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 phonmā, *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   *ciṭṭhī* **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 usᵖᵉ'].

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 usᵖⁱ and give us gifts, then later weᵖⁱ too must call them and give them fully the same ... But if they don't give usᵖⁱ 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 usᵖᵉ'].

In the following, *yapmi* bears the definite singular/topic marker *-n*, again impossible for a pronominal prefix:

Transitive: O →

↓A	1s	1di	1de	1pi	1pe
1s 1di 1de 1pi 1pe	KEY: In each cell, the non-past form appears over the past, where they are distinct. PR = present stem PA = past stem N represents a nasal morphophoneme, homorganic with the stem-final; realized as a glottal stop or hiatus after a vowel.				
2s	kɛ-PR-Na kɛ-PA-aŋ				
2d		akɛ-PR akɛ-PA-ɛ			
2p					
3s	PR-Na PA-aŋ	a-PR-si a-PA-ɛsi	a-PR-sigɛ a-PA-ɛsigɛ	a-PR a-PA-ɛ	PA-igɛ
3d 3p	mɛ-PR-Na mɛ-PA-aŋ	am-PR-si am-PA-ɛsi	am-PR-sigɛ am-PA-ɛsigɛ	am-PR am-PA-ɛ	mɛ-PA-igɛ

Intransitive: S →

	PR-Na PA-aŋ	a-PR-si a-PA-ɛsi	a-PR-sigɛ a-PA-ɛsigɛ	a-PR a-PA-ɛ	PA-igɛ

Reflexive: S →

	PR-Nasiŋŋa	a-PR-nɛsi	PR-nɛsigɛ	a-PR-Nasi	PR-Nasigɛ

Table 2. *Maiwa-Mewa Khola affirmative indicative verb paradigm.*

(8) khɔmbheaŋ   ni   kha   *simal*-khe-llɛ   kɔ   **yapmi   mɛdɔktɛn**
     then   EMPH   that   kapok-yam-ERG   TOP us   support.3s.NEG

     ekdam   muyaŋ –   **yapmi-n   muyɛ**   *simal*-khe-llɛ
     very   intoxicate.PA.31s–   us-DF   intoxicate.PA.3s kapok-yam-ERG

     yapmi-n   muyɛ-aŋ   kɔ   *ekdam*   **pɛʔasigɛ**   [Hb2:00]
     us-DF   intoxicate.PA.3s-and TOP   very   vomit.REFL.1pe

But afterward that manioc wasn't good for us. I was badly intoxicated – we were poisoned by the manioc. It poisoned us and we[pe] vomited a lot.

Transitive: O →

↓A	2s	2d	2p	3s	3d	3p
1s	PR-nɛ	PR-nɛsiŋ	PR-(nɛ)niŋ	PA-uŋ	PA-uŋsiŋ	
1di		PR-nɛsigɛ		a-PR-su	a-PR-susi	
					a-PA-usi	
1de				PR-sugɛ	PR-susigɛ	
					PA-usigɛ	
1pi				a-PA-um	PA-umsim	
1pe		PR-Nasigɛ (PR-nɛsigɛ)		PA-umbɛ	PA-umsigɛ	
2s				kɛ-PA-u	kɛ-PA-usi	
2d				kɛ-PR-su	kɛ-PR-susi	
					kɛ-PA-usi	
2p				kɛ-PA-um	kɛ-PA-umsi	
3s	kɛ-PR	kɛ-PR-si	kɛ-PA-i	PA-u	PA-usi	
	kɛ-PA-ɛ	kɛ-PA-ɛsi				
3d				PR-su	PR-susi	
	kɛm-PR	kɛm-PR-si	kɛm-PA-i		PA-usi	
3p	kɛm-PA-ɛ	kɛm-PA-ɛsi		mɛ-PA-u	mɛ-PA-usi	

Intransitive: S →

	2s	2d	2p	3s	3d	3p
	kɛ-PR	kɛ-PR-si	kɛ-PA-i	PR	PR-si	mɛ-PR
	kɛ-PA-ɛ	kɛ-PA-si		PA-ɛ	PA-si	mɛ-PA-ɛ

Reflexive S: →

	2s	2d	2p	3s	3d	3p
	kɛ-PR-siŋ	kɛ-PR-nɛsi	kɛ-PR-Nasi	PR-siŋ	PR-nɛsi	mɛ-PR-siŋ

Table 2 (cont.)

A/S	Transitive: O 1s	1dp	3s	3dp	Intransitive:	Reflexive:
2s	PA-aŋŋɛ		PA-ɛ		PA-ɛ	PR-siŋŋɛ
2d	a-PA-ɛ		PA-ɛsɛ		PA-ɛsɛ	PR-nɛsɛ
2p			PA-ammɛ	PA-ams(imm)ɛ		PR-Nasinnɛ

Table 3. Mewa Khola affirmative imperatives

(9) na-nu   *sardār*-ɛn   phɛrɛ.   phɛrɛ-aŋ   kɔ   **yapmi teʔrɛ**
there-from   contractor-DF   come.PA.3s   come.PA.3s-and   TOP us   take.3s

khɔmbha *bhāḍā* **yapmi thɛktɛ**-aŋ   kɔ   khɔmbhɛaŋ Siliguri yammu
then   pay   us   pay.3s-and   TOP   then   S.   again

pegigɛ   [Hb2:20]
go.1pe

The contractor came from over there [in Assam] and took us away from there. He paid us our wages and we^{pe} went back to Siliguri.

[cf. **teʔrigɛ**, **thɛktigɛ** 'he took us^{pe}, he paid us^{pe}']

In the following, *napmi* acts like a pronominal prefix in separating the preverb *sen* from the root:

(10) lo   khɛni akkhe poksɛ-aŋ   kɛnuːksi phɛaŋ kɔ
well   you^p how   become.3s-and   return.2p COMP TOP

yammu **sen napmi mɛdosɛ**-llɛ   ni   [G10:10/132]
again   PV   us   ask.3p-when   EMPH

When they asked us, "Well! Why did you come back?" ...

(11) *paisā rokwā* mɛdzogu-aŋ   kɔ   **yapmi membɛren**   [Ia4:00]
money stop   do.3p→3s-and   TOP   us   give.3p.NEG

They stopped the money and they didn't give it to us.

[cf. (**anigɛ**) **membɛrigɛn** 'they did not give to us^{pe}']

(12) khɔn-haʔ-rɛ *galla*   **napmi mɛdzogɛ napmi mɛteʔrɛ**
that-PL-ERG recruitment   us   do.3p   us   take.3p

bhartī   poŋsɛ   khɔmbhɛllɛ *belā*   [O44 (Tembe)]
enlistment effect.3p   then   time

At that time they [soldiers on leave] used to recruit us and take us off and get us enlisted.

In the above examples from the MM dialect, *yapmi~napmi* is seen to occur sporadically for a 1st non-singular object with a 3rd person agent. Where forms in the surrounding context distinguish exclusive from inclusive, these are exclusive, except in 6, which is rather anomalous: after the first word ('we^{pe}') the speaker switches from exclusive to an apparently empathetic inclusive. The context is notionally exclusive — a younger man explaining to an older one how the new generation functions. *yapmi* never represents a 1st singular argument, and it does not appear in 2→1 scenarios or imperatives, although there are many of these in the corpus.

OTHER DIALECTS

Descriptions of other Limbu dialects present somewhat different conditions for the use of 1st person *yapmi*. For the dialect of Phedap, van Driem writes:

> "The first person morpheme <*a*> is often dropped from 2→1 forms and replaced by the word <*naˑpmi*> which immediately precedes the verb. The word *naˑpmi* also occurs as a non-bound morph in the meaning 'someone else', whence the restricted usage to signal a first person actant probably derives." (1987:78).

There are two major differences with the MM dialect: use for 2→1 (including imperatives) rather than 3→1 forms, and use for 1st sing. object, even for 2s→1s (where, incidentally, it cannot be said to replace the prefix *a-*, because this prefix does not occur in the regular finite form). The impersonal verb form may be either past or non-past.

Weidert and Subba (Panchthar dialect) present forms with *yapmi* as the only ones for most 1st person object scenarios except those with specifically INCLUSIVE 1st person objects (necessarily with 3rd person agent). As in Phedappe, the impersonal verb form may be either past or non-past. Without going into a fully detailed analysis, *yapmi* forms are used in the following parts of the paradigm (1985:60 and paradigms 43, 68, 69; paradigm 42 differs in minor details):

(1) 2→1 except 2s→1s; imperative 2→1dp.
(2) 3→1dpe.
(3) 3d→1s.

In a few cases, non-*yapmi* forms are listed as alternatives: 2p→1s present *kɛ-PA-igyaʔ* (resembling Myanglung Phedappe — see below), 2p→1p present *akɛ-PR-ʔ*, and 3p→1pe present *mɛ-PA-igyaʔ* (Weidert and Subba 1985:60, 183). It is possible that a complete personal paradigm without *yapmi* forms exists in Panchthar as in the other Limbu dialects, but the impersonal form appears to be more frequent there than elsewhere.

In older sources for Limbu morphology — the LSI (1908) and Hodgson's notes (1857), both of which contain extensive paradigms — *yapmi* does not occur. This is a clear indication that *yapmi* forms had not replaced the regular paradigm. It is possible, however, that such forms did exist but were either not recorded or not judged to be part of the verbal morphology proper, since *yapmi* may have been taken as an independent word in an idiomatic construction.

We may summarize the use of *yapmi*-forms in Limbu dialects as follows:

Mewa/Maiwa	Phedap (van Driem 1987)	Panchthar (Weidert and Subba, 1985)
3→1dpe		3→1dpe, 3d→1s (not 3s→1s)
	2→1	2→1 (except 2s→1s)

IMPERSONAL *YAPMI*-FORMS AND 1ST PERSON MORPHOLOGY

A number of factors may have contributed to the replacement of first person morphology by *yapmi*. It has often been noted that the non-singular parts of the you-and-me paradigms are the most difficult to elicit in Kiranti languages, with informants frequently resorting to non-finite forms even in spontaneous speech (Allen 1975:49, Michailovsky 1988:105, Ebert 1994:25-26). The development of impersonal *yapmi* forms may reflect this. But why should this part of the paradigm be more problematic than others?

The reason may be, as Ebert suggests, that in these forms the finite paradigm does not allow marking of the number of both speech act participants. The *yapmi* forms at least sidestep this problem, if they do not solve it.

For Limbu, it is possible that the presence of *a-*, the inclusive[3] marker, is felt to be anomalous in 2→1dp forms, in which the 1st person argument is notionally exclusive, even if it is not structurally in opposition with an inclusive category. (Note that 1dp→2 forms all bear the exclusive marker *-ige*.) This would explain the replacement of 2→1dp finite forms, marked by the prefix *age-*, by impersonal-object forms (*yapmi kε-*) forms in Panchthar and (optionally) in

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[3]   Van Driem and I have been carrying on a low-intensity debate on the significance of *a-*, which he considers to mean '1st person' (Michailovsky 1989:472, van Driem 1994:159). My reasons for considering *a-* to be a 1st person (non-singular) inclusive — and not general 1st person — marker are the following (valid for the MM, Panchthar, and Phedap dialects at least):

   a- does not occur in ANY 1st person form with only singular arguments, that is 1s intransitive, 1s reflexive, 1s→2s, 1s→3s, 2s→1s, or 3s→1s, i.e. in any basic 1st person form.

   a- occurs in ALL 1st person non-singular forms which are distinctively inclusive, and in NO form that is distinctively exclusive. These include all non-singular 1st person intransitive forms, and all transitive 1dp→3 and 3→1dp forms.

Van Driem replies, "I cannot concur with this view, as the prefix clearly functions as a marker of first person, not only in 2→1 forms, but also in non-finite forms such as the supine" (1994:159). The first assertion does not contradict my analysis, while the new argument, concerning the supine, is apparently irrelevant, because what is prefixed to the supine, as van Driem explains elsewhere (1987:212), is the oblique (or possessive) pronoun, a different paradigm of 12 forms. Of course, the possibility that the 1st person singular possessive pronoun *a-* (and the element *a-* in other 1st person pronouns) has the same etymological origin as the verbal prefix *a-* cannot be excluded.

Phedap. It also explains the divergent evolution in the Myanglung Phedappe dialect mentioned by van Driem (1987:78n), where 2→1dp forms bear the 2nd person prefix *kɛ-* and the EXCLUSIVE suffix *-igɛ*[4].

If *a-* is felt to be anomalous in 2→1dp forms, it may be wondered why it is there in the first place. One possibility is that it was originally a 1st person (?non-singular) marker, unmarked for "clusivity". Another is that it was originally a 1st person (non-singular) object marker of some kind. This hypothesis could find support in Hodgson's paradigms (see accompanying article), where *a-* occurs only in transitive 1st person object forms.

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[4] For van Driem, *a-* "has been reanalysed as the inclusive morpheme" in this dialect.

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