

**Agreement systems and syntactic organization
in the Kham verb [Nepal]***

David E. Watters

Summer Institute of Linguistics

1. Introduction.

Throughout its early history, Tibeto-Burman was characterized as monosyllabic with few remarkable features in terms of elaborate morphosyntactic systems. The few exceptions were found in the so-called "pronominalizing" languages of the sub-Himalayan region and dismissed as a probable consequence of a Munda substratum (Konow, in Grierson 1909). Maspero (1946) and Egerod (1973) rejected the Munda hypothesis and ascribed the feature to probable Indo-Aryan areal diffusion. Henderson (1957) was perhaps the first to suggest that the feature was "the possibility of a genuine Tibeto-Burman family trait." In 1975, Bauman, basing his work on a broad sampling of Tibeto-Burman languages introduced the first serious, typological study of the question. Many of the languages he drew upon were clearly outside the geographical confines implicit to the notion of a substratum influence. Furthermore, serious typological dissimilarities to the supposed substrate and highly significant consistencies within the morphologies of the Tibeto-Burman languages themselves provided all the evidence needed to imply a native origin of the complex verb morphologies to the internal inclinations and predispositions of Tibeto-Burman itself.

The actual time depth of the pronominal developments is still a matter of much debate; some assigning the feature to the proto language itself (Bauman, DeLancey, van Driem), while others imply that the feature should be interpreted as a relatively late innovation involving only a subset of the total language family (Caughley, LaPolla), or even that the feature may be due to independent, parallel developments accompanied by drift and areal influence (LaPolla).

* The Kham of this paper is not to be confused with the Kham spoken in Eastern Tibet. An earlier version of this paper entitled "The maintenance of deictic integrity across Kham dialects" was presented at the 24th Sino-Tibetan Conference, Bangkok, Thailand, October 1991. After the initial writing I have benefitted greatly from a discussion with Scott DeLancey, and also a personal letter from Randy LaPolla. They do not necessarily agree with my views or conclusions presented in this paper. If I inadvertently misrepresent them or any others in this paper, I am solely responsible for such errors.

Arguments on all sides abound, and though there may not be sufficient evidence to confidently assign verb agreement systems to Proto-Tibeto-Burman, still, the similarities and consistencies in the languages which exhibit such features across the family cannot be lightly dismissed. Since the only reasonable option, in my opinion, capable of accounting for the similarities is one of "shared retention" from an earlier parent language, I would opt for (short of assigning the feature to a position within PTB itself) a high level, genetically related subset of the family of considerable antiquity—something akin to Thurgood's Rung branch.

Given the broad geographical spread of the proposed Rung languages, and their frequent geographical position in the midst of other genetic subgroupings, the proposal seemed at first rather 'odd' and highly unlikely. Given, however, Ebert's recent (1990) findings on related marking systems (apparently) distinctive to Gyarong and the Eastern Kiranti languages, there is now stronger evidence for a Kiranti-Rung genetic grouping. Thurgood (1985) as reported by LaPolla (1992) (I don't possess the original article) gives evidence that the Kanauri-Almora group, too, is genetically closer to Kiranti and Kuki-Chin than to the Tibetan-like languages it is usually associated with.

Incidentally, Thurgood had already noticed some striking similarities in the grammatical patterns of Rung and Kham, and tentatively placed Kham into the Rung subset as well. For a discussion of these similarities, see Thurgood 1984. In recent discoveries of a new Kham dialect—Gamale Kham—which I will discuss at length in this paper), further similarities appear, both with Rawang and Limbu (Rung and Kiranti respectively). See, for example, footnote 3.

1.1 *The aberrant Takale paradigm.*

In the early stages of attempting to reconstruct a verb agreement system for Proto-Tibeto-Burman, among all the languages Bauman sampled (1975), Kham manifested a number of aberrant features difficult to link to an original PTB system. Foremost of these aberrations was a verbal agreement paradigm which manifested two complete sets of role marked agreement indices—one for subjects and one for objects. Later in the same year (1975), in an attempt to account for this anomaly, I presented material from another Kham dialect (Mhai) which suggested that a set of suffixed subject agreement markers could be posited for proto-Kham which had clear connections with an original Tibeto-Burman suffixal agreement system. Then, by certain innovative affixation developments in relative clauses, the original system was augmented by a redundant set of prefixed subject

markers. The older suffixes, now redundant, were lost and then replaced by a new set of object suffixes in Takale, also from innovative affixation *developments in clefted relative constructions*. My intention then, more than anything else, was to show that complex agreement systems could develop within Tibeto-Burman languages as independent innovations apart from substratum influences.

1.2 *The relationship of the Takale paradigm to an earlier proto-system.*

After DeLancey's work (1980), I have since rejected my earlier position that proto-Kham exhibited only subject agreement patterns in the verb. Though the Takale paradigm exhibited anomalous elements not easy to account for, DeLancey, basing his argument on a comparison of the more conservative Mhai data with other TB languages, concluded that the original Kham paradigm must have been fairly similar to the model he was proposing for PTB, and that the elaborate Takale system was due more to a reanalysis and restructuring of original PTB material than to completely novel innovations. (See also Bauman, 1979:426.) DeLancey predicted that the reanalysis process had likely begun with the reinterpretation of a 2nd person prefix belonging to the **te* series (attested in a few other TB languages). In 1988 he adduced even further evidence for an original PTB prefixal series (along the same theme as the **te* series) partly from Thurgood's (1984) proposed Rung subset of languages, plus data from Limbu (Weidert and Subba, 1985) and the newly discovered data from Lakher (Weidert, 1985). Based on the new evidence, he came to the conclusion that "the essential data required for an adequate solution to the Kham puzzle have to do with a prefixal paradigm which, while not as well attested as the suffixal series, seems to be of PTB or near-PTB provenience."

1.3 *The scope of this paper.*

In about the same year I began collecting data from a new Kham dialect, Gamale Kham, which turns out to be more conservative than the Mhai dialect, and shows clear evidence of an extant prefixal paradigm with apparent phonological similarities with Rawang *e-*, and Lakher *ei-*. (See also van Driem, 1990.) With the new comparative data from Gamale Kham, not only is there stronger support for an early TB prefixal series, but there is also illuminating new evidence for a solution to the "Kham puzzle." More important to my own purposes, however, is that the new material lends significant support to a principle which appears to lie at the heart of the Tibeto-Burman verb—DeLancey's notion of "deictic reference."

DeLancey (1980), enlarging upon Bauman's observation of a Tibeto-Burman "dominance hierarchy" (sometimes referred to as a hierarchy of 'animacy', 'agentivity', 'salience', or 'empathy'), in which 1st and 2nd persons take precedence over 3rd persons in verb agreement patterns showed that what was really at issue was an original system of "deictic reference" in the Tibeto-Burman verb. The systems alluded to are pragmatically oriented discourse grammaticalizations which mark such things as natural viewpoint, the directionality of attention flow, and the orientation of speaker and hearer as they relate to the event being reported. In fact, (as implied by DeLancey in 1980), deictic reference turns out to be a major focal point of organization in the Tibeto-Burman verb. The preservation of such reference across major Kham dialect boundaries is analogous to certain long term historical developments in Tibeto-Burman itself, and as such makes an interesting microcosmic case study of the phenomenon.

2. *Major dialect groupings.*

Within the Kham branch of languages [Nepal], there are three major dialect groupings: Takale Kham, Gamale Kham, and Sheshi Kham. A fourth group, less distinct than the others, centers around the Nisi-Bhuji nucleus, a probable offshoot from Takale. Other minor nuclei are probable, but about which little is currently known (Mhai being one of them). Within each of the major groups are numerous village dialects, each of which is distinguished from its neighbors by at least minor changes in vocabulary, phonology, and morphology. Most of the changes are well within the range of intelligibility, but when two villages are separated from each other by several stages in such a continuum, levels of intelligibility between them may be considerably reduced. Still, there is a homogeneity of features within major groupings that no longer holds when crossing over major dialect boundaries (which often coincide with major geographical boundaries). These internal features, mostly grammatical, are what give the dialects their distinctive definition. The kinds of differences that are significant across major dialect boundaries are thus in the area of morphosyntactic systems, not in lexical differences. They are systemic in nature and interrupt cohesive grammatical ties. As such, they play a major role in determining levels of inter-intelligibility.

2.1 *Incompatibility of surface morphemes.*

Though lexical similarity in root morphemes between Kham dialects is relatively high (72% between Takale and Gamale), inherent intelligibility levels between them is surprisingly low—somewhere in the mid 30% range

(Stephen Watters, 1988).¹ The major contributor to this anomaly can be accounted for by an incompatibility in the surface morphologies of their respective verb phrases. Though the categories marked are much the same from one dialect to another, their lexical representations and syntactic arrangements are often very different. What may be suffixing in one dialect may be prefixing in another, and the morphemes themselves may have derived from entirely different etyma. Worse yet (worse for intelligibility, that is), the morphemes may have derived from etyma once participating in entirely different systems, later reinterpreted to fit the new system.

2.2 *Independent systemic innovations.*

One thing is clear: much in the morphology of each dialect has developed independently of the others, the motivations for change having been generated by internal, systemic considerations. As former categories become indeterminate they are replaced or supplemented by new contrastive devices fashioned from whatever is most convenient in the existing system; often bits and pieces of linguistic debris left over from an earlier system. Once replacement and reinterpretation take place, the system is ripe for splits, mergers, and analogical levelling, all common *processes for bringing about symmetry and stability*. The end result is that the root, which, between Takale and Gamale, has no more than a 72% chance of being lexically similar, is surrounded and camouflaged by an array of unfamiliar affixes in unfamiliar syntactic arrangements. Add to this the complexity of morphophonemic phenomena common to such contexts, and it is no longer surprising that mutual intelligibility between major dialects should be so low.

3. *The preservation of genetic mega-traits.*

Of major interest in this paper is the way in which the radically different verb morphologies of various Kham dialects maintain the integrity of certain morphosyntactic systems of "deictic reference." My observations would have been impossible without Scott DeLancey's pioneering work *Deictic Categories in the Tibeto-Burman Verb* (1980). His recognition of deictic reference as the focal point of organization in the Tibeto-Burman verb has been an extremely useful notion to me. In effect, I do little more in

¹ Any attempt at quantifying levels of intelligibility between dialects is obviously an elusive one and is not an attempt at defining the difference between 'language' and 'dialect' (which involves an interplay of sociolinguistic factors as much as anything else). The technique used for determining levels of intelligibility between Kham dialects is based on Casad (1974) and has been used by survey workers throughout South Asia.

this paper than corroborate what he, and others who precede him (e.g. Bauman 1975, Caughley 1978), have already shown. The data I present is new, and comes from my own study of Kham dialects hitherto unknown.

My claim in this paper is that the maintenance of deictic integrity in each of the Kham dialects has been the overriding organizational principle that guided the restructuring of their individual verb morphologies. Each dialect, from the time of its separation from the parent stock, has been free to develop, innovate, and branch off in its own unique way, but always within the bounds of its genetic makeup—a predefined set of common mega-traits inherited from the parent language. A comparison of the Takale and Gamale verb morphologies implies for Kham that any amount of morphemic reshuffling in the verb phrase can be tolerated so long as the larger deictic categories of which they are a part remain contrastive. As a result, equivalent categories for deixis exist in most of the dialects, and though their equivalence is masked by radical differences in surface morphology, a closer look reveals their fundamental identity.

3.1 *Points of grammatical compatibility across dialects.*

Though the verb morphologies of the various Kham dialects have gone through radical shifts so that their points of similarity are not immediately transparent, they still assume a basic one-to-one correspondence. That is, they involve little more than regular sound changes, lexical substitution, and simple variation in the syntactic ordering of morphemes. The familiar person and number agreement patterns in the Kham verb are a case in point. Common to most of the dialects is a nine feature series in which first, second, and third persons intersect with singular, dual, and plural numbers. Typically, only eight of the nine features have a lexical or morphemic representation in the verb, the ninth being a default or *zero* morpheme. Consistent with most languages, the default agreement is with third singular persons—third singular actor for intransitive verbs, and third singular patient for transitive verbs. In general, then, for intransitive verbs eight out of nine possible actors are marked for agreement; and for transitive verbs eight out of nine possible patients are marked for agreement (while all agents are marked).

3.2 *Points of divergence in otherwise analogous systems.*

Even in analogous systems with a basic, underlying compatibility, there can be numerous points of divergence in which an exact or precise correspondence of surface features is no longer possible. In the Gamale dialect, for example, most agentive person markers in the verb are

bisyllabic, not monosyllabic as they are in the Takale dialect. The first syllable of the bisyllabic morpheme occurs before the root and the second syllable occurs after the root—a "split" morpheme of sorts, as in the following examples:

a-	hna-	ŋ-	ke	
1sg-	go-	1sg-	fut	'I will go'

ye-	hna-	sə-	khě	
2pl-	go-	2pl-	past	'You [pl] went'

Following is a comparison of the intransitive paradigm for the two dialects. In Gamale non-past, only the 1st singular form is different from the past series. ("V" represents the placement of the verb root, and "A" the placement of tense-aspect markers):

Takale: (all tenses)	Gamale: (past)	(non-past)
1sg. na-V-A	ye-V-ŋ	a-V-ŋ-A
1dl. gin-V-A	ye-V-A	(same as past)
1pl. ge-V-A	ye-V-əĕ-A	"
2sg. nə-V-A	nə-V-əĕ-A	"
2dl. jin-V-A	ye-V-sĩ-A	"
2pl. je-V-A	ye-V-sə-A	"
3sg. V-A	A-V	"
3dl. V-A-nl	A-V-ŋl	"
3pl. V-A-rə	A-V-rə	"

Figure 1. Intransitive paradigm in Takale and Gamale dialects.

3.2.1 *Vestiges of an earlier prefixal system.*

The origin of the prefixed forms in Gamale is not clear. They may be related historically to what Bauman refers to in Tibeto-Burman as the *te

series, a series often associated with second person.² Assuming this to be true for proto-Kham as well, the series would have been expanded in Gamale, presumably by analogy, and now includes all first person forms as well. In second singular forms the *ye-* has been replaced by *nə-*, an obvious second person form, attestable in other Tibeto-Burman languages. Its replacement in this environment suggests that it must have been closely associated with 2nd person even before its replacement. In the Takale paradigm, we'll see that a similar replacement (*ye-* to *nə-*) was very likely the first step in a restructuring of the entire paradigm, which was DeLancey's prediction in 1980 and again in 1988. The result, after further reanalysis, has been a new, fully contrastive agent series in Takale.

3.2.2 *Vestiges of the normal pronominal series.*

It is evident that the suffixed forms in Gamale make up what may be considered the most attested pronominal series for TB. The forms are contrastive except between 2nd singular and 1st plural, in which case both are *əḥ* < [**n*] (an irregular form for 1st plural). In precisely those cases where the suffixed forms have become ambiguous, the prefixed forms *nə-* vs. *ye-* furnish the necessary contrast. The weight of the contrast has shifted to the prefix, as the following example illustrates:

<i>ye-hna-əḥ-khḥ</i>	
1pl-go-{}-past	'We went'
<i>nə-hna-əḥ-khḥ</i>	
2sg-go-{}-past	'You went'

Thus, it appears that an older system of unclear origin (possibly in keeping with DeLancey's and van Driem's prefixal series) is being drawn into the orbit of a new person marking system. In the new system, the burden of contrast is still shared, for the most part, between the old suffixed forms and the new prefixed series. In some cases the entire weight falls on the prefix, in which case the suffix becomes redundant (as in the suffix *-əḥ* in the above example).

² The designation comes from Chepang where the function of *te* is more refined than the one ascribed to it by DeLancey for TB (see Caughley). In Chepang, the morpheme clearly marks the "unexpected" direction of information flow between 1st and 2nd persons.

3.2.3 Development of past/non-past distinction in Gamale.

For first singular actor agreement forms, Gamale has a past/non-past distinction not present in the Takale paradigm: *ye-* for past tense forms, and *a-* for non-past forms. As such, the *ye-* prefix acts as a portmanteau morpheme, playing a role in two separate series. That is, it marks tense as well as person. Where it occurs, the usual past tense marker *-khě* becomes redundant (as it would be in **ye-hna-n-khě* 'I went') and, as may be expected, has dropped off in favor of economy. (*a-* occurs alone in iterative/habitual aspect, but combines with other tense markers in tenses like continuous *a-hna-ja-n*, and future *a-hna-n-ke*, etc.) This is true for the transitive paradigm as well. The "split" person marker morphemes in Gamale have become the "stuff" of which an eventual (and still only partial) past/non-past distinction is being developed, as the following example illustrates:

<i>ye-hna-n</i>	vs.	<i>a-hna-n</i>
pst-go-1st		nonpst-go-1sg
'I went'		'I go'

We saw earlier that in the 2nd person singular forms *ye-* has been replaced by *nə-*, an obvious 2nd person prefix which occurs elsewhere in the language. Most notably it occurs in NPs as a 2nd person possessive prefix. The *a-*, too, occurs in the same series as a 1st person possessive prefix:

<i>nə-kwi</i>	
your-hand	'Your hand'
<i>a-kwi</i>	
my-hand	'My hand'

As such, *a-* is the second morpheme imported from an outside system (the genitive system) to replace a member of the now-meaningless *ye-* series. The *a-*, however, is restricted to non-past contexts, whereas *nə-* functions in all tenses. We'll see in a later section that this replacement process has continued in the Takale dialect until all of the old series have been replaced by a new contrastive series of agent markers.

3.3 Comparison of transitive paradigms.

Following is a comparison of the transitive paradigms for the Gamale³ and Takale dialects. Patients are highlighted in bold type, and agents in italic type. (For simplicity's sake dual patients are not included here.)

GAMALE

1sg.pat		2sg.pat	3sg.pat
1sg.agt	--	ye-V-k-ǝḗ	ye-V-(n)
1dl.agt	--	ye-V -A	ye-V -A
1pl.agt	--	ye-V-k-ǝḗ-A	ye-V-k-ǝḗ-A
2sg.agt	nə-V-kə-ŋ-A	--	nə-V -A
2dl.agt	ye-V-si-ŋ-A	--	ye-V-si-ŋ-A
2pl.agt	ye-V-sə-ŋ-A	--	ye-V-sə-A
3sg.agt	A-V-kə-ŋ-o	A-V-k-ǝḗ-o	A-V-o
3dl.agt	A-V-kə-ŋ-ni	A-V-k-ǝḗ-ni	A-V-ni
3pl.agt	A-V-kə-ŋ-rə	A-V-k-ǝḗ-rə	A-V-rə
1pl.pat		2pl.pat	3pl.pat
1sg.agt	--	ye-V-si	ye-V-(n)-rə
1dl.agt	--	ye-V -A	ye-V-rə -A
1pl.agt	--	ye-V-k-ǝḗ-A	ye-V-k-ǝḗ-rə-A ⁴
2sg.agt	nə-V-si-A	--	nə-V -A
2dl.agt	ye-V-si-ŋ-A	--	ye-V-si-ŋ-A
2pl.agt	ye-V-si-A	--	ye-V-sə-rə-A
3sg.agt	A-V-si-u	A-V-s -o	A-V-o-rə
3dl.agt	A-V-si-rə	A-V-si-ni	A-V-ni
3pl.agt	A-V-si-rə	A-V-sə-rə	A-V-rə

³ The Gamale prefixed form *ye-* is strikingly similar to forms found elsewhere in TB (e.g. Rawang *e-* and Lakher *ei-*). Apparently tied to the prefixed forms is a suffixed *-k*, (alternating with *-ŋ* in some environments). The suffix resembles similar suffixed forms in some of the Kiranti paradigms (also of unclear origin).

⁴ The 1st plural agentive form *-ǝḗ* in Gamale is irregular both in its form and in its agreement patterns. It is identical to the 2nd singular form occurring elsewhere in the system. Furthermore, it is not usual for primary agreement patterns to occur with 1st or 2nd person agents in the transitive paradigm. The ambiguity may be related to what occurs in Kiranti as *-n* for 2nd singular, and *-ni* for 1st and 2nd plural (DeLancey, personal communication.)

TAKALE

1sg.pat		2sg.pat	3sg.pat
1sg.agt	--	<i>na-V-ni-A</i>	<i>na-V-A</i>
1dl.agt	--	<i>gin-V-ni-A</i>	<i>gin-V-A</i>
1pl.agt	--	<i>ge-V-ni-A</i>	<i>ge-V-A</i>
2sg.agt	<i>nə-V-na-A</i>	--	<i>nə-V-A</i>
2dl.agt	<i>jin-V-na-A</i>	--	<i>jin-V-A</i>
2pl.agt	<i>je-V-na-A</i>	--	<i>je-V-A</i>
3sg.agt	<i>V-na-A-o</i>	<i>V-ni-A-o</i>	<i>V-A-o</i>
3dl.agt	<i>V-na-A-ni</i>	<i>V-ni-A-ni</i>	<i>V-A-ni</i>
3pl.agt	<i>V-na-A-rə</i>	<i>V-ni-A-rə</i>	<i>V-A-rə</i>
1pl.pat		2pl.pat	3pl.pat
1sg.agt	--	<i>na-V-ci-A</i>	<i>na-ra-V-A</i>
1dl.agt	--	<i>gin-V-ci-A</i>	<i>gin-ra-V-A</i>
1pl.agt	--	<i>ge-V-ci-A</i>	<i>ge-ra-V-A</i>
2sg.agt	<i>nə-V-si-A</i>	--	<i>nə-ra-V-A</i>
2dl.agt	<i>jin-V-si-A</i>	--	<i>jin-ra-V-A</i>
2pl.agt	<i>je-V-si-A</i>	--	<i>je-ra-V-A</i>
3sg.agt	<i>V-si-A-ni</i>	<i>V-ci-A-ni</i>	<i>ya-V-A-o</i>
3dl.agt	<i>A-V-si-rə</i>	<i>A-V-si-ni</i>	<i>yara-V-A-ni</i>
3pl.agt	<i>V-si-A-rə</i>	<i>V-ci-A-rə</i>	<i>yara-V-A-rə</i>

Figure 2. Transitive paradigms in Gamale and Takale.

3.3.1 The conservative Gamale pattern.

The major difference between the two paradigms is in their degree of development or departure from an earlier proto-form. Gamale can be regarded as more conservative in this respect. The suffixed SAP (SPEECH-ACT-PARTICIPANT) *patient* markers found in the Gamale transitive paradigm (except 1st plural *-si* which does not correspond with 1st plural *əḗ* in the intransitive paradigm) are identical to the *actor* markers in the intransitive paradigm. The patterns in such cases are parallel to the case marking pattern of clause constituents in classical ergative systems: that is, the patient of a transitive clause is marked the same as the actor of an

intransitive clause. A modification of the pattern, a pattern for "split ergativity," is also evident. Only 1st and 2nd persons SAPs participate "classically" in the modified pattern; hence the term "split." In Gamale, third persons are not marked at all for patient agreement, except where their number is plural. Third person agreement patterns are with the agent (which also happens to be the ergative-case marked constituent in the clause). The pattern is parallel to DeLancey's proto-typical Tibeto-Burman "split-ergative" pattern.⁵

Even in cases where both participants in a transitive clause are SAPs the agent index is not always recoverable from the verbal paradigm, though in most cases a certain amount of ancillary information is provided for the agent as well. In particular, if both participants are singular the verbal agreement index is with the patient to the exclusion of the agent (except in the case of 2s-1s where the 2s agent is also clear, but only by virtue of the newly innovated prefix *nə-*), as in the following example:

nə-hnə-kə-ŋ-khẽ 'You saw me'
ye-hnə-k-əẽ 'I saw you'

If the patient is 1st plural, however, all agreement information is focused on the patient, and most intersecting agent information (except for the prefix *nə-*) is obscured, as in the following two examples:

*ye-hnə-sĩ-khẽ*⁶ 'You {dl} saw us {pl}'
ye-hnə-si-khẽ 'You {pl} saw us {pl}'

⁵ LaPolla (personal letter) emphasized to me that "the simple fact that 3rd person has different marking from 1st and 2nd person does not qualify it as an ergative system." We are not, however, dealing with classical ergative systems, but with the 'split-ergative', a clearly acknowledged typological system with its own set of diagnostic properties. Silverstein's hierarchy (1976) espouses the fundamental basis of the typology, and Trask (1979) goes on to distinguish two types of split-ergativity, his 'Type A' being the one most applicable to the pronominalized TB languages. His division between 'Type A' and 'Type B' is fairly close to DeLancey's (1981) 'EH-Split' and 'Aspectual Split.' In fact, LaPolla's claim (1992) that the TB verb agreement systems are "based on person rather than clause syntax or semantics," is very close to DeLancey's claim (1981:626) that in split-ergative languages "the assignment of particular case-markers is partly determined by some factor other than semantic or syntactic role." Furthermore, in the same three articles, DeLancey comments on the similarities between voice alternations in nominative type languages and the function of split-ergativity. Trask makes the claim that "Type A ergative languages derive from a passive made obligatory," and LaPolla refers to the TB verb agreement system as a "pragmatically-based grammaticalization of the discourse prominence of SAPs."

⁶ The picture is less clear here since the nasalized syllable *sĩ* is identical to the 2nd dual agent morpheme in the intransitive paradigm. It may be a coalescence of *sí* + *n*, in which case both agent and patient are represented.

Furthermore, where the patient is 2nd person, there is no agreement for an intersecting 1st person agent (except in the case of the anomalous 1pl agt *æð*). Given these patterns, the broad generalization can be made that where both participants are SAPs, the primary agreement pattern in Gamale is with patients (though certainly the case cannot be stated as an absolute).

The "split" pattern occurs where agents are 3rd person. In the same way that there is an identity in form for intransitive SAP agents and transitive SAP patients, the reverse is true for 3rd persons—the identity in form is between the agents of the intransitive and transitive paradigms. As stated earlier, the verb agreement marking can be viewed as an echo of the split ergative case marking patterns in the clause. As such, all 3rd person agents are marked for verb agreement, even where they occur with SAP patients; that is, both roles are marked for agreement. The importance of this pattern for split-ergativity will be discussed in §3.4.1.

3.3.2 Development of new patient series in Takale.

The Takale paradigm is a further departure from an original pattern for Kham. In Takale, an identity exists between transitive and intransitive subjects, not between transitive patients and intransitive actors (as it was in Gamale). Furthermore, a new series of patient morphemes, clearly distinct from the agent series, has evolved. The result is that all agents and all patients (except 3rd singular) are always marked for agreement.

The newly developed 1st and 2nd person agent series in Takale is totally prefixing, apparently replacing what occurs in Gamale as the vestige of an earlier prefixal system. In Gamale, so far, only 2nd singular *nə-* and 1st singular *a-* (nonpast) have replaced any of the *ye-* series. In Takale, the replacement has been complete, bringing about a reanalysis of the entire system; a system which is highly regular and fully contrastive. For both singular and plural patient sets there are twenty-one distinctive forms for twenty-one possible combinations. For the dual patient set (not included) there is some overlap and ambiguity with the plural set.

3.3.3 Subject agreement patterns in Sheshi Kham.

A third major grouping of Kham dialects, the Sheshi group, offers an interesting contrast to the Takale and Gamale dialects in that agreement patterns in (at least) one of its dialects are only with subjects. As such, this one dialect has little to offer in terms of support to my major thesis except that as may be expected, the deictic distinction of "split ergativity" is also lost in such an environment. DeLancey's assumption (1988) that "no

reanalyzed subject-agreement system is to be found in any of Kham's closest neighbors and most probable cousins..." may turn out to be wrong,⁷ but I do agree with his assumption that such a system would not likely occur as a link in the chain between a proto-system and Takale Kham. His observation that the loss of split ergativity in such a system would require a subsequent reanalysis back to its original form is correct. I offer the paradigm here for interest's sake and for other scholars to make of it what they will:

Sheshi: (— all objects —)

	PAST:	FUTURE:	CONTINUOUS:
(free-pronoun)			
1sg. (na)	V-də-na	əi-V-na	V-jya-na
1dl. (gini)	V-də-cya	əi-V-cya	V-jya-cya
1pl. (ge)	V-də-ya	əi-V-ya	V-jya-ya
2sg. (nən)	V-də-na	əi-V-na	V-jya-na
2dl. (jini)	V-də-cina	əi-V-cina	V-jya-cina
2pl. (je)	V-də-cya	əi-V-cya	V-jya-cya
3sg. (o)	V-d-a	əi-V-wa	V-jya-w
3dl. (oni)	V-də-niya	əi-V-niya	V-jya-wni
3pl. (oyan)	V-də-ra	əi-V-ra	V-jya-wan

Figure 3. The transitive paradigm in Sheshi Kham.

In the Sheshi dialect, too, a "parenthetic" mode (a specific kind of relativized construction to be discussed later in §3.4.3) is in effect. In all dialects the normal suffixed verbal agreement paradigm is augmented in parenthetic mode by a new set of prefixed subject markers. In Sheshi, however, where the normal suffixed agreement patterns are only subject indices anyway, the augmented prefixed series turns out to be completely redundant with the suffixed set, as can be seen in the following Figure:

⁷ My informant for this dialect was a woman who had spent most of her adult life in a Nepali run leprosarium outside her native homeland. Her consistent loss of patient agreement forms in the verb paradigms may have been due to the influence of Nepali which marks only agent agreement. Other varieties of the Sheshi group still retain fully inflected agreement forms. If, in fact, further investigation bears out that her speech form contrasts with the norm for her own dialect, it would make an interesting case study in terms of the rapidity in which a 'bleaching out' of patient forms can actually occur under the areal influence of a predominant language. Some of the other Sheshi dialects in which agent-patient marking has been retained will have to await treatment in a later paper.

	Sheshi:	
	<i>narrative</i>	<i>parenthetic</i>
1s	V-A-na	na-V-n-(u)
1d	V-A-cya	gini-V-ci-(u)
1p	V-A-ya	ge-V-y-(u)
2s	V-A-na	na-V-n-(u)
2d	V-A-cina	jln-V-cln-(u)
2p	V-A-cya	je-V-ci-(u)
3s	V-A-a	a-V-(u)
3d	V-A-niya	ni-V-(u)
3p	V-A-ra	ora-V-(u)

Figure 4. Narrative and parenthetic paradigms in Sheshi Kham.

In other words, since the patient agreement patterns have already been obliterated in the process of Sheshi's own independent evolution from proto-Kham, there is apparently no possibility of the old suffixed series being reanalyzed as an object series (the kind of process I was proposing in 1975). In Mhai, at least the first steps of a reanalysis have begun, but only because at a previous stage some of the suffixed series were still patient agreement indices. Though 2-1 and 2-3 are still redundant (both of which are na-V-n), the rest of the forms are contrastive for two persons, still along split ergative lines,⁸ as in the following:

1-2	na-V-n
1-3	V-n
3-2	V-u-nu
3-1	V-u-nu
3-3	V-u

3.4 Morphosyntactic categories.

As part of the verb phrase in each of the Kham dialects there are morpho-syntactic systems which grammaticalize certain discourse functions—i.e. they make reference in some way to the orientation of speaker and hearer as they relate to the event. (For a fuller treatment of the phenomenon, see Watters 1978.) So, while the grammatical categories

⁸ I should point out here that DeLancey's 3-1 and 3-2 forms (o-V-nu and o-V-nu, respectively) for the Mhai "active transitive paradigm" are misrepresented and come from the "passive" or "parenthetic" paradigm. As such they don't reflect the split ergative pattern they are claimed to reflect. (See DeLancey 1988:54 [Table 3]).

discussed thus far (person/number, tense/aspect, etc.) are marked by single morphemes affixed to the verb, the discourse categories I speak of are marked by the specific syntactic arrangement of those same morphemes. The deliberate way of marking 3rd person agreement as an opposition to 1st and 2nd persons is one such category—the “split ergative.” Another primary pattern for Kham is the opposition between parenthetic and narrative modes. The latter appears to be Kham specific, and as such is not likely to be reconstructible beyond the time depth of proto-Kham.

Within each of the discourse categories there are *marked* and *unmarked* arrangements. Following DeLancey, the unmarked arrangement is the starting point, and is used when the *normal* or *expected* orientation of speaker and hearer occurs. The marked arrangement is the less natural starting point, a departure from the expected. From the discussion up to now, it should be clear that the two dialects, Takale and Gamale, because of radical shifts in their surface arrangements, have as their starting points two very different *unmarked* syntactic configurations. As may be expected, the *marked* configurations are yet a further departure from already divergent starting points. Significantly, however, the integrity of the morphosyntactic categories has not been corrupted. Rather, their maintenance appears to have been the overriding organizational principle that has guided the restructuring of the distinctive Kham verb morphologies.

3.4.1 Split ergativity.

DeLancey shows that the split ergativity patterns of modern Tibeto-Burman languages are probably linked to an original direction marking pattern in which the coincidence of “natural viewpoint” (i.e. SAPs in preference to 3rd person) and “natural starting point” (i.e. the agent of a transitive clause) is the unmarked expectation. When a less natural viewpoint is the starting point (i.e. 3rd agent), the agent NP of the clause must be marked for its role, as the following examples from Takale illustrate:

na 'zihm na-jəi-ke
I house I-build-pst 'I built a house.'

no-e 'zihm jəi-ke-o
he-erg house build-pst-he 'He built a house.'

Remarkably, the same attention to direction is reflected in the pronominal agreement patterns of the verb. In both the Takale and Gamale narrative verb (the *unmarked* category), when the agent is 1st or 2nd

person, the morphological order of affixes follows the "natural attention flow," i.e. agent precedes patient, just as it does in the constituent order of NPs in the clause. When the agent is 3rd person, however, the syntactic order of affixes is the reverse of constituent order so that agent follows patient, as can be seen in the following figure. Observe that the *ye-* series in Gamale, especially as it begins to gain status as an "agent marking slot," lends significant mass to one side of the split ergative opposition.

	<i>Takale</i>	<i>Gamale</i>	<i>agt-pat direction</i>
person:			
1-3	na-V-A	ye-V	---->
1-3p	na-ra-V-A	ye-V-rə	---->
2-3	nə-V-A	nə-V-A	---->
1-2	na-V-ni-A	ye-V-əẽ	---->
2-1	nə-V-na-A	nə-V-ŋ-A	---->
2p-1	je-V-na-A	ye-V-sə-ŋ-A	---->
3-1	V-na-A-o	A-V-ŋ-o	<----
3-2	V-ni-A-o	A-V-əẽ-o	<----
3-3p	ya-V-A-o	A-V-o	<----

Figure 5. Relative order of agent and patient agreement markers in the Takale and Gamale verb.

In both dialects, the syntactic relationship of agent to patient is reversed where the agent is third person. Regardless of whether the underlying arrangement for 1st and 2nd person agents is prefixing or suffixing, the marked arrangement in both dialects still achieves the same effect: patient precedes agent. In other words, maintenance of a morphosyntactic pattern for split ergativity in the verb phrase is of primary importance to Kham; so much so that lower level inconsistencies in the surface configuration of various dialects can be tolerated so long as the larger deictic categories of which they are a part remain contrastive. Until that principle is understood, a comparison of the Takale and Gamale verb phrase yields little in way of useful understanding, and the rearrangement of their morphologies appears completely random, as the following figure illustrates:

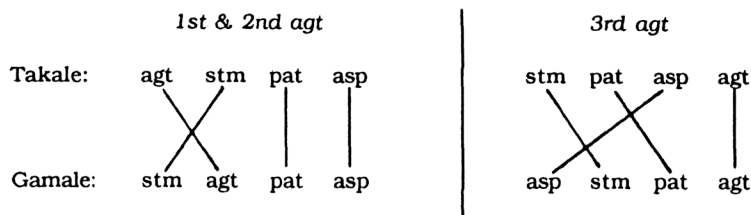


Figure 6. Apparently "random" shifts in morphemic configuration between Takale and Gamale.

The fact remains, however, that the real issue—the syntactic arrangement of agent>patient versus patient<agent as a means of expressing deictic direction—is maintained across dialects regardless of the placement of all the other individual affixes. Such is illustrated in the following figure:

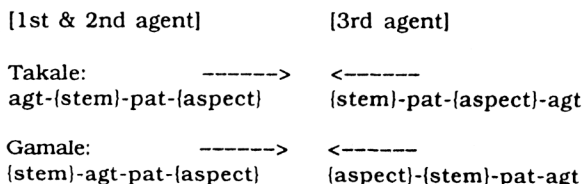


Figure 7. Compatibility of "deictic directionality" between Takale and Gamale.

3.4.2 Syntactic flip-flop as a direction marking device.

The shift of deictic directionality is not dependent solely on a mere switch in the ordering of agent and patient agreement markers. Accompanying that switch is a more radical shift in the overall balance in the order of morphemes, which is in fact a major contributor to the hearer's perception of it. In Gamale, the major cue is an interchangeable past tense marker that alternates between prefixed and suffixed positions. Where PST is suffixed the deictic direction is marked as DIRECT; where it is prefixed, direction is marked as INVERSE, as in the following illustration:

Gamale:

nə-hnə-kən-khě	ya-hnə-kən-wo
2sa-look-1sp-PST	PST-look-1sp-3sa
<i>You looked at me</i>	<i>He looked at me</i>
[agt-pat] PST	PST [pat-agt]
DIRECT —>	<— INVERSE

In Takale, a similar shift in deictic directionality is achieved, but by a different operation: a flip in the position of the agent morpheme from word initial in 1st and 2nd persons (i.e. DIRECT), to word final in 3rd persons (i.e. INVERSE). This can be illustrated in the following example:

Takale:

na-jəl-ke	vs.	jəl-ke-o
1SA-made-pst		made-pst-3SA
<i>I made it</i>		<i>He made it</i>
12AGT [nucleus]		[nucleus] 3AGT
DIRECT —>		<— INVERSE

3.4.3 Narrative versus parenthetic modes.

Another contrastive morphosyntactic pattern in Kham is that of the narrative and parenthetic modes. The narrative mode signals events belonging to the main chain of events in a narrative discourse, and the parenthetic mode indicates an action or state outside the main chain of events; some kind of corollary information needed for establishing background or setting.⁹ In both dialects, the primary distinguishing feature between the two modes (in addition to a suffixed -o/-u) is a "configuration" or syntactic arrangement of person markers in the verb. The unmarked or normal configuration is for the narrative mode and is identical to that discussed above for split ergatives.

⁹ The "parenthetic" mode is, in fact, a kind of relativized clause which operates as an equative clause at the discourse level. An equative clause in Kham is verbless, i.e. its structure is the simple juxtaposition of two NPs as in: 'aorə naza:rə' *These = my children*. Parenthetic clauses typically set the stage in narrative discourses, as well as provide background or corollary information where needed. A typical narrative stage setting may begin as in: 'ahjya uhbyali nahmni gehuzyaw' which means literally, *Last spring that we were coming up from the low country = (the setting for this story)*. The 2nd NP is unstated but understood as the stage setting.

Parenthetic mode (which I referred to in 1978 as the "orientation mode") is the *marked* configuration. The syntactic order of verbal affixes parallels the natural constituent order of the clause (agent-patient) in all cases, even where the agent is 3rd person. Split ergativity patterns are overridden for third person agents. Following are portions of the two paradigms. In both dialects the suffixed *-(o)* is the overt marker for the parenthetic mode:

Takale:		Gamale:	
<i>narrative</i>	<i>parenthetic</i>	<i>narrative</i>	<i>parenthetic</i>
1-2 <i>na-V-ni-A</i>	<i>na-V-ni-(o)</i>	<i>ye-V əč</i>	<i>a-V-əč-(o)</i>
2-1 <i>nə-V-na-A</i>	<i>nə-V-na-(o)</i>	<i>nə-V-ŋ-A</i>	<i>nə-V-ŋ-(o)</i>
1-3 <i>na-V-A</i>	<i>na-V-(o)</i>	<i>ye-V</i>	<i>a-V-ŋ-(o)</i>
2-3 <i>nə-V-A</i>	<i>nə-V-(o)</i>	<i>nə-V-A</i>	<i>nə-V-(o)</i>
3-2 <i>V-ni-A-o</i>	<i>o-V-ni-(o)</i>	<i>A-V-əč-o</i>	<i>ə-V-əč-(o)</i>
3-1 <i>V-na-A-o</i>	<i>o-V-na-(o)</i>	<i>A-V-ŋ-o</i>	<i>ə-V-ŋ-(o)</i>
3-3 <i>V-A-o</i>	<i>o-V-(o)</i>	<i>A-V-o</i>	<i>ə-V-(o)</i>
3-3p <i>ya-V-A-o</i>	<i>o-ra-V-(o)</i>	<i>A-V-o</i>	<i>ə-V-(o)-rə</i>

Figure 8. Narrative versus parenthetic modes in Takale and Gamale Kham.

In both dialects, the morphosyntactic difference between narrative and parenthetic modes exists only where 3rd person agents are present. In addition, morphological categories are more limited in the *marked* configuration. That is, the narrative mode features all tenses and aspects, while the parenthetic mode features only two: perfective and continuous, in which case, perfective is the default or *zero* tense.

Note, however, that in the Gamale paradigm there are more prefixed person distinctions in the parenthetic mode than there are in the narrative. In the 1-2 pattern, for example, both participants are marked for agreement. This suggests that the replacement and reanalysis of person markers in Takale Kham had their probable beginnings in the parenthetic mode, as I concluded once before (Watters, 1975). The parenthetic construction is a specific kind of nominalization and operates comfortably in cleft type expressions. A prefixed genitive on the construction is not surprising and could well have been the precursor to *ye-* replacement.

4. Conclusion.

In summary, the major dialects of Kham present an interesting case study in the historical development of complex morphological systems. All the dialects studied thus far have compatible grammatical systems for marking person/number agreement, tense/aspect, derivation, case distinctions, and the like. The existence of analogous systems, however, does not imply a strict one-to-one correspondence. The dialects studied show considerable diversity in the lexical background and syntactic arrangement of their surface morphologies.

From the time of their separation, each of the dialects developed independently of the others; their motivations for change having been generated by internal, systemic considerations. Loss of contrastive devices, followed by supplementation, replacement, reinterpretation, and analogical levelling was the soil in which the new developments took root. It is not surprising that a combination of such forces should significantly alter the surface compatibility of verbal agreement systems across such dialects and the kind of transparency that might otherwise have existed between them.

The important point, however, is that each of the dialects ascribes the same degree of importance to certain morphosyntactic systems of "deictic reference" (or grammaticalization of discourse relations), having to do with the orientation of speaker and hearer as they relate to the event being reported. I would have to agree with LaPolla's observation (1992) that "in doing morphological reconstruction... [we] should strip back the layers of transparent grammaticalization to arrive at an opaque core." Once we come to an agreement on the nature (and time depth) of proto-verb-agreement patterns including their pragmatic motivations, we should hopefully arrive at the discovery that the evidential systems of the Bodish-type languages with their attendant conjunct/disjunct distinctions are not, diachronically speaking, all that different, but represent just another innovative spin-off from an earlier but identical core.

REFERENCES

- Bauman, James. 1975. *Pronouns and pronominal morphology in Tibeto-Burman*. Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley.
- . 1979. "An historical perspective on ergativity in Tibeto-Burman." pp. 419-433 in F. Plank, ed., *Ergativity: towards a theory of grammatical relations*. London: Academic Press.
- Casad, Eugene. 1974. *Dialect intelligibility testing*. [SIL Publications in Linguistics and Related Fields 38] Norman, Oklahoma: SIL and The University of Oklahoma.
- Caughley, Ross. 1978. "Participant rank and verbal cross reference in Chepang." pp.163-178 in J. Grimes, ed., *Papers on Discourse*. Arlington, Texas: S.I.L.
- . 1982. "The syntax and morphology of the verb in Chepang." *Pacific Linguistics* B-84, Australian National University, Canberra.
- DeLancey, Scott. 1980. *Deictic categories in the Tibeto-Burman verb*. Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University.
- . 1981. "An interpretation of split-ergativity and related patterns." *Language* 57:626-657.
- . 1988. "On the evolution of the Kham agreement paradigm." *LTBA* 11.2:51-61.
- Driem, Sjors van. 1990. "The Proto-Tibeto-Burman verbal agreement system." *BSOAS* 56.2:292-334.
- Ebert, Karen H. 1990. "On the evidence for the relationship Kiranti-Rung." *LTBA* 13.1:57-78.
- . 1991. "Inverse and pseudo-inverse prefixes in Kiranti languages: evidence from Belhare, Athpare, and Dungmali." *LTBA* 14.1:73-92.
- Egerod, Søren. 1973. "Review of Paul K. Benedict, *Sino-Tibetan, a Conspectus*." *J. Chin. Ling.* 1:498-505.

- Hale, Austin & David E. Watters. 1973. "A survey of clause patterns." In A. Hale and D. Watters, eds., *Clause, Sentence, and Discourse Patterns in Selected Languages of Nepal*, vol. II. 175-239. Norman, OK: Summer Institute of Linguistics.
- Henderson, Eugénie J.A. 1965. *Tiddim Chin, a descriptive analysis of two texts*. London Oriental Series, Vol. 15. London: Oxford University Press.
- Konow, Sten. 1909. In Grierson, George, ed., *Linguistic Survey of India* 3.1. Calcutta: Superintendent of Government Printing.
- LaPolla, Randy J. 1992. "On the dating and nature of verb agreement in Tibeto-Burman." *BSOAS* 55.2:298-315.
- Maspero, Henri. 1946. "Notes sur la morphologie du tibéto-birman et du munda." *BSLP* 21:9-15.
- Silverstein, Michael. 1976. "Hierarchy of features and ergativity." In R. M. W. Dixon, ed., *Grammatical categories in Australian languages*, 112-171. New Jersey: Humanities Press, Inc.
- Thurgood, Graham. 1984. "The 'Rung' languages: A major new Tibeto-Burman subgroup." *BLS* 10:338-349.
- _____. 1985. "Pronouns, verb agreement systems, and the subgrouping of Tibeto-Burman." *Linguistics of the Sino-Tibetan Area: The State of the Art*, ed. by Graham Thurgood, James A. Matisoff, and David Bradley, 376-400. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics (C-87).
- Trask, R. L. 1979. "On the origins of ergativity." pp. 385-404 in F. Plank, ed., *Ergativity: towards a theory of grammatical relations*. London: Academic Press.
- Watters, David E. 1973. "Clause patterns in Kham." In A. Hale, ed., *Clause, Sentence, and Discourse Patterns in Selected Languages of Nepal*, vol. I. 39-202. Norman, OK: Summer Institute of Linguistics.
- _____. 1975. "The evolution of a Tibeto-Burman pronominal verb morphology." *LTBA* 2:45-80.
- _____. 1978. "Speaker-hearer involvement in Kham." *Papers on Discourse*, ed. by Joseph E. Grimes. SIL PL no. 51. Norman, OK.

- Watters, Stephen. 1988. "A Sociolinguistic Profile of the Kham Magar." unpublished ms.
- Weidert, Alfons. 1985. "Paradigmatic typology and its application to verb agreement analysis." pp. 903-936 in Pieper & Stickel, eds., *Studia Linguistica Diachronica et Synchronica*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Weidert, Alfons & Bikram Subba. 1985. *Concise Limbu Grammar and Dictionary*. Amsterdam: Lobster Publications.