On the evidence for the relationship Kiranti-Rung[1]

Karen H. Ebert
University of Zurich

In an article published in 1984 Thurgood presented some arguments in favor of a 'Rung' subgroup of Tibeto-Burman, in which he includes Gyarong, Kham, Chepang, Jinghpaw, Tangut, Qiang and Nungish. Thurgood also seems to suggest a closer relationship between Kiranti and Rung on the basis of agreement patterns. The paradigms compared are from Gyarong and Thulung, a Western Rai language. I shall here present material from the verbal paradigms of Southern Rai, which turn out to be much closer to Gyarong than Thulung or, as far as I can see, any language of the Rung group.

The Southern Rai languages Chamling, Bantawa, and Puma are spoken in Eastern Nepal in the area between the rivers Sun Kosi, Dudh Kosi, Rawa Khola, and Arun. Bantawa is also used as a lingua franca by Rai people of different descent in Ilam province. The languages are closely related, Puma sharing 80% cognates with both Chamling and Bantawa. The Rai data are, if not indicated otherwise, from my own fieldwork on Chamling and from materials of the Linguistic Survey of Nepal.

1. Gyarong

Table 1: Gyarong verbal paradigm (Jin et al. 1958, Nagano 1984)

DIRECT		INVERSE	
1>2s	ta- -n	2>1s	kə-u- -ng
1>2d	ta- -Nch	2>1d	kə-u- -Nch
1>2p	ta- -ny	2>1p	kə-u- -y
2s>3	tə- -u/-n	3>2s	tə-u- -n
2d>3	tə- -Nch	3>2d	tə-u- -Nch
2p>3	tə- -ny	3>2p	tə-u- -ny
1s>3	-ng	3>1s	wu- -ng
1d>3	-ch	3>1d	wu- -ch
1p>3	-y	3>1p	wu- -y
3s>3	-u	3dp>3	wu-

1.1. Agreement

The Gyarong verbal system is characterized by agreement with speech act participants (SAP) independent of semantic role. If both actants are SAP the verb agrees with patient. The pronominal suffixes reflect the common Tibeto-Burman (TB) pronouns *nga "I", *na(ŋ) "thou", as well as plural *i . The other actant is marked neither for person nor for number; 3rd person is never marked for number.

There is a prefix (tə-ꭙ ta-ꭙ kə-) in all 2nd person configurations. DeLancey (1980:53) splits ta- into tə-+ a and attributes to a the function of uniquely specifying the 1>2 configuration. Although this configuration is often set apart from the other forms in TB, no such prefix is known from other languages. Therefore it seems more likely that ta-, realized as tək- before velar stops, derives from tə-kə- (Nagano 1984:72), kə-being a 1st person prefix (cf. 5.2.). kə- -ngin 2>1 stands for 1st person, just as ta/tə- -Nin 1>2, 2>3, and 3>2 stands for 2nd.

1.2. Direction marking

INVERSE

All inverse configurations, with an agent lower on the scale of natural viewpoint or empathy than patient[2], have the prefix (w)u-. Although DeLancey (1980:53) convincingly assigned the status of inverse marker to Gyarong wu-, Nagano (1984:71) claims that it stands for 3rd person. An inverse marker can of course easily be taken for a 3rd agent marker, and a direct marker for 3rd patient. Reinterpretations along this line have taken place in several TB languages (e.g. Limbu) - but not, I think, in Gyarong. The crucial forms are those that mark 1st/2nd and 3rd/3rd configurations. Gyarong 2>1 with the prefixes kə-u- obviously contradicts Nagano's analysis. Elsewhere Nagano (1984:75, 181) seeks a way out in making wu- a marker for non-first. This can hardly be regarded as a satisfactory solution; we would then, according to Nagano's agreement scheme PAT-AG-(verb)-PAT, expect e.g. *wu-tə-in 2>3.

Also, it is hard to see how 3s>3 -u and 3ns>3 wu- would fit into Nagano's scheme. The distribution of -u and wu- clearly indicates that 3ns>3 counts as inverse; i.e. 3rd non-singular participants rank lower on the

---

2   For discussion of the category 'inverse' see e.g. Comrie (1980). DeLancey (1981:641ff). The relevance of 'viewpoint' for the TB verb is demonstrated in DeLancey (1980, 1981).

scale of natural viewpoint than 3rd singular. The actant hierarchy is for Gyarong and, as we shall see, at least for some Kiranti languages:

$$1 > 2 \gg 3s > 3ns$$

The main break is between speech act participants and non-participants. Speaker and hearer have nearly equal status. 2>1 counts as inverse in Gyarong and Kiranti, but 1>2 forms a separate category, which may be called 'local' in analogy to the Algonquian convention.

DIRECT

There is synchronically no clear indication of a direct marker in Gyarong, but on the basis of comparative evidence -u in 2s>3 and 3s>3 can be identified as a trace of it. We can postulate the following pattern underlying direction marking in Gyarong:

-u	direct
(w)u-	inverse

2. Chamling

Table 2: Chamling (West) verbal paradigm[3] (past)

DIRECT			INVERSE		INTRANSITIVE		
1>2s	-na		2>1s	ta- -unga			
1s>2d	-na-ci		2>1de	ta- -ac-ka			
1s>2p	-na-i		2>1pe	ta- -i(m)-ka			
1ns>2ns	-na-ni						
or:			or:				
1de>2	-(n)-ac-ka		2d>1	ta- -aci			
1pe>2	-(n)-um-ka						
1s>3s	-unga		3>1s	pa- -unga	1s	-unga	
1di>3s	-aci		3>1di	pa- -aci	1di	-aci	
1de>3s	-ac-ka		3>1de	pa- -ac-ka	1de	-ac-ka	
1pi>3s	-um		3>1pi	pa- -i	1pi	-i	
1pe>3s	-um-ka		3>1pe	pa- -i(m)-ka	1pe	-i(m)-ka	
1s>3ns	-ung-c-unga						
1nsi>3ns	-um-c-um						
1nse>3ns	-um-c-um-ka						
2s>3s	ta- -u		3>2s	ta- -a	2s	ta- -a	
2d>3s	ta- -aci		3>2d	ta- -aci	2d	ta- -aci	
2p>3s	ta- -um		3>2p	ta- -i	2p	ta- -i	
2s>3ns	ta- -u-c-yu						
2ns>3ns	ta- -um-c-um						
					3s	-a	
3s>3s	-u		3d>3	pa- -aci	3d	-aci	
3s>3ns	-u-c-yu		3p>3	pa- -a	3p	mi- -a	

Compared to Gyarong the Chamling paradigm looks more complex, but the underlying principle is the same.

Before looking at agreement a note is in order regarding tense marking. The Chamling past marker -a appears only if there is no other suffix, e.g. .

ta-id-a	he gave you
pa-id-a	they gave him

---

3   The Chamling paradigm has been constructed from 12 elicited paradigms (no 2 of them alike) on the basis of consistency and occurrence in 100 pages of transcribed texts. Informants' errors were frequent in elicitation, but not in natural speech. The regular variations are included in the table.

The person suffixes -unga, -na and -ka are used only in the past; in the non-past -a is replaced by the non-past marker -e. These suffixes (also present in the independent pronouns ka-nga "I", kha-na "you", kai-ka "we (pe)") should not be analysed as (u)ng + a etc.; i.e. past tense is unmarked in those forms. The vowel a before the dual marker -ci was originally a past marker (as it still is in Bantawa), but it has become part of the suffix.

	CHAMLING	cf. BANTAWA	
PAST	ta-ims-aci	tü-ims-a-ci	you (d) fell asleep
	2-fall asleep-d	2-fall asleep-PAST-d	
NONPAST	ta-ims-ac-e	tü-im-ci	you (d) will fall asleep
	2-fall asleep-d-NONP	2-fall asleep-d	

2.1. Agreement

We find the same pronominal suffixes in Gyarong and Chamling (for -um see below):

	GYARONG	CHAMLING
1s	-ng	-nga
1p	-y	-i (m)
2s	-n	-na
2p	-ny	-ni/-i

In both languages there is agreement with SAP in configurations involving 3rd person. Moreover both languages use a t-prefix for 2nd person. There is, however, a marked difference in the distribution of the 2nd person affixes. In Chamling (and in most other Kiranti languages) -na is restricted to 1>2. In all other configurations ta- functions as 2nd person marker, whereas Gyarong has the double marking tə- -n. Both Gyarong and Chamling uniquely specify the configuration 1>2, Chamling by -na, Gyarong by ta- (<tə-kə-). In Gyarong 2>1 agrees with 1st person (kə- -ng), while the corresponding Chamling form agrees with both participants (ta- -unga, but cf. below under b).

Chamling has the following additional markers in comparison to Gyarong:

a) The exclusive marker -ka; Gyarong has an exclusive pronoun, but the feature is not marked on the verb.

b) Gyarong marks only the number of the SAP the verb agrees with; Chamling tends to mark non-singular for both participants. Competing constructions exist in 1st/2nd configurations, since only one dual or plural marker is possible in a form. From Table 2 we can derive

2d>1pe *ta-id-i-ka*   or   *ta-id-aci*   you gave us
        2-give-p-e   2-give-d

2d>1de *ta-id-ac-ka*   or   *ta-id-aci*   you gave us
        2-give-d-e

where the first forms agree with patient in number, the second with agent. Alternative forms also exist for the 1ns>2ns configurations, which we would expect to agree with 2nd person, as in the first of the following forms. The last form shows pure subject agreement.

1pe>2p *i-na-ni*   or   *i-n-um-ka*   we gave you
        give-1>2-2p   give-1>2-1pAG-e
                            or   *id-um-ka*
                                give-1pAG-e

     c) The dual marker *-ci* is not restricted to 1st and 2nd person, but also indicates dual and plural of 3rd person patients. 1st and 2nd person agreement suffixes are repeated after the 3rd non-singular patient marker:

1s>3ns *tyok-ung-c-unga*   I saw them
        see-1s-3nsPAT-1s

     There is thus a tendency in Chamling to mark number of both participants, and towards agent agreement in competing configurations.

2.2. Direction marking

DIRECT

     It is problematic to assign a synchronic function to Chamling *-u*. On the basis of comparative evidence, especially from the neighboring Bantawa, it is clear that *-u* has developed from a *direct marker*. This function is still recognizable in some configurations, e.g.

3s>3s *rhaik-u*   he scolded him   cf. GYARONG *nasngo-u*
vs.
3p>3s *pa-rhaik-a*   they scolded him   *ʋu-nasngo*

2s>3s *ta-rhaik-u*   you scolded him   *tə-nasngo-u/n*
vs.
3s>2s *ta-rhaik-a*   he scolded you   *tə-u-nasngo-n*

     The generalization of the suffixes *-unga* for 1st person singular and

-aci for dual agent Irrespective of semantic role shows that the direction marking is not carried through systematically. Only one informant of the Eastern dialect insisted on *-u-ci* in 2d>3 (but not in 1d>3). The vowels u and a have become fixed parts of the suffixes, and can even replace stem final vowels, as in

ta-ma	come	*t-unga*	I came
mu-ma	make	*m-aci*	they (d) made it

The generalization of these suffixes seems to be the result of fairly recent developments, as the comparison with Bantawa shows (cf. 3.2.). Note that the interpretation of *-u* as a 3rd patient marker would leave us with the problem of *-unga* and *-aci*; moreover it would be incompatible with the 3p>3 form without *-u*.

1st and 2nd plural have *-um* in direct, *-i* or *-im* in inverse. It is evident that *-um* combines a direct and a plural marker: *-um < -u + *-iN*.[4]

INVERSE

The prefix *pa-* occurs in 3>1 and 3ns>3, i.e. in the inverse configurations without t-prefix. The crucial forms for the analysis as inverse marker are

3p>3	*pa-*
3s>3s	*-u*

---

4   The plural marker appears in different shapes in Kiranti, e.g.
-m   1p and 2p in Southern Rai and Limbu
-im   1p in Chamling
mi-   3p in Chamling and Limbu
üm-/mü- 3p in Bantawa
·mi   3p and 1p in Thulung, 3p in Nachering, Chourase, Mewahang
·in   1p in Bantawa
·ni   2p in Chamling, Kulung, Thulung
-nin   2p in Bantawa
-niN   2p in Puma
-ni   3p in Dumi, Koi
ni-   3p in Puma
-i   2p in Chamling and Limbu; 1p in Chamling, Dumi, Thulung

mi seems to prevail for 3p agent, *im/in* for 1p/2p.

They demonstrate that *pa-* cannot be a 3rd agent marker, just as *-u* cannot be a 3rd patient marker. Two informants occasionally used a direct form for 3p>3 with the 3p agent prefix *mi-* and the suffix *-u*.

3p>3p   **mi-tyok-u-c-yu**   they saw them
       3pAG-see-DIR-3nsPAT-DIR

The fact that the corresponding inverse form *pa-tyok-a* (in which the plurality of agent and patient cannot be marked)[5] does not have *-u* confirms our analysis of *pa-* as inverse marker. The two forms, coexisting in at least some Chamling dialects, but also in Puma and Bantawa, indicate that the switch between direct and inverse in the 3>3 configurations is not stable.

The absence of *pa-* in forms with the *t-*prefix is explained by a prefix restriction in Chamling (cf. fn.5). Like inverse *pa-*, the negative prefix *pa-* is not realized in forms with the *t-*prefix, e.g.:

3s>3s	*tyok-u*	he saw him	NEG:	**pa-tyok-aina**
2s>3s	*ta-tyok-u*	you saw him		**ta-tyok-aina**

2.3. The kha- paradigm

Chamling has an alternative paradigm for actions directed towards 1st person. In the Eastern dialect the following forms have replaced the corresponding forms of the West Chamling paradigm presented in Table 2.

3s>1	*kha-*	*-a*
3d	*kha-*	*-aci*
3p	*kha-mi-*	*-a*
2s>1	*kha-ta-*	*-a*
2d	*kha-ta-*	*-aci*
2p	*kha-ta-*	*-i*

The prefix *kha-* is used with a 1st person patient irrespective of number. A form like *kha-ta-tyok-a* "you saw me/us" replaces five different forms of the Western dialect.

What function are we to assign to this prefix? The *kha*-paradigm differs markedly from the rest of the inverse forms. Whereas inverse

---

5   (West) Chamling can have only one prefix: *pa-* outranks *mi-*, *ta-* outranks *pa-*. 3nsPAT is marked only in direct. In inverse configurations the suffix *-aci* always indicates dual agent; e.g.
    pa-tyok-aci   they (d) saw him/them (but not: they (p) saw them)

markers do not disturb the split agreement pattern, the *kha*-forms have subject agreement; the forms following *kha*- are identical with intransitive verb forms. *kha*- can thus not be an inverse marker. It functions as an indicator of 1st person patient. This implies two remarkable deviations from the canonical TB agreement pattern: (1) the introduction of a role specific marker; (2) the neglect of number of a speech act participant. A parallel development occurred in Limbu (cf. 4.1.).

3. Puma and Bantawa

In Table 3, I present the Puma and Bantawa paradigms together with Chamling. Some dual and exclusive forms which are not needed for the comparison have been left out.

The Puma data are from two verb morphology questionnaires of the Linguistic Survey of Nepal. The data were not recorded by linguists and are not always reliable; dubious and obviously wrong forms have therefore not been included in the table. The Bantawa verbal paradigm was presented by Novel Kishore Rai, a linguist and native speaker of Bantawa from Ilam. A slightly different Bantawa paradigm was recorded by Gvozdanović (1985:121) in Ilam with an informant who migrated fifty years earlier from Bhojpur. Instead of N. K. Rai's *üm*- this informant uses *mü*-. Further divergences are indicated in square brackets in Table 3.

Table 3: Southern Rai verbal paradigms (past)

DIRECT		PUMA		BANTAWA	CHAMLING
1s >2s		-na		-na	-na
>2p		-na-ning		-na-nin	-na-i
1pe>2s		?		üm- -a [ø- -ni-cia]	-na/-n-um-ka
>2p				üm- -a-nin ["]	-na-ni/ "
1s >3s		-ung		-ung	-unga
>3ns		-ung-c-ong		-ung-c-üng	-ung-c-unga
1pi>3s		?		-um	-um
>3ns		-um-c-om		-um-c-üm	-um-c-um
2s>3s	to-	-i	tü-	-u	ta- -u
>3ns	to-	-i-ci	tü-	-u-ci	ta- -u-c-yu
2p>3s	to-	-um	tü-	-a-num	ta- -um
>3ns	to-	-um-c-um	tü-	-a-num-c-üm	ta- -um-c-um
3s>3s		-i		-u	-u
>3ns		-i-ci	üm-	-u-ci	-u-c-yu
3p>3p	(mo-	-i-ci)	üm-	-u-ci	(mi- -u-c-yu)

INVERSE

	PUMA		BANTAWA	CHAMLING
3p>3s	po- -a	ü-	-a	pa- -a
3d>3s	po- -aci	(ü-)	-a-cu	pa- -aci
		[ü-	-a-cu]	
3s>2s	to- -a	tü-	-a	ta- -a
3p>2s	ni-to- -a	üm-	-a	"
3s>2p	"	tü-	-a-nin	ta- -i
3p>2p	ni-to- -ning	üm-	-a-nin	"

	PUMA	BANTAWA	WEST-CH.	EAST-CH.
3s>1s	po- -ung	(ü-) -a-ng	pa- -unga	kha- -a
3p>1s	ni-po- -ung	üm- -a-ng	"	
3s>1pi	kha- -a	(ü-) -in	pa- -i	kha- -a
3p>1pi	kha-ma- -a	üm- -in	"	kha-mi-
2s>1s	to- -nga	tü- -a-ng	ta- -unga	kha-ta-
2p>1s	kha-to- -in	tü- -a-ng-nüng	ta- -unga	kha-ta-
2s>1pe	kha-to- -a	tü- -in-ka	ta- -i(m)-ka	kha-ta-
		[tü- -ni-cia]		
2p>1pe	kha-to- -in	" ["]	"	kha-ta-

3.1. Agreement

The t-prefix occurs in Puma and Bantawa in the same configurations
(henceforth 'T-configurations') as in Chamling. 2nd person -na is
restricted to 1>2. The dual marker -ci is again also used as a 3rd non-

singular patient suffix. Like Gyarong, but unlike Chamling, Bantawa distinguishes 1p (-*in*, -*um*) and 2p (-*nin*, -*num*).
Bantawa *üm-/mü-* is a 3p agent marker (cf. Chamling *mi* -). This marker takes different shapes in Puma:

mo-	initial
ma-	after *kha-*
ni-	preceding *po-*, *to-*

N. K. Rai uses *üm-* also in 1p>2 configurations, resulting in identity of forms with 3p>2, e.g.,

1pe/3p>2s *üm-Dhatt-a*   we/they hit you
            -hit-PAST
1pe/3p>2p *üm-Dhatt-a-nin*   we/they hit you (p)
            -hit-PAST-2p

Here *üm-* seems to be a generalized plural agent marker, although the possibility cannot be excluded that 1pe>2 counts as inverse in Bantawa, with a rather natural hierarchy 1(+2) > 2 > 1+3 > 3. A further peculiarity of those forms is that *üm-* has led to the suppression of the 2nd person *t*-prefix in 3>2 and of the n-suffix that marks 1>2 in Kiranti.

Like Chamling, Bantawa has competing forms for non-singular 2>1 configurations. In the form N. K. Rai gives in his paradigm the suffix agrees with the patient:

2>1pe   *tü-Dhatt-in-ka*   you (s/p) hit us
          2-hit-1p-e

But in an example sentence N. K. Rai uses a different form:

khana-nin-?a   *üngka-n-ka*   *tü-Dhat-ni-ci*
  you-p-ERG   I-p-ex   2-hit-2-ns

The interpretation of the suffixes is Rai's; the Bhojpur data suggest that a different analysis is possible:

1pe>2s   *Dhat-ni-cia*
2s>1pe   *tü-Dhat-ni-cia*

As -*ni* indicates 1p, -*cia* must stand for exclusive: -*in-ka*, -*ni-cia* and -*ni-ci* would then be variants coding the same features. Those Bantawa examples illustrate the general instability of the Kiranti verbal paradigms, especially in the 1st/2nd non-singular configurations, and the reuse of affixes for different purposes.

3.2. Direction marking

DIRECT

In all direct configurations Puma has -u or -i in the paradigm for
dhed- "beat", -i being a variant of -u after alveolar consonants. With a
stem final velar or bilabial we would, as far as I can gather from some sample
sentences of the Survey questionnaires, have -u throughout.[6]
Puma shows a tendency towards generalization of -ung for 1st (cf.
3>1s forms). Bantawa distinguishes direct and inverse more systematically,
using -u in all direct and in no inverse configuration except 3d>3.

	BANTAWA	cf. CHAMLING	
1s>3s	Dhatt-u-ng	caidh-unga	I hit him
	hit-DIR-1s		
3s>1s	ü-Dhatt-a-ng	pa-caidh-unga	he hit me
	INV-hit-PAST-1s		
2d>3s	tü-Dhatt-a-c-u	ta-caidh-aci	you (d) hit him
	2-hit-PAST-d-DIR		
3s>2d	tü-Dhatt-a-ci	ta-caidh-aci	he hit you (d)
	2-hit-PAST-d		

INVERSE

The cases where Gyarong has simple vu- and Chamling pa- are split
up in Bantawa into forms with ü- and forms with an additional plural
marker *mi (cf. fn.4):

in the Ilam dialect: ɑm- (< ɑ + *mi)
in the Bhojpur dialect: mü- (< *mi + ü)

---

6   The realization of the suffix vowel in direct configurations in Puma and
Chamling is:

	WEST CHAMLING	EAST CHAMLING	PUMA
after/before velar/bilabial	-u	-u	-u
otherwise	-yu	-yi	-i

e.g.	WEST CHAMLING	EAST CHAMLING	
	lhap-u	same	he caught him
	lhap-u-c-yu	lhap-u-c-yi	he caught them
	caidh-u-m	same	he beat us
	caidh-yu	caidh-yi	he beat him

The following distribution suggests an interpretation of ü- as inverse marker:

3s>1s	ü-Dhatt-a-ng	you hit me
3ns>3s	ü-Dhatt-a	they hit him
3s>3s	Dhatt-u	he hit him

ü is a high central unrounded vowel, which reflects common Kiranti u or i. Thus 2nd tü- cannot have developed from ta-, but is most likely a combination of *ta + u. I suppose that tü- was originally used in inverse configurations and then generalized to all T-configurations, just as mü-/ɔm- was generalized to all 3p agent forms.

The inverse marking function of the prefix ɑ-, for N. K. Rai optional in most configurations, is blurred further by the affixation ɑ- -u in 3d>3 in both dialects. In a comparative context, however, the origin of ɑ- in a direction system seems beyond doubt.

Puma has the pa- and kha- prefixes combined into one single paradigm. kha- is regularly used in configurations with a 1st non-singular patient, but only once with 1st singular. Like Chamling pa-, the prefix po- is incompatible with the 2nd person t-prefix, but it does combine with the 3p agent marker.

3s>2s	to-dhed-a	you hit me	cf. CHAMLING ta-caidh-a
	2-hit-PAST		

3ns>1s	ni-po-dhed-ung	they hit me	pa-caidh-unga
	3nsAG-INV-hit-1s		

70

4. Other Kiranti languages

Table 4: Further verbal paradigms

	LIMBU/Panthare (past)		KHALING (Rai) (nonpast)		RAWANG (Nungish)	
1>2						
1s >2s		-ne	-nä			-ng
>2p		-ne-ning	-nu			-ning
1pe>2s		-ne-gya	i-			-i
>2p		-ne-ci-gya	i-	-ni		-i
DIRECT						
1s >3s		-ung	-u			-ngu
>3ns		-ung-si-ng	-nu			
1pi>3s	a-	-um	-ki			-i
>3ns	a-	-um-si-m	"			
2s>3s	kε-	-u	i-	-ü	e-	-u
>3ns	kε-	-u-si	i-	-nu		
2p>3s	kε-	-um	i-	-ni	e-	-ning
>3ns	kε-	-um-si-m	"			
3s>3s		-u	-ü-			-u
>3ns		-u-si	-nu			
3ns>3s	mε-	-u	"			
>3ns	mε-	-u-si	"			
INVERSE						
3s >2s	kε-	-a	i-		e-	
3ns>2s	kε-mi-	-a	"			
3s >2p	kε-	-i	i-	-ni	e-	-ning
3ns>2p	kε-mi-	-i	"			
3s>1s		-ang	i-	-ngaa	e-	-ng
3p>1s	me-	-ang	i-	-ngaa-nu		
3s>1pi	a-	-a	i-	-ki	e-	-i
3p>1pi	a-mi-	-a	"			
3s>1pe	yapmi-	-a	i-	-kaa		
3p>1pe	yapmi-me-	-a	"			
2s>1s	ke-	-ang	i-	-ngaa	e-	-nga
2p>1s	yapmi-ke-	-a	i-	-ngaa-nu	e-	-sha
2s>1pe	"		i-	-kaa	"	
2p>1pe	"		"		"	

4.1. Limbu

If we compare Table 4 with Table 3 it is obvious that the Limbu verbal paradigm has much more in common with Southern Rai than Khaling Rai has.

Limbu *ke-* corresponds in distribution to the t-prefix in Southern Rai, the *n*-suffix again being restricted to the 1>2 configurations. Limbu has a further prefix *a-*, which stands for 1p inclusive. Neither prefix is sensitive to direction.

The non-singular markers are familiar from Rai: *-si* (= Southern Rai *-ci*) indicates any dual or a 3ns patient, *me-/mi-* a 3ns agent. The verb can have more than one prefix, e.g.

3p>2s   *ke-m-su-?*   they touch you
           2-3pAG-touch-NONP
2p>1s/nse *yapmi-ke-ssu-ssi -?*   you (p) touch me/us
           1(e)PAT-2-touch-2p(?)-NONP   (Weidert & Subba: 218;
                                          glosses mine).

There is no direction marking in Limbu. All 2>3 and 3>3 (including 3ns>3) configurations have *-u*; i.e. *-u* functions as a 3rd patient marker. There is no trace of an inverse marker.

The Panchthare Limbu prefix *yapmi-* is restricted to inverse configurations with 1st person exclusive or singular patients.[7] It can substitute for the old personal affixes, but the replacement is not regularly carried through. In the paradigms, Weidert & Subba irregularly list alternative forms, e.g.

2d>1d/pe   *yapmi-ke-hip/yapmi-ke-hips-ya-?* you (d) beat us
                                              (1985:181)

In Phedappe Limbu, according to van Driem, the prefix *a-* is optionally replaced by *napmi* in 2>1 configurations (v.Driem: 78), but in the following text example it is used instead of the 1s suffix:

        aŋga   yang-in   na·pmi pi·r-ɛ?
        me   money-ABS 1   give-IMP
        give me my money!   (v.Driem: 302)

In Phedappe, the origin of the marker is transparent: *napmi* is an impersonal pronoun analogous to French *on*.

---

7   The presentation in Weidert & Subba is rather chaotic. The forms given in Table 4 are from their table on pp. 60-61. In the actual paradigms *ya·pmi-* is used irregularly for 1d/pe patient, seldom for 1s patient in combination with a non-singular agent, never in 2/3s>1s. Sometimes variants are given, e.g. *lɛ·ɔya?*, *yapmilɛ·?* (197) "it burns us (de)", but only *yapmi·* in the same paradigm for the corresponding past form and for 3s>1pe.

The replacement of 1st person markers in inverse configurations constitutes an interesting parallel to the Chamling and Puma *kha*-paradigms. The process seems to start with plural patients: in Limbu an impersonal form replaces 1st person exclusive affixes in inverse configurations; Puma *kha*- replaces both inclusive and exclusive affixes. While in Limbu and Puma a 1st singular suffix is affected only occasionally, the substitution has been carried through in East Chamling to **all** 1st patient configurations.

4.2. Khaling-Dumi

There are two prefixing languages in the Northwest of the Kiranti area: Khaling and Dumi, which have a vocalic prefix (Khaling *i -*, Dumi *a -*)[8] in all inverse forms and in 2>3 (with a further generalization to 1p>2 in Khaling; cf. Bantawa *um-ŋ*. The Khaling forms (given by Toba, pers. communication) are listed in Table 4.

Exactly identical patterns are found in the Nungish languages Rawang (Table 4, data from DeLancey 1980) and Trung. Rawang has *e -*, Trung *nə -* in all T-configurations and in inverse. Synchronically this strange distribution of the prefix does not make sense; it can only be understood as a collapse of a 2nd prefix with the inverse marker.

There are also some traces of a direct marker *-u* in both Khaling-Dumi and Rawang-Trung. The overall pattern of affixes is more similar between those two groups, supposed to belong to different subgroups of Tibeto-Burman, than between Khaling-Dumi and Southern Rai.

5. Eastern Kiranti in comparison

The similarities in the Gyarong and Eastern Kiranti (Southern Rai and Limbu) verbal systems is too obvious to be overlooked or to be ascribed to coincidence. In both groups we have:

a) suffixed pronominal agreement markers *-nga* and *-na*,
b) agreement with SAP (with a tendency towards subject agreement in Kiranti),
c) a dual marker *-ch/-ci*,
d) a 1p/2p marker *-i* (+nasal),
e) a *t -* or *k -*prefix for 2nd,
f) traces of a suffixed direct marker *-u*,

---

8   Some small intermediate groups between the Limbu and Bantawa area (e.g. Dungmali, Athpariya, Chulung, Chintang) have 2nd *a -*.

g) traces of a prefixed inverse marker u- or pa- (not in Limbu),
h) inverse marking of 3ns>3 (not in Limbu).

Features a)-d) are well known from other Tibeto-Burman languages;
features e)-h) are not.

5.1. Direction markers

Relics of direction marking can be traced in all Eastern Kiranti
languages as well as in Gyarong. The distribution, irrespective of the
synchronic function, comes out as in Table 5.

Table 5: Traces of direction markers

	GYARONG	CHAMLING-PUMA	BANTAWA	LIMBU
1>2	–	–	–	–
1>3	–	-u	-u	-u
2>3	(-u)	-u	-u	-u
3s>3	-u	-u	-u	-u
3ns>3	-u	(-u)	-u	-u
3ns>3	wu-	pa-	ü-	
3>1	wu-	pa-	ü-	–
2>1	u-	–	(*ü-)	–
3>2	u-	–	(*ü-)	–

In Southern Rai there is some instability in the marking of 3ns>3, as
also shown in Table 1. Some Chamling speakers use a direct form in -u
besides the common inverse pa-form in 3p>3. Bantawa has both ü- and -u
in 3d>3. Despite those minor variations, the hierarchical ordering of 3s over
3ns is clearly recognizable in Southern Rai. An inverse interpretation of
3ns>3 configurations has not been attested for any other Tibeto-Burman
language so far[9]. Both the form of the inverse marker and its distribution are,
to our present knowledge, unique to the Kiranti-Rung complex and
constitute the strongest argument for a close relationship.

The only Kiranti language for which a direction system has been
claimed is Hayu. DeLancey ascribes a directive function to Hayu -ko and
-su and relates ɜ to Nocte inverse h. I find the latter case rather
unconvincing, especially as -ɜu is restricted to configurations with a 1st
singular patient. Hayu -ko is synchronically used as a 3rd patient marker
(Michailovsky 1988:113), but like Kiranti -u it seems to be an old direction
marker.

---

[9]   A 3s > 3ns hierarchy exists in Chukchi and Koryak; cf. Comrie 1980.

Direction systems that bear similarity to those of Kiranti and Gyarong are found in Kham and Chepang, both supposed to be included in Rung; e.g.

MHAI KHAM DIRECT			INVERSE		
1s>3s		-ng	3s>1s	o-	-ngu /-u-ngu
2s>3s	nə-	-n	3s>2s	o-	-nu /-u-nu

(cf. DeLancey 1980:100). The inverse configurations have either a prefix o- and a suffix -u, or -u-PERS-u, exemplifying the phenomenon of morphemes shifting position found over and over again in TB. Chepang uses -u and -taa in a way reminiscent of direct and inverse (DeLancey 1980:57f).

A direction system has also been claimed for Nocte (DeLancey 1980:82, 1981:641f). Nocte h is part of the system of local deixis, cf. :

NOCTE	Wankhu ka-ta	W. went
	Wankhu ka-tha	W. has come

	nga-ma ate-nang chien-ta-k	I asked him
	ate-ma nga-nang chien-tha-ng	he asked me

(Das Gupta 1971:73,20)

Both its form and its integration into the local deictic system places Nocte h far away from the Kiranti-Gyarong direction system.

5.2. The t- and k-prefixes, Chamling kha-

Table 6: Distribution of the t- and k-prefixes

	GYARONG	S.RAI	LIMBU
1>2	ta-(tə-k-)		
2>3	tə-	tə-	kɛ-
3>2	tə-	tə-	kɛ-
2>1	tə-	tə-	kɛ-

The following morphemes are widespread in Tibeto-Burman both in pronouns and in agreement:

velars for 1st: *ka, nga*
alveolars for 2nd: *ta, na*

In Kiranti-Rung the stops primarily occur in prefixed position, the nasals suffixed, but the positions may be switched around.[10] The identity of Gyarong and East Kiranti prefixes could therefore be due to accident. Together with the direction marking system, however, the prefixes gain in significance for the establishment of a close relationship between Kiranti and Rung.

If we take Gyarong *kə-* to be a 1st person marker, for which there is some internal evidence (1s>1p *ka-* < *kə-kə-*, 1>2 *ta-* < *tə-kə-*)[11], how are we to explain that the prefix stands for 2nd in Limbu? Limbu must have reinterpreted *k-* as a 2nd marker in a 1st/2nd configuration and generalized it to the other T-configurations. This seems plausible if *k-* originally occurred in 2>1 (Gyarong *kə-* *-ng* 1- -1,Limbu *ke-* *-ang* 2- -1).

The prefix *kha-* occurs in Chamling and Puma in configurations with 1st person patients. A relation with *ka-* (present in Chamling *ka-nga* "I", *ka-i* "we (pl)") is doubtful. Apart from the aspirated initial, 1st person singular and plural are otherwise never collapsed in Kiranti, whereas *kha-* is used to indicate a 1st person irrespective of number.

Another possibility that should be taken into consideration is that *kha-* developed parallel to the directive systems in some Kuki-Chin languages. The directive prefix *hong-/on-* in the Northern Kuki languages Sizang, Tiddim, and Paite reflects an earlier verb "come" (DeLancey 1980:170ff). The prefix indicates movement towards speaker or hearer, as in

SIZANG   *hong-pe-tu* hi   he will give it to me
                hither-give-FUT IND
cf. E-CHAMLING *kha-id-e*   "

PAITE   *ka chanai on-pia-in*   give me my share!
                my share hither-give-Imper
cf. E-CHAMLING *a-ro³ kha-id-anna*   give me my food!

Although *kha* is a widespread TB motion verb root, it is not traceable in Chamling-Puma or any of the neighboring languages. The origin

---

10   E.g. Kham: 1s *nga-*, 2s *ne-*; Chepang: 2nd *-te?*, 2nd pronoun *naang-te?*; Bantawa: 1st pronoun *üng-ka*; Chamling: *ka-nga*; Kuki-Chin: 1st *ka-*, 2nd *na-*; some conservative Kuki-Chin languages moreover have *-ng* and *-te*.

11   Gyarong has *kə-* also with 3rd person in the intransitive paradigm in some totally unpredictable configurations (Nagano 1984:64f). Nagano does not comment on his irregular intransitive paradigms.

of *kha-* in the Chamling-Puma 1st patient configurations therefore remains obscure.

6. Some historical speculations

The shared features between Southern Rai and Limbu make it most likely that they had some period of common history after splitting away from the other Rai peoples. This hypothesis will of course have to be confirmed with material from other domains. However, as verbal paradigms tend to be conservative, and as it is hard to imagine that people would borrow a complex paradigm of the Kiranti type, I think the postulation of an Eastern Kiranti subgroup, comprising Limbu and Southern Rai, is quite sound.

The grouping together of 'Rai' languages seems to have had a geographical or political rather than a linguistic basis. Khaling and Dumi share more than 80% cognates, but less than 35% with any other Rai language (Hansson, ms.). It could be that their history is different from that of the other Rai groups and that some of the features they share with Rai are the result of areal diffusion.

This leads us to the question of higher groupings. We have found striking similarities in the verbal paradigms of Gyarong and Eastern Kiranti on the one hand and Nungish and Khaling-Dumi on the other hand. This grouping cuts across the classification of Gyarong and Nungish into Rung and of Khaling-Dumi with Kiranti.

An independent invention of the complex verbal paradigms of Gyarong and Eastern Kiranti is most unlikely. The question is whether we are dealing with retention or innovation. As Gyarong and Eastern Kiranti have not been shown to be closely related in other respects one would probably opt for retention. But there is no evidence for direction marking of the Kiranti-Rung type anywhere outside those groups, the Northern Kuki directive system being of a different order. The direction system, together with the distribution of the t-/k-prefixes makes it seem likely that the ancestors of the Kiranti and the Gyarong once were at least neighbors participating in the u-/-u direction marking and the prefixing wave.

The case of Khaling-Dumi and Nungish is weaker and needs further investigation.

I will not carry my speculations further and propose a new genealogical subtree[12]. It is surely premature to claim a new subclassification

---

[12] Also I do not believe that migrating people always split up neatly in a way that would allow linguists to draw genealogical trees. The comparative work of the Linguistic Survey of Nepal has shown that it is not possible to draw a Stammbaum for the Rai languages on the basis of lexical innovation and sound shifts. Waves of innovation have spread from different centers of diffusion. There is no reason to believe that TB peoples should have split up in a neater way in past times.

only on the basis of verbal paradigms, although they must, due to their conservatism, play a crucial role in any classification. More detailed descriptions of more languages and more detailed comparisons are necessary. Discovery of further prefixing Kuki-Chin languages of the Lakher type (cf. DeLancey 1989) may change the picture completely.

REFERENCES

Comrie, Bernard. 1980. "Inverse verb forms in Siberia: Evidence from Chukchee, Koryak, and Kamchadal." *Folia Linguistica Historica* 1.1, 61-74.

Das Gupta, K. 1971. *An Introduction to the Nocte Language.* Shillong: North-East Frontier Agency.

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, 626-57.

--------1989. "Verb agreement in Proto-Tibeto-Burman." *BSOAS,* 52.2, 315-33.

Driem, George, van. 1987. *A Grammar of Limbu.* Berlin, New York, Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter.

Ebert, Karen H. 1987. "Grammatical marking of speech act participants in Tibeto-Burman." *Journal of Pragmatics* 11, 473-82.

Gvozdanović, Jadranka. 1985. *Language System and its Change.* Berlin, New York, Amsterdam: Mouton de Gruyter.

Hansson, Gert. ms. "Recent main Kiranti areas." *Linguistic Survey of Nepal.* University of Kiel.

Jin Peng, Tan Kerang, Qu Aitang, & Lin Xiangrong. 1958. "Jiarong-yu Suomo-huade yuyin he xingtai." (Phonology and morphology of the Suomo dialect of Jyarong). *Yuyan Yanjiu* 3, 71-108.

Michailovsky, Boyd. 1988. *La Langue Hayu.* Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique.

Nagano Yasuhiko. 1984. *A Historical Study of the rGyarong Verb System.* Tokyo.

Thurgood, Graham. 1984. "The 'Rung' languages: a major new Tibeto-Burman subgroup." In: Brugmann, C. & Macaulay, M. (eds), *Proceedings of the 10th Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society.* Berkeley.

Weidert, Alfons & Subba, Bikram. 1985. *Concise Limbu Grammar and Dictionary.* Amsterdam: Lobster Publications.