

On the Linguistic Position of the Kham Language in West Nepal

—Some Provisional Observations—

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1. The Kham language is spoken in the Dhaulagiri and Rapti zones of West Nepal¹⁾. In 1970 this language was investigated by David and Nancy Watters, and their *Kham-English Glossary*, which appeared in 1973²⁾, particularly, was of great interest to me.

Their field work on this language was a very important contribution to Tibeto-Burman linguistic studies. As they say in their *Glossary*, "According to Swadesh list comparisons, Kham is not closely related to any of the Tibeto-Burman languages of Nepal in terms of vocabulary. It is about 25% cognate with the Magar and Gurung groups, slightly below 25% with the Tibetan group, and about 15% with the Rai and Limbu groups" (p. vi).

It seems the origin of the remaining 35% is obscure. What impressed me most was the inclusion of Lolo-Burmese words in the Glossary.

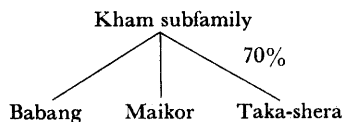
Recently Kham has been studied in its syntactic constructions, especially the ergative system, and interesting findings have been published—contributing in an important way to studies on ergative systems in general³⁾.

At the same time, its morphological structure and word formation also show interesting features.

In this paper I should like to discuss briefly some aspects of morphology and

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- 1) According to W. W. Glover the Kham subfamily of the West Central Himalayish Stock is shown as follows:



W. W. Glover, *Semantic and Grammatical Structures in Gurung (Nepal)* SIL 1974.

- 2) *An English-Kham Kham-English Glossary* Summer Institute of Linguistics, Institute of Nepal and Asian Studies, 1973, The Kham dialect recorded in the *Glossary* is spoken in Taka village, Baglung District of Dhaulagiri Zone.
- 3) J. J. Bauman, 'An Historical Perspective on Ergativity in Tibeto-Burman' (F. Plank ed., *Ergativity* 1979), David E. Watters, 'The Evolution of a Tibeto-Burman Pronominal Verb Morphology: A case-study from Kham (Nepal)' *LTBA* vol 2, num. 1. Austin Hale, 'Grammars for the lay reader' *Seminar papers in linguistics problems and perspectives in linguistic studies*, INAS 1976 etc.

word formation in Kham, from the point view of comparative studies, without dealing directly with its syntactic construction.

2. In the languages spoken in the Himalayan area there are many basic words which have turned out to correspond to Burmese rather than Tibetan, contrary to expectation.

I once pointed out this fact in connection with A. H. Francke's Manchad vocabulary⁴).

I considered Manchad as one of the most typical linking languages between Tibetan and Burmese. It has quite a number of forms closely similar to the Burmese, though those resembling the Tibetan generally predominate. In fact, most of the TB languages of the Himalayan area can be considered to link these two languages in this sense.

In Richard Pottman & Jessre Glover's 'Proto-Tamang-Gurung-Thakali word list', we find many words which have cognates in Burmese⁵).

For example.

	Proto-form	WrB		Proto-form	WrB
'leaf'	baa	<i>phak</i>	'to see'	mrang	<i>mrang-sañ</i>
'four'	bliq	<i>lei²<liy²</i>	'sky'	mu	<i>mou²<muw²</i>
'mat'	byo	<i>phya</i>	'to rest a load'	nah	<i>na²-sañ</i>
'skin'	dri	<i>'a-rei<riy</i>	'to stand'	rap	<i>rap-sañ</i>
'son'	dza	<i>sa²</i>	'to weave'	raaq	<i>rak-sañ</i>
'daughter'	dzame	<i>sami²</i>	'breath'	saaq	<i>'a-sak</i>
'to bind'	khiq	<i>khyañ-</i>	'ring'	tsyap	<i>lak-cwap</i>
'faeces'	kli	<i>khyei²<khiy²</i>	'house'	dimp	<i>'im</i>
			'needle'	dap	<i>'ap</i>
'to do'	la	<i>lup-sañ</i>	'be enough'	yooq	<i>lok-sañ</i>
'tongue'	leq	<i>hlyā</i>	'be cold'	syim	<i>khyam²</i>
'be heavy'	lih	<i>lei²<liy²</i>	'stream'	syong	<i>khyong²</i>

The Kham language seemed to me to have many more of these cognate words than other languages of the area. 'Mortar (for grinding)' chum, 'thorn' 'zu: are typical samples connected with the Burmese forms. In the case of 'sky', the Himalayan languages show the following two kinds of forms.

	I		II	
Gurung	mu	Kaike	pānāng	
Tamang	mu	Jirel	nāng	
Thakali	mu	Sherpa	nam-laq	

4) A. H. Francke, 'Vokabular der Manchadsprache' *ZDMG* 71. 1917. See T. Nishida, 'Some problems in comparison of Tibetan, Burmese and Kachin languages', *Studia Phonologica* XI 1977 Kyoto.

5) Hale, A. and Pike, K. L. (ed.) 1970, *The tone systems of Tibeto-Burman Languages in Nepal* (Occasional Papers of the Wolfenden Society on Tibeto-Burman Linguistics edited by F. K. Lehman vol. II part II: Lexical Lists and Comparative Studies).

It is clear that *mu* in column I is cognate with Burmese *mou*² < *muu*² and *nāng* ~ *nam* in column II is cognate with WrT *gnam* (*-mkha*_l).

The form 'nxm[nəm] 'sky' in Kham corresponds to the Tibetan *nam*. There is an interesting example in the expression meaning 'it rains', formed by a combination of two morphemes.

Kham	'nxm	wa-nya	'to rain'
WrB	<i>mou</i> ²	<i>rwa-saṅ</i>	'to rain'

In this expression of the Kham word, the form 'nxm which is cognate to Tibetan is used instead of the Burmese *mou*². We cannot consider 'nxm or wa here to be loan words. I think this is a very interesting reflexive of a probable combination of the Proto-forms, and their characteristics as a link language are clearly shown.

To give a similar example, the word formation of 'otter' *rihsrxm* is also interesting. The former morpheme 'rih is cognate with WrB *rei* < *riy* 'water', and the second morpheme *srxm* corresponds to WrT *sram* 'otter'⁶⁾. So the form of the Kham language 'otter' can be analyzed as 'water' and 'otter'. This is a sample of the Kham CVC-form corresponding to WrT CC-. Other samples will be presented later.

3. Before we mention the correspondence of Kham words with other languages, I should like to show two features of morpheme forms of the Kham language through comparisons with the Tibetan or Burmese forms.

- 1) the tendency to add the suffix -n in the final position
- 2) the shift from CC- to CVC- sequences

Regarding 1), this tendency appears in many morphemes, but it is unclear whether this final -n was some kind of functional morpheme or if it had originally the same or similar function as -n in WrT: WrT *rku-ba* 'to steal' → *rkun-ma* 'thief', *gci-ba* 'to make water' → *gcin-ma* 'urine' etc., or WrT *sbyin-pa* 'to give': WrB *pei*²- < *piy*²- 'to give' etc⁷⁾.

Between Kham and WrT or WrB, we can find the following morphemes which show a similar connection.

'pillar'	Kham	khan.ba	'post'	: WrT	<i>ka-ba</i>
'mushroom'		'mon.		: WrB	<i>hmou</i> < <i>hmuu</i>
'to lift'		chin.-nya		: WrB	<i>khyi-saṅ</i>

6) The cognate forms of *srxm* are widely distributed in the TB language area. See Benedict, *Sino-Tibetan, a conspectus* p. 107 (438). Trung su31 rām53: Hsihsia ši^won(R49): LB *p-sram. Monpa (Mocuo)sam, Lhopa çaram, Dēng Jam (孫宏開等『門巴, 珞巴, 僜人的語言』1980 北京)

7) cf. S. N. Wolfenden, *Outline of Tibeto-Burman Linguistic Morphology* 1929, p. 61. There are also some examples between WrT and WrB, or between WrT WrB and Kachin (Bhamo dialect.)

'to hear'	WrT	<i>nyan-pa</i>	: WrB	<i>na-</i>	'to listen'	: Kachin
'to reach'		<i>phyin-pa</i>	: <i>prei</i> ³ - < <i>priy</i> ² -		'to run'	
'flesh'		<i>sha</i>	: <i>a-sa</i>			: shān
'water'		<i>chu</i>	:			: ntśin

cf. T. Nishida, 'A study of the Kachin language', *Gengo Kenkyu* 38, 1960.

'to know'	sxyn.-nya	: WrT <i>she-ba</i> : WrB <i>si-sañ</i>
'horn'	'rxhn.	: WrB <i>'u²-khyou</i> < khruu: WrT <i>gru</i>
'elbow'	'gun.	: WrT <i>gru-mo</i>
'leg'	'kxhn.	: WrB <i>khrei</i> < khriy
'to get drunk'	mxhn.-nya	: WrB <i>mu²-sañ</i>

Regarding 2), the shift from CC- to CVC- appears in many languages of the Tibeto-Burman. For example, just as su31 na55 'nose' in Trung, a language of the southwest China, corresponds to WrT *sna* and WrB *hna*, the Kham form 'sxni: 'nose' also corresponds to WrT *sna* and WrB *hna*. Kham 'sxni: kun. 'nostril', WrT *sna-khung* and WrB *hna-khong²*, too, are clearly cognate forms.

The fact that Kham phxren.si-nya 'to brush (hair)' corresponds to WrB *phri²-sañ* 'to brush' (in *champang phri²-sañ*) indicates that the same kind of shift occurred in this morpheme, though in the Kham form suffix -n was added in its final position⁸).

Corresponding to WrT *ma-ba* 'ear' we do not find the expected form *rxna in Kham, but rather orna, with an o-prefix.

This o-prefix must have prevented an occurrence of the same shift in the word 'no e' and we can assume that it corresponds to the a-prefix of WrB. The following example indicates clearly that WrB *a-* and Kham o- have the same origin and the same function, i.e. noun formative prefix.

Kham		WrB	
sxy-nya	'to bear fruit'	: <i>si²sañ</i>	'to bear fruit'
o-sxy	'the fruit or nut of a plant'	: <i>a-si²</i>	'fruit'

4. The form or'mehn. 'tail' in Kham should be analysed into three parts, prefix o-stem 'rmeh and suffix -n. This word is cognate with WrB *a-mri²* 'tail' and suggests that the WrB *mri²* is a shifted form from **rmii²* by metathesis. WrT *rmed* 'crupper attached to a saddle' may also include the same stem of these words. (cf. Benedict, *Sino-Tibetan, a conspectus* (282) p. 64, on the Coblin's metathesis view, see *JAOS* 1974)

It is possible to research every word of Kham in its etymological connection with Tibetan and Burmese or, if necessary, with other TB languages; and in fact such a procedure is necessary for the study of hierarchy of Kham lexical items. For example, 'bridge, ladder' 'chxm has no cognate form in WrB, but corresponds to WrT *zam-pa* etc. Likewise we can enumerate similar examples at random.

Kham	WrB		Kham	WrB
'shooting bow'	li: : <i>lei² < liy²</i>	'to sell'	'yo:-nya	: <i>rong²-sañ</i>
'now'	a:hkx : <i>akhu</i>	'to reach'	yo:-nya	: <i>rək-sañ</i>
'leopard'	'la: : <i>kya < kla</i>	'tiger' 'to leak'	'yu:-nya	: <i>you-sañ < yuu</i>

8) The Kham form phxrap 'fire fan (made of bamboo)' corresponds to WrT *yab*, WrB *yap*, and this correspondence shows that both the latter languages had lost their original initial consonant.

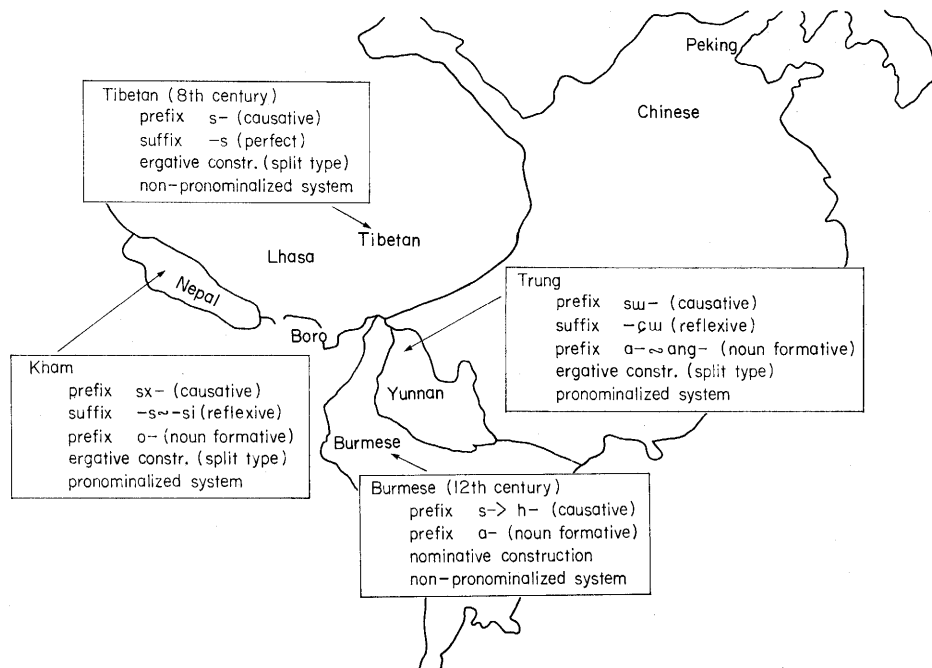
'blood'	ʃi:h	: swei ² < suy ²	'color'	rxnggx	: a-rəng
'urine'	ʃihs	: sei ² < siy ²	'house'	'zihm	: 'im
'to find'	dxy-nya	: twei ³ -sañ< tuy ³	'to soak in water'	'chim-nya	: cim-sañ 'to steep'
'you(sg.)'	'nxn.	: nang	'fur~feather'	'muhl	: mwei ² < muy ²
'water'	'ri:h	: rei< riy	'to forget'	me:h-nya	: mei ³ -sañ< miy ³
'to see'	'rxn.-nya	: mrang-sañ	'head hair'	'cem	: cham etc.

What I seek here is not simply to look for a cognate form with Kham among the other TB languages, or certain correspondence directly between the modern Kham forms and the Proto-TB forms postulated by the comparison of some main languages but to identify what descendants from Proto-TB in Kham are common with either Tibetan or Burmese.

It is clear that 'head hair' 'cem of the Kham, the last example above mentioned is a cognate with WrB *cham*, so we can put this Kham word into the distribution area of *cham* extended to Gyarong, Trung, Lolo to the east, Magar, Jirel, Sherpa, Dhimal, Monpa (Mo cuo), Dēng (Geman) to the west and Burmese, Chin to the south.

For 'to dig', we have two main TB forms, i.e. ku- and tu- distributed widely within the TB language area. Since the Kham word *goh-nya* 'to dig' corresponds to the WrT *rko-ba* 'to dig', we can understand that the Kham form, in this case, belongs to the Tibetan series. (cf. WrB *tu²-sañ* 'to dig')

The following are some Kham words which show direct a connection with the WrT forms.



	Kham	WrT		Kham	WrT
'dirt'	ri:h	: <i>dri-ma</i>	'foam'	'phwi:	: <i>lbu-ba, bdu-ba</i>
'tongue'	se:	: <i>lce</i>	'corpse'	'mohro	: <i>ro</i>
'who'	'su:	: <i>su</i>	'be able'	duh-nya	: <i>thub-pa</i>
'sheep'	lu:	: <i>lug</i>	'to carry'	gur-nya	: <i>hkhur-ba</i>
'goat'	'ra:h	: <i>ra</i>	'to fly'	buhr-nya	: <i>hphur-ba</i>
'poison'	tu:	: <i>dug</i>	'pot'	'ja:	: <i>rdza-ma</i>
'to set' (of sun)	nup-nya	: <i>nub-pa</i>			

5. In the Written Burmese we have the word pair '*ip-sañ* 'to sleep' and *sip-sañ* 'to cause to someone to sleep'. 'sep-nya 'to sleep' 'to put to sleep' in Kham is a causative form and clearly corresponds to WrB *sip-*, but no form remains corresponding to the basic and expected form '*ip-*'. Actually in the Kham language another stem meaning 'sleep': syan.-nya is used, which is perhaps cognate with WrT *spyan* 'eye (resp.)'. Regarding the correspondence of Kham sy-: WrT *spy-*, see 'jackal' Kham 'syal : WrT *spyan-*.

WrB ' <i>ip-</i>	: Kham	x	'to sleep'
WrB <i>sip-</i>	:	'sep-nya	'to put to sleep'
WrT <i>mig-</i>	:	'mi	'eye'
WrT <i>spyan</i>	:	syan.-nya	'to sleep'
WrT <i>nyal-ba</i>	:	ngxhl-nya	'to fall asleep'

6. Let us go on the next topic, morphological construction. At first, we must pay attention to the fact that the causative formation by the prefix *s-* is productive in the Kham language still now, just as it is in the Trung and the Nung languages.

Kham			
hur-nya	'to hurt' (intr.)	'gyo:h-nya	'to grow, get big' ⁹⁾
sxhur-nya	'to hurt' (tr.)	sxgyo:-nya	'to enlarge'
'gx:-nya	'to solidify, freeze' ¹⁰⁾		
sngx:-nya	'to cause to harden or solidify'		

It is known that the causative prefix *s-* is not productive in the other TB languages spoken in the Himalaya area.

To show how the original pair of words is preserved in the Kham and how the prefix *s-* has kept its original function of causativity, I will mention some pairs of words.

1. Kham cyu:-nya 'to become soaked (as in the rain)'
sxcyu:-nya 'to wet something'

9) cf. WrB *kri²-la-sañ* 'to grow'
kri²-cei-sañ 'to enlarge'

10) cf. WrB *khong-sañ* 'to be firm'
khong-cei-sañ 'to cause to be firm'

In WrB the syntactic causative is formed by the addition of the particle *cei*.

The non-causative form *cyu:* corresponds to the WrB *cou* 'to be wet', but in the Written Burmese we cannot find its transitive counterpart **s-cou*. (WrT *chu* 'water' is taken to be a derivation from the same root.)

2. Kham *'mihn.-nya* 'to ripen'
 sxmin.-nya 'to ripen green fruit by laying in sun'

Since WrT *smin-pa* 'to ripen' and WrB *hmañ-sañ* 'to be ripe, as fruit' (prefix *s-* usually shifts in *h-* in WrB) correspond to the second word of the Kham, so we can suppose that both of these WrT and WrB forms were originally transitive verbs. In fact the intransitive form without prefix *s-* meaning 'to ripen' has not remained in WrT and WrB.

However in the Kham language, these word pairs are still used.

Kham	WrB	WrT	
<i>cyu:-</i>	<i>cou-</i>	x	'to be wet'
<i>sxcyu:-</i>	<i>cou cei-</i>	x	'to wet something'
<i>'mihn.-</i>	x	x	'to be ripe'
	<i>hmañ (intr.)</i>	<i>smin-(intr.)</i>	'to be ripe'
<i>sxmin.-</i>	<i>hmañ cei-</i>	<i>smin-du ḥjug-pa</i>	'to ripen something'

7. A more interesting form of Kham is *si* (which has an allomorph *-s* after a stem ending in a vowel). The function of *si* was discussed in detail by David Watters in his long article 'Clause Patterns in Kham'. It is an important article and most interesting. But I think a description of the syntactic treatment of *si* needs a simpler approach for the sake of linguistic comparison. For the purpose of comparative study, it is enough to treat these pairs simply as *-V#* versus *-V-si* in the lexical items, without a consideration of syntactic background for convenience. For example: *'dup-nya* 'to gather(collect)' and *'dup-si-nya* 'to gather together' (cf. WrT *ḥdu-pa* 'to collect, accumulate', whereas no form exists corresponding to the latter Kham word). However, this pair of word forms has survived in the Trung language group. It is certain that *-si* in Kham and *-shi* in Nung (ꨀꨁꨂꨃ in Trung) are the same descendant from the Proto-TB language¹¹).

Mr. J. T. O. Barnard explained the function of this *shi* as follows in his *A Handbook of the Rāwang dialect of the Nung language* (Rangoon, 1934).

"The particle *shi*: This may be classed as a reflexive particle and is used with transitive verbs to give them an intransitive form". p. 17¹²). This is an explanation easy to understand. For example, Nung *ma* 'to hide': *mashi* 'to hide oneself' We can mention the Kham words corresponding exactly to them.

11) Sun Hongkai, 'A Brief Description of the Trung Language', *Minzu Yuwen* 1979, No. 4. cf. Kun Chang, Lo Ch'ang-p'ei's description of the Trung dialect, Berkeley.

12) This particle *shi* is different from the dual particle *shi* (Barnard 55-56 p. 18), which is used with transitive and intransitive verb in the 1st and 2nd persons of the present and future tenses of the indicative mood.

Kham mohn.-nya 'to hide (tr.)': mohn.si-nya 'to hide oneself'¹³⁾.

In some examples the actual lexical forms are different, but it is clear that the function of si in the Kham and of shi in the Nung (ꠘu in the Trung) are quite similar.

Nung	shălap	'to teach'	shălap-shi	'to learn'
Trung	su31 lap55		su31 lap55 ꠘu31	
Kham	'pxy-nya		'pxysi-nya	

The role of suffix -si~s<* -s(?) for the transitive verb stem is less known in the field of TB comparative studies, but I incline to recognize the existence of a stage in which this suffix -s (-si) was found to coexist with the causative prefix s- in the process of development of the Proto-TB word morphology. We could think, in effect, that the position of s̄ before or after the verb stem determined these opposite functions.

I wonder if a reflexion of such a stage is preserved still now both in the Kham and the Trung languages.

However this assumption that the Kham language is at much the same stage of development as the Trung language in this respect, I expect, will be supported to some extent by the similarity of their syntactic construction: the split type of

13) David. E. Watter's treatment of si is as follows: ('Clause Patterns in Kham' in Hale, A (ed.): *Clause, Sentence, and Discourse Patterns in selected languages of Nepal*, 1973. p. 128)

"The verbal affix -si is a role deletion marker: -si may mark the deletion of an actor or an under goer." For example.

zya:h-e (self) sxyh-ke-o

Act Und stem-pst-3sA

The witch killed (herself)

Apply the following rule which is obligatory to this structure, a variant clause with a reflexive meaning will come out.

Rule: a) Where the actor and undergoer are referentially identical, delete the undergoer and mark the deletion in the verb by the affix -si.

b) Delete the agent marker on the actor and assign the appropriate intransitive inflections to the verb.

Structural change: zya:h sxyh-si-ke

Act stem-ItV-pst

The witch killed herself

Act=actor Und-undergoer pst=past tense 3sA=3rd sg. active.

I hope I am justified in taking this set of verb forms lexically as an opposition of sxyh-nya 'to kill' and sxyh-si-nya 'to kill oneself', for the sake of the language comparison.

Likewise

1. mwin.-ke it became hot

2. sxmwin-ke-o it made it hot

Watter treats this structural change from 1 to 2 as a result of the following rule applied.

Rule: a) Add the verbal prefix sx-

b) Add to the verb the 3rd person singular actor-marker affix -o

This word pair corresponds to the following pair in WrB exactly.

1. nwéi khê-<nuy² khai²-

2. hnwéi khê-<hnuy² khai²-

And these pairs of words in Burmese are treated generally as a lexical, not syntactic opposition. (The past tense marking affix ke is perhaps cognate with -kè 'past tense marker' of Sema Naga.)

ergative system and the pronominalized system for the verbs¹⁴).

8. It is very difficult to reach a certain conclusion on the linguistic position of the Kham language within the Tibeto-Burman language group. Much more time and research are needed. But at present it seems sure that the Kham language preserves certain old morphological and syntactic constructions. The former is represented by the prefix *s-* for the causative construction and suffix *-s~si* for the intransitive verb formation.

Regarding lexical items, the Kham has the characteristics of a link language between WrT and WrB lexical stock, typically represented by the examples 'to rain', 'otter' etc. mentioned above. It may be said this characteristic of the Kham also similar to the Trung language¹⁵).

Notes

* This paper was originally presented at the 15th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics, Peking, August 1982.

14) Pronominal agreement system in the Taka Kham and the Nung.

	Taka Kham	Nung	
agent patient		(transitive sg. form)	
1st—2nd	ɣa-V-ni-T	V-ng	
1st—3rd	ɣa-V (*V-ɣa)	V-ng-u	
2nd—1st	nx-V-na-T	e-V-ng-a	
2nd—3rd	nx-V (*nx-V-o)	e-V-u	
3rd—1st	V-na-T-o (*o-V-na)	e-V-ng	* These are earlier forms of Taka Kham assumed from the Mhai dialect.
3rd—2nd	V-ni-T-o (*o-V-ni)	e-V	
3rd—3rd	V-T-o (*o-V)	V-u	
	V=verb stem	T=tense marking affix	
	na<*ɣa=1st agent	ni<*na=2nd agent	o=3rd agent

This Taka Kham system is considered by J. J. Bauman to be a result of a highly aberrant development from the original system.

And S. C. Delancey called the Taka Kham agreement paradigm 'an atypical example of T-B agreement' in his interesting dissertation 'Deictic Categories in the Tibeto-Burman Verb', 1980.

I should like to discuss this problem on some other occasion. In any case, the connection between the form of the independent pronoun and the pronominal agreement affix is evident, so we can easily set up the two forms *ɣa for 1st person and *na(ɣ) for 2nd person as their original forms within the paradigm of agreement for both the intransitive and the transitive.

15) On the Trung language, see T. Nishida 'On the linguistic position of the Trung and Nu languages' in Tohogaku Ronshu, 『東方学論集』 (東方学会創立四十週年記念), The Toho Gakkai, Tokyo 1987.

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