Indicized pronunciation of a native la
4) Some or all of these forms may also function as ablatives; the available descriptions are seldom explicit.
5) At least within TB, the common tendency seems to be to innovate an instrumental form to distinguish that case from the ergative, rather than to innovate an ergative marker.
6) E.g. Jinghpaw la 'carry in the hand'. The entire family is clearly related to *lak 'hand'.
7) It seems from available descriptions that transitive subject is not always marked as ergative in some of these languages. We desperately need further data on the use of ergative marking in these languages.
8) The sources for the data are the LSI, my own notes on Jinghpaw and Newari, and whatever other descriptions I happened to have on hand. There is, of course, a great deal more data available which should be examined.

9) I have included a few forms with initials such as ʔ and w which might be secondary.
10) Although there are six such forms on the list, three are from very closely related languages (Gurung, Jirel, and Tamang). Simon (1940) presents an argument suggesting that the 'i allomorph of the written Tibetan genitive is etymologically original, and the kyi allomorph secondary. In the absence of more convincing supporting evidence than is provided in that article, the alternative interpretation -- that kyi is original, and the 'i which occurs after final vowels is a result of intervocalic weakening of the velar initial -- is more plausible.
11) As I will suggest below, the Kukish locative/ergative in incorporates an n- etymon. Naylor's Sizang form suggests that it was *na.
12) Cf. the distinction in Russian between bounded idti and unbounded xodit'. Some TB cases are described in DeLancey 1980.

Benedict, Paul. 1972. Sino-Tibetan: A Conspectus. Cambridge: C.U.P.

DeLancey, Scott. 1980. Deictic Categories in the Tibeto-Burman Verb. Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University.

_____. 1983. A semantically driven analysis-synthesis-lexis cycle in Tibeto-Burman. presented at the Symposium on Iconicity in Language. to appear in J. Haiman, ed., Iconicity in Language. Benjamins.

Diehl, Lon. 1981. Spatial postpositions of Jinghpaw: A Lexical-Generative analysis. presented to the 14th ICSTLL.

Matisoff, James. 1973. The Grammar of Lahu. Berkeley, C.U.P.

Naylor, L.B. A Practical Handbook of the Chin Language (Siyin Dialect). Rangoon.

Pulleyblank, E.G. 1983. The locative particles Yu , Yu , Hu . presented to the West Coast Branch of the American Oriental Society.

Simon, Walter. Tibetan dañ, ciṅ, kyin, yin, and ḥam. BSOAS 10.954-75.

Stern, Theodore. 1963. A provisional sketch of Sizang (Siyin) Chin. AM n.s. 10.2:222-78.

Watters, David. 1973. Clause patterns in Kham. in A. Hale and D. Watters, eds., Clause, Sentence, and Discourse Patterns in Selected Languages of Nepal, vol. I.39-202. S.I.L.

LIST I: Case postpositions in k-/g-

	LOC/ALL/DAT	ABL/ERG/INSTR	GENITIVE
LOLO-BURMESE			
Xide Lolo		kɯ	
Moso	keu ~ ko		geu
Li ɹ	kwa^3		
Lahu	kà?	gɛ (LOC & COM/INSTR)	
Bisu		kɔ́ŋ(ABL w/ humans)	
Mpi	$khuŋ^6$ $aŋ^2$		
Naxi			gə
Maru	kyaw		
Burmese	kui	ka. (ABL & SUBJ)	
KACHIN			
Jinghpaw	káw?		
Singhpo	goi		
BODO-GARO-KONYAK			
Nocte	ko		
Chang		ka ABL	
Dhimal			ko
Garo, etc.	ko		
KUKI-NAGA			
Meithei		gi ABL	gi
Ao	dak	age INSTR	
Rengma	ka	ki	
Empeo	ga LOC ki DAT	gene ABL	gu
Kabui	kho'		
Khoirao			goi
Thado	khu DAT		
Rangkhol	kâ DAT		
Chiru	*ka LOC		
Anal		gi~ki	gi~ki

ABOR-MIRI-DAFLA			
Taraon	gò LOC		
Kaman Mishmi		ka~ke	
Dafla	kõ LOC	*ka ABL	
Miri		*ka ABL	
Idu	*qo LOC	go INSTR	
Aka	gü LOC		
TIBETAN-HIMALAYAN			
Tibetan		kyis ERG/INST	kyi
Sunwar	ka-le DAT	ke ERG	ke~ka
Magar	ke DAT		ko
Khambu	ko LOC	ka	
Radong/Rungc^{h}henbung		ka	
Rai		ka	
Yakha	go DAT		ga
Tamang			ki
Khaling	ka LOC		
Kulung		ka ABL	
Thulung		ka ERG	
Jirel		ki ERG	
Kham	kə LOC		
Rangkas	khũ LOC		gu
Bunan	rog, dog, kog LOC		kyi
Pahri (Newari)	ga LOC		
SIFAN			
Primi	k'u LOC	gúe iɛ̀ ERG	
Gyarong		kə ERG	
Rawang	hka		
Tangut	kha 'inside'		

LIST II: Case postpositions in n-

	LOC/ALL/DAT	ABL/ERG/INSTR	GENITIVE
LOLO-BURMESE			
Moso		né~neu	
Hani		ne	
Phunoi	na	né	
Naxi		nɯ	
Burmese		nay? INSTR	
KACHIN			
Jinghpaw	ná	nná ABL	
Singhpo		nani	
BODO-GARO-KONYAK			
Nocte	naŋ		
Deori Chutiya	na DAT		
Garo	na DAT	ni ABL	
Kokborok	nɔ	ni ABL	
KUKI-NAGA			
Meithei		na ERG	
Tangkhul		na~ei-na	
Lotha	nuŋ LOC	na	
Sema		na	
Angami	nu	no	
Empeo	gene LOC & ABL		
		ne ERG	
Khoirao		ni ERG	
Ralte, Paite, Zahao, Lushai, Hallam	in	in ERG	
Thado		in ERG	
Banjogi	in	ni ERG	
Lai		ne ERG	
Chiru		na	
Sizang (Stern)		in ERG	
(Naylor)		ina ERG	

ABOR-MIRI-DAFLA

Taraon		ɲu ABL
Idu		ne ABL

TIBETAN-HIMALAYAN

Tibetan	na LOC	nas ABL
Hayu	noŋ LOC	na ABL
Limbu		nu ABL
Radong		no ABL
Kham		ni ABL
Pahri		na
Newari		nɔ̃

SIFAN

Primi		nãu ABL
Tujia		né

LIST III: Initialless vowels

	LOC/ALL/DAT	ABL/ERG/INSTR	GENITIVE
LOLO-BURMESE			
Hani	a LOC		ɤ
Bisu	ʔɤ LOC		
Mpi	a^2 LOC		
Lahu	ɔ̄ LOC		
Maru		e INSTR	
KACHIN			
Jinghpaw	è LOC éʔ DAT	è ERG	àʔ
Singhpo	i	i	é
Zaiwa		eʔ ERG	
BODO-GARO-KONYAK			
Nocte		wa ABL	
Chang	a LOC	e ABL	
Garo, etc.	o LOC		
KUKI-NAGA			
Tangkhul	*ei (ei-na ABL)		
Lotha	i 'in' o 'on'		
Ao		a INSTR	
Khoirao	a LOC		
Thado, Ralte, Paite, Zahao, Lai, Lushai, Banjogi, Rangkhol, Hallam, Chiru, Anal	a LOC in LOC	in ERG	
Zahao	i LOC		i
ABOR-MIRI-DAFLA			
Kaman Mishmi	wi DAT		
Aka	a LOC		
Dafla	a LOC		

TIBETAN-HIMALAYAN

Gurung			e
Jirel			e
Tamang			i
Vayu	e LOC		
Hayu		ha ERG	
Magar		e ERG	
Khambu	a DAT	e ERG	
Rai		a ERG	
Radong		wa ERG	
Kulung		a ERG	
Khaling		æ ERG	
Kham		e ERG	
Manchati		i	
Kanawari	o LOC	a-s ERG	u
Kanashi	a LOC		

SIFAN

Gyarong			i (w/ pronouns)
Qiang (Ch'iang)		i ERG	
Primi		gúe iɛ̀ ERG	