

Inverse and pseudoinverse prefixes in Kiranti languages: evidence from Belhare, Athpare, and Dungmall

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1. Introductory remarks

Belhare, Athpare and Dungmall are small Rai languages located in the area between Bantawa to the West and Limbu to the East. Athpare is spoken in a few villages to the East and Southeast of Dhankuta. Belhare is the language of one small settlement on the slopes of the Belhara hill South of Dhankuta. Informants gave Athpare-Rai as the name of their language, but it differs considerably from Athpare both in grammar and in the lexicon and is definitely not a dialect of it. Although the number of speakers probably amounts to not more than 600 for Belhare and 2000 for Athpare, both languages are still regularly spoken in the villages. No further information is available about the situation of Dungmall. (*Please see map p. 91.*)

The verbal paradigms, probably the most conservative part of Kiranti languages, show strong affinities with the surrounding bigger languages that I have dealt with earlier in this journal (Ebert 1990). All three languages show traces of an old inverse marker and have pseudo-inverse prefixes, which function as 1st person patient markers.

Verbal prefixes in Tibeto-Burman are usually regarded as secondary innovations; but the discovery of more and more prefixing languages, and especially the establishment of cognates in such distant groups as Southern Rai and Gyarong indicate a considerable age at least for some prefixes. DeLancey (1988) has argued that the 'clitic series', i.e., the prefixes, may be older than the suffixal paradigm.

The Kiranti data and parallels outside Kiranti suggest that there are at least two layers of prefixes, one shared with Gyarong (2nd person *t-, inverse *u-), and one - probably younger - layer of pseudoinverse markers of different origins and grammaticalized to different degrees. For the latter set a parallel exists in Lushai, but it could well be an independent development there.

This article was originally written on the basis of the data from the Linguistic Survey of Nepal (LSN)¹. In the meantime I have had the

¹ I would like to thank W. Winter and G. Hansson for making available data from the Linguistic Survey of Nepal. Both the LSN project and my own fieldwork in Nepal were sponsored by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.

Table 1: Belhara verbal paradigms
(sources: Linguistic Survey of Nepal (B1) and B. Bickel (B2))

	B1	B2	B1	B2
1 > 2			INVERSE	
1s - 2s	-yuk-na/yu?-ŋa	-na	2s-1s	ka- -ga/-ka
- 2d	-yuk-na-chi	-na-chi	2d-1s	ka- -ci-ga
- 2p	-yuk-na-ni	-na-ni	2p-1s	ka- -i-ga
1nse-2	-yuk-na-chi-ŋa	-na-chi-ŋa	2s-1nsc	maʔi- -ga
			2d-1nsc	maʔi- -chi-ga
			2p-1nsc	maʔi- -i-ga
DIRECT				
1s - 3s	-u-ŋ	-u-ŋ	3s-1s	mai-
- 3ns	-u-ŋ-chi-ŋ	-u-ŋ-chi-ŋ	3p(d)-1s	ma-ŋ- (-chi)
1di - 3s	-ch-u	-ch-u	3s-1di	ka-
- 3ns			3p(d)-1di	ka-ŋ- (-chi)
1pi - 3s	-u-m	-u-m	3s-1pi	ka-
- 3ns	-u-m-chi-m	-u-m-chi-m	3ns-1pi	ka-ŋ- (-chi)
1de - 3s	-ch-u-va	-ch-u-ŋa	3s-1de	maʔi-
- 3ns	-u-m-chi-m(-a)	-u-m-chi-m-ma	3p(d)-1de	maʔi- (-chi)
1pc - 3s	-u-m-ma	-u-m-ma	3s-1pc	maʔi-
- 3ns	-u-m-chi-m-a	-u-m-chi-m-ma	3p(d)-1pc	maʔi- (-chi)
2s - 3s	-u-ga	-u-ga	3-2s	N- -ga
- 3ns	-u-chi-ga	-u-chi-ga	3-2d	N- -chi-ga
2d - 3s	-ch-u-ga	-ch-u-ga	3-2p	N- -i-ga
- 3ns	-u-m-chi-m-ga	-u-m-chi-m-ga		
2p - 3s	-u-m-ga	-u-m-ga		
- 3ns	-u-m-chi-m-ga	-u-m-chi-m-ga		
3s - 3s	-	-u	3d-3s	N- -ch-u
3s - 3ns	-chi	-u-chi	3p-3s	N- -u

opportunity to work with some Athpare informants and to study Belhare data collected by my assistant B. Bickel. Our findings confirmed my analysis and enabled us to eliminate some doubtful data from the LSN². Some of the new data have been included in the paper.

2. Belhare

The LSN provides two verb morphology questionnaires and two sentence questionnaires for Belhare. In Table 1 I give a synopsis of the LSN data (B1) as well as the paradigm elicited by Bickel (B2). The main difference lies in a more systematic distribution of the prefixes in 3>1 configurations in Bickel's paradigm. For the purpose of comparison Bantawa, Chamling and Limbu paradigms are represented in Table 2, leaving out some dual forms that would not add any interesting information.

2.1. Identification of the suffixes

Most of the suffixes found in Belhare direct configurations are familiar from other Kiranti languages:

(1)	-ŋ	1st person singular
	-na	2nd person (in 1>2)
	-m	1p (ns)/2p (A: after -u)
	-i	" elsewhere (S,P)
	-ni	2p (in 1>2)
	-chi	dual A/S
		3ns patient (after -u, + copy of person suffix)
	-a/-ŋa	exclusive
	-u	3rd patient

-yuk in B1 is a future marker. Different from the surrounding Kiranti languages, 2nd person is not marked by a prefix, but by the suffix -ga. Otherwise the parallels with Southern Rai and Limbu in the formation of verb forms are obvious:

² The LSN material was collected by Nepali investigators with only a few weeks of linguistic training. Configurations with a 1st or 2nd person agent were elicited in the nonpast, with 3rd person agent in the past, but tenses are not always distinguished in the answers. A main source of errors is the distinction between inclusive and exclusive, which informants have the greatest difficulties to grasp in isolated forms.

Table 2: Limbu, Bantawa, Chamling verbal paradigms (past forms)

	LIMBU/Panthare (Weidert & Subba)	BANTAWA/Ilam (N.K. Rai)	CHAMLING
1>2			
1s -2s	-nc	-na	-na
1s -2d	-nc-cchi-ŋ	-na-ci	-na-ci
1s -2p	-nc-niŋ	-na-nin	-na-i
1de-2s	-nc-gya	-na-c-a	-na-ci / na-c-ka
1pe-2s	-nc-ci-gya	-a-nin	-na-ni / "
1p-2s	-nc-gya	wm-	-na / -n-um-ka
1p-2p	-nc-ci-gya	wm-	-na-ni / "
DIRECT			
1s -3s	-u-ŋ	-u-ŋ	-uŋa
1s -3ns	-u-ŋ-si-ŋ	-u-ŋ-cw-ŋ	-uŋ-c-uŋa
1di-3s	a-	-a-c-u	-aci
1s -3ns	a-	-c-ch-u-si	-u-m-c-u-m
1p1-3s	a-	-u-m	-u-m
1s -3ns	a-	-u-m-si-m	-u-m-c-u-m
1de-3s	-c-chi-gya	-a-c-a	-a-c-ka
1s -3ns	-c-ch-u-si-gya	-a-c-a	-u-m-c-u-m-ka
1pe-3s	-u-m-ba	[-u-m-ka]	-u-m-ka
1s -3ns	-u-m-si-m-ba	-u-m-cw-m-ka	-u-m-c-u-m-ka
2s-3s	kc-	tu-	-u
1s -3ns	kc-u-si	tu-u-ci	-u-c-yu
2p-3s	kc-u-m	tu-num	-u-m
1s -3ns	kc-u-m-si-m	tu-num-c-wm	-u-m-c-u-m
3s-3s	-u	-u	-u
3p-3p	mc-u-si	wm-u-ci	-u-c-yu
			(mi-