PUMA VERBS AND THE PROTO-KIRANTI VERBAL AGREEMENT SYSTEM

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The purpose of this paper is to overview the historical status of conjugations observed in the Puma language based on a comparison of Proto-Kiranti verbal agreement system. The provenance of Proto-Kiranti affixal agreement paradigms is presented by investigating the conjugations of Puma. While some Puma suffixes are identical with the Proto-Kiranti morphemes, a few are cognate with the Proto-Kiranti reflexes.

Keywords: Proto-Kiranti, verb agreement, arguments, reflexes, Puma

1. Introduction

Languages differ considerably with respect to the conditions under which they display verbal person marking. Kiranti languages like Puma are typically characterized by complex verbal agreement system, where verbal person marking is obligatory and both A and P arguments are triggered. Like most other Kiranti languages, Puma distinguishes eleven pronominal categories.

Previous comparisons of Kiranti verbal agreement systems (van Driem 1991) display the conjugations of Kiranti verbs to reflect a split-ergative system in which third person A arguments are triggered differently in the verb than first and second person A arguments.

In Kiranti languages the person marking of first and second person A arguments follows an ergative pattern and the marking of third person A arguments in the verb follows an accusative pattern (van Driem 1991: 345) in which separate sets of morphemes index for a third person patient (3P) as opposed to a third person S or A arguments (3S/A).

It is worthy to note that Thangmi, a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in Nepal, whose genetic affiliation is unclear (between Newar and Kiranti), exhibits the Kiranti split-ergativity model in structure while it differs in the specifics in which only the first person is indexed ergatively and second and third persons show the accusative pattern (Turin 1998: 485).

Contrary to this, Puma exhibits upside down ergativity in which S arguments are indexed in the same way as P arguments with the first person singular and plural, while A arguments are indexed in the same way as S arguments but differently from P arguments with the third person (Sharma 2014).

2. Proto-Kiranti conjugation system

DeLancey (1989: 332) notes that there is a strong case for reconstructing the Proto-Tibeto-Burman (PTB) paradigm for the common ancestor of Kiranti, Gyarong, Nungish, Kuki-chin and Kham. For detailed information about historical reconstruction of Proto-Tibeto-Burman languages, it is worthy to see (Matisoff 2003).

Based on the purpose of this paper, we discuss here for just Proto-Kiranti paradigm. In fact, the Proto-Kiranti verb model is developed by the previous comparisons of the conjugational morphology of Bahing, Kulung, Thulung, Lohorung, Limbu, Dumi and Hayu verbs. The Proto-Kiranti model, proposed in van Driem (1991: 354), is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: The Proto-Kiranti verbal agreement system

				-ŋa 1SG/NPST						*-k* 1PL	
			-k NPST	*-aŋ* 1SG/PST	*-ci* 1/2DL.S/P	*-ŋ* 1SG.A		*-ni* 2PL		*-ya* EXCL	
me- 3PL.A	Σ STEM	*-nši* REFL	+AUX$_1$				+AUX$_2$				
			-tɛ PST	*-na* 2	*-ci* DL.(S)A	*-u* 3P		*-m* 1/2PL.A		*-i* INCL	
				-nya 1SG → 2						*-ci* 3DL.P	

3. Proto-Kiranti morpheme *-me

The modern reflexes of the Kiranti third person plural agent ***me-*** are prefixes in those languages which have prefixes and are suffixes in languages which lack prefixes, other than a prefix of negation (van Driem 1991: 347).

As the morphological analysis of Puma verbal agreement affixes demonstrates, the Puma third person plural *mʌ-* marks the plurality of both third person S and A arguments. We discuss morphemes in Puma which have clear Proto-Kiranti cognates. Tables 2 to 6 show Puma reflexes which are identical to their Proto-Kiranti cognates (cf. Sharma 2014).

With respect to the third person plural Proto-Kiranti prefix **me-*, while it is reflected as a prefix in Puma and Limbu as in Proto-Kiranti, it is reflected as a suffix in the rest of the languages, as in Table 2.

Table 2: Reflexes of the Proto-Kiranti affix ***me-***

Proto-Kiranti	**me-*	3PL	*pf.2
Limbu	*mɛ-*	NS.S/A	pf.1
Hayu	*-me*	3PL	sf.3
Thulung	*-mi*	3PL → 3	sf.2
Lohorung	*-mi*	3PL	sf.3
Bahing	*-me*	3PL → 3/3PL.S	sf.3
	-m	3PL.S/A	sf.3
Puma	***mʌ-***	**3PL.S/A**	**pf.3**

Plural number of a first or second person A argument is indexed by the cognate suffix ***-m***. Note that the Puma plural agent morpheme *-m* triggers the plural of first and second person S and A arguments only, as in (1) from Sharma (2014):

(1) a. *khokkuci* ***mʌ-pis-a***
3PL.ABS 3PL.S/A-speak-PST
'They$_{PL}$ spoke.'

b. *khokkuci-a* *ke-lai* *kha-**mʌ**-sont-a*
3PL-ERG 1DL-DAT 1NS.PL-3PL.S/A-persuade-PST
'They$_{PL}$ persuaded us$_{INCL}$.'

As can be seen from the above examples the suffix *-mʌ* occurs only with the third person plural S and A arguments. The suffix occurs in only two form, namely 3PL>1NS and 3PL>3NS in the transitive paradigm. It does not occur in negated forms because the negation morpheme *pʌ-*, which also occupies the third prefix slot takes precedence as in Sharma (2014: 149):

(2) a. *khokkuci* *ni-**pʌ**-pis-en*
3PL.ABS NS.S/A-NEG-speak-NEG.PST
'They$_{PL}$ did not speak.'

b. *khokkuci-a* *ke-lai* *kha-ni-**pʌ**-sont-en*
3PL-ERG 1DL-DAT 1NS.P-3S/A-NEG-per.-NEG.PST
'They$_{PL}$ did not persuade us$_{PL.INCL}$.'

4. Proto-Kiranti morpheme *-m

Turning to the suffix *-m*, the first or second person plural agent morpheme is reflected as a suffix in Proto-Kiranti, as illustrated in Table 3.

Table 3: Reflexes of the Proto-Kiranti first or second person suffix ***-m***

Proto-Kiranti	*-*m*	1/2PL	*sf.6
Limbu	*-mʔna*	1PL.EXCL.S/A.PST	sf.7
	-m	PL.A	sf.7
Kulung	*-am*	1PL → 3	sf.5
	-m	2PL → 3	sf.5
Thulung	*-mi*	PL	sf.8
Lohorung	*-m*	1PL.EXCL.S/A; 2PL→3	sf.5
Bahing	*-mi*	3PL/1PL.EXCL	sf.3
Puma	***-m***	**1/2PL.A**	**sf.3**

The suffix *-m* marks a first or second person plural agent in 1/2>3 forms. It occurs only after the third person patient morpheme <*-u*~ *-i*~ *-a*~ *-o*>, as in:

(3) a. *ke-a* *khokku-lai* *sont-u-**m***
1PL.INCL-ERG 3SG-DAT persuade-3P-1/2PL.A
'We$_{INCL}$ persuade him.'

b. *khʌnnanin-a* *khokku-lai* *tʌ-bha-a-**m***
2PL-ERG 3SG-DAT 2-cut-3P-1/2PL.A
'You$_{PL}$ cut him.'

5. Proto-Kiranti dual morpheme *-ci

Some of the reflexes of the Proto-Kiranti first and second person dual morpheme ***-ci*** are listed in Table 1, reflexes of the Proto-Kiranti third person agent morpheme ***-ci*** are

provided in Table 4, and reflexes of the Proto-Kiranti third person patient (3P) morpheme ***-u*** are given in Table 6 (cf. Turin 1998: 487).

Table 4: Reflexes of the Proto-Kiranti second person dual suffix ***-ci***

Proto-Kiranti	*-*ci*	1/2DL	*sf.4
Limbu	-*si*, -*tchi*	DL.S/P	sf.4
Kulung	-*ci*	1/2DL	sf.3
Thulung	-*ci*	DL	sf.4
Lohorung	-*ci*	DL	sf.3
Bahing	-*si*	DL.S/P	sf.4
	-*sa*	1DL.INCL	sf.4
	-*su*	1DL.EXCL	sf.5
Puma	**-*ci***	**DL**	**sf.2**

6. Proto-Kiranti third person morpheme *-ci

The suffix -*ci* ~ -*cʌ* marks only dual number. It occurs in combination with all persons and tenses and with all speech act participants. The allomorph -*cʌ* occurs only in two cases, namely 2DL>1SG and 3DL>1SG.

(4) a. *khʌnnaci-a ŋa-lai tʌ-son-ŋa-**cʌ**/*-**ci**-ŋ*
2DL-ERG 1SG-DAT 2-per.-1SG.S/P.NPST-DL-1SG [COPY][1]
'You$_{DUAL}$ persuade me.'

b. *khokkuci-a ŋa-lai pʌ-son-ŋa-**cʌ**/*-**ci**-ŋ*
3DL-ERG 1SG-DAT 3S/A-persuade-1SG.S/P.NPST-DL-1SG [COPY]
'They$_{DUAL}$ persuade me.'

The following examples show uses of the dual suffix -*ci*.

(5) a. *keci ips-a-**ci***
1DL.ABS sleep-PST-DL
'We$_{DUAL}$ slept.'

b. *keci-a khokku-lai cut-**ci***
1DL-ERG 3SG-DAT tease-DL
'We$_{DUAL}$ tease her.'

c. *khokku-a keci-lai pʌ-cut-**ci**-ka*
3SG-ERG 1DL-DAT 3S/A-tease-DL-EXCL
'He teases us$_{DUAL}$.'

Table 5: Reflexes of the Proto-Kiranti third person morpheme ***-ci***

Proto-Kiranti	*-*ci*	3DL.A	*sf.4
Limbu	-*si*	NS.S/P	sf.8
Kulung	-*ci*	3PL	sf.5
Thulung	-*ci*	3DL.P	sf.8

[1] The copy of the final nasals of the preceding morpheme is a common characteristic of Kiranti languages (van Driem 1993; Ebert 1997).

Lohorung	*-ci*	NS.P	sf.6
Bahing	*-si*	DL.P	sf.8
Puma	***-ci***	**3NS.P**	**sf.5**

The suffix *-ci* ~ *-cʌ* marks a non-singular third person P and appears with the first person, second person and third person A argument. Its two allomorphs are the result of vowel harmony with the preceding syllable, as illustrated in Sharma (2014: 150):

(6) a. *ŋa-a* *khokkuci-lai* *phad-u-ŋ-**cʌ**-ŋ*
1SG-ERG 3NS-DAT help-3P-1SG.A-3NS.P-[COPY]
'I help them.'

b. *ke-a* *khokkuci-lai* *phad-u-m-**cʌ**-m*
1PL.INCL-ERG 3NS-DAT help-3P-1/2PL.A-3NS.P-[COPY]
'We help them.'

c. *khʌnna-a* *khokkuci-lai* *tʌ-phad-i-**ci***
2SG-ERG 3NS-DAT 2-help-3P-3NS.P
'You$_{SG}$ help them.'

d. *khʌnnaci-a* *ŋa-lai* *tʌ-pha-ŋa-**cʌ**-ŋ*
2DL-ERG 1SG-DAT 2-help-1SG.S/P.NPST-3NS.P-[COPY]
'You$_{DUAL}$ help me.'

As can be seen from example (6) that the non-singular suffix *-ci-* ~ *-cʌ* is followed by a copy slot, which is usually occupied by a copy of only the nasal of the preceding person and/or number suffix. In (6c) this copy slot remains empty when no nasal precedes the suffix *-ci* such as the third person patient suffix *-i*. This nasal copying also occurs when the negative marker precedes *-ci.* The nasal of the morpheme *-in* is suffixed after *-ci* as shown below:

(7) *khʌnna-a* *khokkuci-lai* *tʌ-phad-in-ci-n*
2SG-ERG 3NS-DAT 2-help-NEG-3NS.P-[COPY]
'You$_{SG}$ do not help them.'

Alternatively, in Puma the distribution of the non-singular suffix *-ci-* ~ *-cʌ* can also be analysed in terms of a vowel harmony rule as *-ci-* occurs only after the front vowel /i/, while *-cʌ* occurs after the non-front (i.e. mid and back) vowels /a/, /ʌ/, /o/ and /u/.

It is not unusual for Kiranti languages to have two homophonous suffixes occurring in different slots denoting different meanings. The first is a proper dual marker and the second, which has been 'generalized' in van Driem's (1990: 38) words, shows the meaning of non-singularity.

7. Proto-Kiranti 3p morpheme *-u

This suffix occurs only in the direct third person P forms of the transitive paradigm, with the exception of dual forms. It has altogether four allomorphs, two of which (*-u* and *-i*) are categorically determined and two of which (*-a* and *-o*) are phonologically determined.

Table 5: Reflexes of the Proto-Kiranti third person morpheme ***-u***

Proto-Kiranti	*-*u*	3P	*sf.5
Limbu	-*u*	3PL	sf.4
Thulung	-*u*	1EXCL → 3.NPST	sf.7
Lohorung	-*u*	3P	sf.4
Thangmi	-*u*	3P	sf.3
Kulung	-*o*~-*ə*~-*u*	3P	sf.4
Puma	**-*u*~-*i*~-*a*~-*o***	**3P**	**sf.1**

The underlying form of all these allomorphs is -*u*, which is related to the proto-Kiranti morpheme *-*u* as reconstructed by van Driem (1993) (although he analyses it as a third person P morpheme). A morphophonological rule that turns stem-final /a/ into /o/ before a following (usually third person P) suffix -*u* exists in several other Kiranti languages (e.g. Limbu and Wambule) (cf. Stutz 2005). Let us examine examples from Sharma (2014: 143):

(8) a. *khokku-a* *khokku-lai* *ɖher-**i***
3SG-ERG 3SG-DAT beat-3P
'He beat him.'

b. *khʌnna-a* *khokku-lai* *ɖher-**u**-m*
2SG-ERG 3SG-DAT beat-3P-1/2PL.A
'You$_{SG}$ beat him.'

c. *ŋa-a* *khokku-lai* *bha-**a**-ŋ*
1SG-ERG 3SG-DAT cut-3P-1SG.A
'I cut$_{NPST}$ him.'

d. *ŋa-a* *khokku-lai* *bho-**o**-ŋ*
1SG-ERG 3SG-DAT cut-3P-1SG.A
'I cut$_{PST}$ him.'

Examples (8c-d) distinguish the stem final vowel changing[2].

8. Proto-Kiranti morpheme *-ŋa

In Puma, the involvement of a first person singular is always expressed overtly. -*ŋa* and -*oŋ* occur on a verb to mark the subject of an intransitive verb and the object of a transitive verb in the non-past and past tense respectively, while -*ŋ* appears on a verb to mark a first person transitive subject in both tenses.

Tables 7 to 9 show reflexes of the Proto-Kiranti first person morpheme ***-ŋa***, first person agent morpheme ***-ŋ***, first person tense morpheme ***-aŋ***.

[2] Generally past and non-past remain unmarked unless there is a possibility of vowel lengthening. Primarily the non-past forms are such as *bha-a-ŋ* > *bha-u-ŋ* and the past forms are *bho-o-ŋ* > *bha-u-u-ŋ*. However, due to stem final vowel changing, it is difficult to make a distinction between past and non-past tense as vowel lengthening is only realised in careful pronunciation of adult speakers.

Table 6: Reflexes of the Proto-Kiranti first person non-past morpheme ***-ŋa***

Proto-Kiranti	*-*ŋa*	1SG.NPST	sf.3
Dumi	-*ŋ*	1SG	sf.2
Hayu	-*ŋo*	1SG.S/P.NPST	sf.2
Thulung	-*ŋi*	1SG/P	sf.1
Lohorung	-*ŋa*	1SG	sf.2
Puma	**-*ŋa***	**1SG.S/P.NPST**	**sf.1**

The suffix -*ŋa* is a portmanteau containing the meaning of non-past tense and first person singular, as in Sharma (2014):

(9) a. *ŋa* *ri-**ŋa***
1SG.ABS laugh-1SG.S/P.NPST
'I laugh.'

b. *khʌnna-a* *ŋa-lai* *tʌ-cet-**ŋa***
2SG-ERG 1SG-DAT 2-hit-1SG.S/P.NPST
'You$_{SG}$ hit me.'

9. Proto-Kiranti morpheme *-aŋ

Turning to the suffix -*aŋ*, the first person singular past morpheme is reflected as a suffix in Proto-Kiranti, as illustrated in Table 8.

Table 7: Reflexes of the Proto-Kiranti first person past morpheme ***-aŋ***

Proto-Kiranti	*-*aŋ*	1SG.PST	*sf.3
Limbu	-*aŋ*	1SG.S/P.PST	sf.4
Lohorung	-*iŋ*	1SG.S/P.PST	sf.2
Thangmi	-*ŋa*	1SG	sf.5
Puma	**-*oŋ***	**1SG.S/P.PST**	**sf.1**

This portmanteau suffix is the past counterpart of -*ŋa* marking a first person singular subject or patient in the past tense, as presented in:

(10) a. *ŋa* *ri-**oŋ***
1SG.ABS laugh-1SG.S/P.PST
'I laughed.' (Sharma 2014)

b. *khʌnna-a* *ŋa-lai* *tʌ-cet-**oŋ***
2SG-ERG 1SG-DAT 2-hit-1SG.S/P.PST
'You$_{SG}$ hit me.'

10. Proto-Kiranti morpheme *-ŋ

Turning to the suffix -*ŋ*, the first person agent morpheme is reflected as a suffix in Proto-Kiranti. However, it is noteworthy that Hayu has alternations for this, as illustrated in Table 9:

Table 8: Reflexes of the Proto-Kiranti first person agent morpheme ***-ŋ***

Proto-Kiranti	*-*ŋ*	1SG.A	*sf.5
Limbu	-*ŋ*	1SG.A	sf.5
Hayu	-*ŋ*~-N~-*soŋ*	1SG.A	sf.3
Lohorung	-*n*	1SG.A	sf.5
Puma	**-*ŋ***	**1SG.A**	**sf.1**

This suffix occurs when a first person singular agent acts on third person patient (1SG>3) in the non-past and past tense. It occurs only after the third person patient morpheme <-u ~ -i ~ -a ~ -o>.

(11) *ŋa-a* *khokku-lai* *cetdh-u-**ŋ***
1SG-ERG 3SG-DAT hit-3P-1SG.A
'I hit him.'

11. Proto-Kiranti morpheme *-k

Reflexes of the Proto-Kiranti first person plural morpheme ***-k*** are presented in Table 10.

Table 9: Reflexes of the Proto-Kiranti first person plural morpheme ***-k***

Proto-Kiranti	*-k*	1PL	sf.2
Dumi	*-k*	1PL	sf.2
Kulung	*-ka*	EXCL	sf.6
Thulung	*-ki*	EXCL	sf.6
Bahing	*-k*	1PL.EXCL	sf.8
	-ka~-ko~-ku	1EXCL.S/A	sf.5
Lohorung	*-ka*	EXCL	sf.8
Puma	***-ka***	**EXCL**	**sf.8**

In Puma pronouns are marked for the distinction of inclusive and exclusive reference. Puma also marks dual number in its pronouns. The first person non-singular inclusive is unmarked on the verb, while the first person non-singular exclusive is marked by the suffix *-ka* on the verb, as illustrated in Sharma (2014: 151):

(12) a. *ke-ka* *baŋŋ-i-**ka***
1PL-EXCL.ABS talk-1/2PL-EXCL
'We$_{EXCL}$ talk.'

b. *keci-ka-a* *kitāp* *khipd-i-ci-**ka***
1DL-EXCL-ERG book.ABS read-1/2PL.NPST-DL-EXCL
'We$_{DL.EXCL}$ read the book.'

c. *khokku-a* *keci-ka-lai* *pʌ-pha-ci-**ka***
3SG-ERG 1DL-EXCL-DAT 3S/A-help-DL-EXCL
'He helps us$_{DL.EXCL}$.'

The suffix *-ka* only co-occurs with the non-singular first person S argument, A argument and P argument. This suffix is never found with a hearer (the second person). The exclusive marker *-ka*, according to van Driem's (1990) reconstruction of proto-Kiranti morphemes, is common in several Kiranti languages, and is a reflex of the proto-Kiranti first plural morpheme *-*k* and the exclusive marker *-*ya*, which coalesced as a single morpheme later due to their frequent co-occurrence.

12. Conclusion

The Puma first person singular non-past morpheme *-ŋa*, dual suffix *-ci*, third person non-singular suffix *-ci*, first person agent morpheme *-ŋ* and third person patient morpheme *-u* are identical with the Proto-Kiranti morphemes. The Puma first/second person plural morpheme *-mʌ*, first person past morpheme *-oŋ* and first person exclusive morpheme *-ka* are cognate with the Proto-Kiranti reflexes.

Conjugations of Kiranti languages, when systematically compared with similar conjugations in Tibeto-Burman languages beyond the Kiranti, may be shown to be retentions of an archaic Tibeto-Burman verbal agreement pattern (van Driem 1991: 355). It is observed that in Kiranti languages, as well as in the Tibeto-Burman languages in general, there is a strong evidence that the presence of a velar nasal /ŋ/ indicates the involvement of a first person singular agent in the historical reconstruction.

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