Some Ergative Phenomena in Tibeto-Burman

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Introduction

Most Tibeto-Burman languages show, to some extent, ergative characteristics. These facts have been pointed out since Wolfenden (1929), but it is not until recently that they have been re-examined from the angle of 'ergativity'. We have not yet reached a stage where the ergativity of this whole language group may be discussed from the typological viewpoint.

It should also be noted that ergative phenomena in Tibeto-Burman have been spotlighted not from theoretical interests in language universals but through the motivation of historical study; historical linguists expected the phenomena to be one of the prospective criteria of historical approach. It is because of this attitude that the studies on ergativity in Tibeto-Burman, including my present work, have been based rather on morphological and/or morphosyntactic processes than on purely syntactic or pragmatic matters. In other words, the ergativity has been dealt according to its classical definition (Shibatani 1986: 76–77) and much of attention has been paid to its overt level.

As Bauman has pointed out (Bauman 1975: 221–222, 1979: 419), ergativity in Tibeto-Burman is observed at two different levels of analysis: one comprising the nominal case-markers, and the other the pronominal agreement system. At the both levels, Tibeto-Burman shows a variety of morphological and morphosyntactic types of ergativity and their ways of appearance vary from language to language. Hayu,1) on the one hand, represents an extreme in which ergative markers consistently occur and no accusative type is observed. In some languages, on the other hand, a high optionality of markers (ergative and accusative) is seen, such that there are three possible choices:

1) either subject or object is marked,
2) both are marked, and
3) both are unmarked.

Chepang,2) Rawang3) and Kham4) are regarded as having these characteristics.

A very limited number of the Tibeto-Burman languages are consistently 'ergative' and many others belong to 'split-ergative' type. This will be further sub-classified according to the degree of optionality and mixture of case markers.

What then causes split? The answer to this question has not yet been found, but, as far as I know, the split in Tibeto-Burman is divided into two types: in one type, case marker is sensitive to the meaning of verbs, and in the other, pronominal affix system shows split-ergative characteristics. The following descriptions and analyses may provide some clues to answer the above question.

The languages which I will discuss in this paper are Tibetan, Newari and rGyarong. These data cited here are based on my own field research unless otherwise noted.

0.1 Abbreviations

agt.	agent
ABL	ablative
ABS	absolutive
A-NP	agent noun phrase
AUX : E	auxiliary verb of existence
AUX : S	auxiliary verb of statement
bnf.	beneficiary
CAUS	causative
CLA	classifier
COP	copula
DAT	dative
DIM	diminutive
DL	dual
ERG	ergative
FUT	future
goa.	goal
HON	honorifics
INF	infinitive
INS	instrumental
IPF	imperfective
LOC	locative
N	noun
NEG	negative
NP	noun phrase
NMR	nominalizer
NS	negative statement
O-NP	object noun phrase
PL	plural
PRO	progressive
PTB	proto-Tibeto-Burman
ptt.	patient
QUO	quotative
SG	singular
S-NP	subject noun phrase
TB	Tibeto-Burman
VP	verb phrase

1. Split in Tibetan5)

Since the publication of Csoma de Kőrös's grammar in 1834, based on his long field study in Tibet and aided by his deep understanding of Tibetan traditional grammar, Tibetan has been recognized by European scholars as an exotic language where no passive formation is found. It was not until quite recently that this 'exotic' language was re-defined as having ergative characteristics in the context of case-marking typology. Unfortunately, we have had no monograph-length paper devoted to Tibetan ergativity, and so I present a rough sketch of it below as a first step.

1.1 The ergative case of Tibetan is marked by *-kyis* which has five allomorphs (Tibetan transcriptions hereafter are in the orthography)6):

-kyis→-gyis /m, n, r, l________
-gis /g, ng________
-yis /'________
-s(-'is) /vowel________
-kyis /otherwise________

This particle consists of two morphemes, *kyi* and *-s*. *kyi* is identical to the genitive marker and *-s* is cognate to a locative marker *su* which is from PTB *sa(LAND). Recall that rGyarong also has -s, besides -y, as an 'ablative' marker meaning FROM. Because of this meaning of -s, the ergative marker can express reason, cause, method, instrument and material.

The distribution of ergative and non-ergative NP's in the following examples7) seems to show the functions of this instrumental/ergative particle:

(1) lcags-Ø gser-du 'gyur.
iron-Ø gold-LOC change (VI)
Iron changes to gold

(2) slab-dpon-gyis lcags-Ø gser-du bsgyur.
guru-ERG iron-Ø gold-LOC change (PFT :VT)
A guru changed iron to gold.

Comparing intransitive sentence (1) with transitive one (2), Tibetan seems to be prospectively ergative. In the actual texts, however, the occurrence of *-kyis* is not as regular as the traditional grammars explain. Our next step will be, therefore, to check how consistent the marking is. To do so with efficiency, we classify verbs into the following eight categories, aided by the hypothesis of Tsunoda (1982: 4AB), and look for good evidence in each branch:

a) action,
  a1) action + process8), such as KILL,
  a2) action ± process, such as EAT,
  a3) action, in which you also expect the patient's action towards you, such as WAIT, LOOK FOR,

b) knowledge,
c) sense,
d) emotion,
e) possession, and
f) potentiality.

As the example of al), let us compare the following two:

(3) kho-0 stag-gcig-0 gsad-pa-red.
he-ERG tiger-one-0 kill-PFT-AUX :S
He killed a tiger.

(3A) stag-0 shi-pa-red.
tiger-0 die-PFT-AUX :S
A tiger died.

This pair represents a parallel contrast to (1) vs. (2) and constitutes a typical case. The examples of a2) show a complication.
Thus,

(4) nga-0 rtsam-pa-0 za-gi-yin.
I-0 roast flour-0 eat-IPF-AUX :S
I am going to eat tsampa (roast-flour).

(5) kho-s mog-mog-0 za-gi-'dug.
he-ERG meat pie-0 eat-IPF-AUX :E
He is eating a meat-pie.

With the same verb and the same transitive structure, the ergative marker occurs in (5) whereas it does not in (4). A possible reason for this would be that the ergative marker originally appeared after *nga* but precise differentiation of auxiliary verbs neutralized ergativity in the proximal persons (usually 1st and 2nd). This neutralization tends to occur in the colloquial language and, indeed, when the informant writes down the sentence, -s does appear.

In the a3) group, regular occurrence of ERG is observed. Examples are,

(6) nga-s zhal-lta-ma gcig-0 btsal-pa-yin.
I-ERG maid one-0 look for-PFT-AUX :S
I looked for a maid.

(7) kho-s mo-0 sgug-pa-red.
he-ERG she-0 wait for-PFT-AUX :S
He has waited for her.

(8) 'di-0 nga-s shes-kyi-mi-'dug.
this-0 I-ERG know-IPF-NEG-AUX :E
I don't know this.

'di in sentence-initial position may be the old information carrier, but, according to the informant the sentence with nga-s first and 'di-0 second is fully grammatical and *'di-r(this-LOC) is not acceptable. In natural Tibetan

speech with this group of verbs, it is rather rare that A-NP and O-NP co-exist in a sentence, and we have no good data for *ha go pa* 'to understand', *brjes pa* 'to forget' and *dran pa* 'to recall'.

The verbs of c) sense seem to require ERG. Thus,

(9) kho-tsho-s par-Ø lta-gi-yod.
they-ERG photo-Ø look at-IPF-AUX :E
They are looking at a photo.

(10) nga-s mo-Ø mthong byung.
I-ERG she-Ø see AUX :PFT
I've seen her.

(11) nga-s kho'i dbyin-ji sgra-Ø go-gi-mi-'dug.
I-ERG he-of English pronunciation-Ø hear-IPF-NEG-AUX :E
I don't hear (cannot follow) his English pronunciation.

(12) nga-s kho-r nyan-pa-yin.
I-ERG he-LOC listen to-PFT-AUX :S
I listened to him.

The last sentence has the ERG-LOC combination, instead of ERG-ABS. Examples of d) emotion are:

(13) nga-Ø las-ka 'di-'dras-la dga'-po-med.
I-Ø work this-like-LOC fond of-NEG
I don't like work like this.

(14) nga-r dngul-Ø dgos.
I-LOC money-Ø necessary/want
I need money.

No ergative marker occurs in this group. With *gzhes* 'to fear', the ergative marker may appear depending upon idiolects.

The verb of e) possession does not take ERG either. Thus,

(15) nga-r dngul-Ø yod.
I-LOC money-Ø AUX :E
I have money (lit. There is money to me).

Verbs of potentiality require a slightly different structure.

(16) nga-Ø lha-sa-r 'gro thub-gyi-red.
I-Ø Lhasa-LOC go able-IPF-AUX :S
I can go to Lhasa.

(17) khong-Ø chang-Ø mchod thub-gyi-mi-'dug.
he-Ø wine-Ø drink (HON) can-IPF-NEG-AUX :E
He cannot take 'chang'.

With this kind of meaning, A-NP always occurs with the absolutive case and is combined with the imperfect root+thub. Therefore, this seems to be irrelevant to our present concern. However, when *thub* forms the *-ba* infinitival nominal, the ergative marker does appear. Thus,

(18) kho-s las-ka-de-0 byed thub-pa red-pas?
he-ERG work(N)-that-0 do can-INF AUX:S-IRG
Is he able to do that work?

1.2 On the basis of these example sentences, the following scheme, illustrating the semantic split, may be deduced:

a1) ERG - ABS
a2) ERG - ABS (and ABS - ABS)
a3) ERG - ABS
b) ERG - ABS
c) ERG - ABS and ERG - LOC
d) ERG - LOC and LOC - ABS
(ERG - ABS)
e) LOC - ABS
f) ??

What can be assumed from this chart is that groups (a) and (b) contain verbs of a 'high ergativity' with verbs of the other classes showing progressively 'lower ergativity': i.e., 'highly transitive' verbs which refer to highly 'transitive actions' show more consistently ergative characteristics. This fact seems to be exactly parallel to a universal tendency that verbs towards a1) are capable of establishing a transitive structure more smoothly whereas those towards f) have less potential to do so (cf. Dixon 1972).

Thus, the Tibetan case marking system is sensitive to the meaning of verbs, and the phenomenon of ergativity is of limited scope in the language.

1.3 Some scholars[9] explain the split in Tibetan according to volitionality. If they consider it synonymous with transitivity, their hypothesis may be acceptable. Looking into it carefully, however, they try to gradate volitionality by the combinations of persons, aspects and auxiliary verbs. Suppose these combinations show some gradations of volitionality, they are distinctions of psycholinguistic distance of the speaker, which have no relationship with ergativity, even though volitionality is somewhat reflected.

1.4 Ergative case-maker possibly appears in Tibetan intransitive structure too. For instance,

(19) nga-s phyin-pa-yin.
I-ERG go(PFT)-PFT-AUX:S
I went.

This sentence is grammatical only when the agent must be particularly emphasized. In general utterance, -s never occurs. Besides 'to go', 'to come' may let -s appear.

I understand that ergative marking in intransitive structure in Tibetan is a lexically limited phenomenon and belongs to a different grammatical level of analysis. Therefore, I do not categorize Tibetan in 'active' language.

2. Split in Newari10)

Newari ergativity is sensitive to the meaning of verbs but its nominal case-making varies from Tibetan in terms of the sensitiveness.

Our check begins with the following three sentences:

(20) jigu kusā tan-a.
I-of umbrella lose-PFT
My umbrella got lost/is missing.

(21) jĩ: kusā tan-k-ā:.
I-ERG umbrella lose-CAUS-PFT
I lost an umbrella.

(22) ji wo-yā.
I come-PFT
I came.

A typical intransitive agent, as is seen in (22), does not take any marker, whereas the transitive agent in (21) is marked by a lengthened vowel of the last syllable as well as by its nasalization, and the patient is unmarked, i.e. in absolutive case; in (20), which is the intransitive sentence contrastive to (21), 'my umbrella' is again zero-marked.

These examples, especially the ERG-ABS combination in (21), may convince us that Newari has proto-typical ergative characteristics.

However, the following sentences disprove such an assumption:

(23) jĩ: shrestha-yāta dā-yā.
I-ERG Shrestha-DAT hit-PFT
I hit Shrestha.

(24) jĩ: shrestha(-yāta) khan-ā.
I-ERG Shrestha(-DAT) see-PFT
I saw Shrestha.

In both examples, the transitive agents are ERG-marked while 'Shrestha' is mandatorily marked by -yāta, a so-called dative particle. In (24), the dative marker can be deleted in natural speech, but, grammatically, it should be added. The verbs in (23) and (24), 'to hit' above all, are of such a high transitivity that we may expect the absolutive case for 'Shrestha'.

Our next step will be, therefore, to check how the split system functions in Newari. It is known that split-ergativity along volitionality, perfectivity, controllability of action and so on does not mechanically work but it is rather sensitive to 'meaning of verbs' or 'transitivity gradation'. Modern Tibetan is a good example of it.

2.1 To examine the relationship between the occurrence of case markers and the meaning of verbs, we will check Newari verbs according to the same classifications of meaning as that we did on Tibetan.

(25) jĩ: cha-mha dhũ: syā-nā.
I-ERG one-CLA tiger-∅ kill-PFT
I killed a tiger.

(26) shresthã: kap tachyā-ta.
Shrestha-ERG cup-∅ break-PFT
Shrestha broke a cup.

(26a) jĩ: demā tachyā-nā.
I-ERG plate-∅ break-PFT
I broke a plate (intentionally).

(26b) jĩ: demā tachyā-ye lāta.
I-ERG plate-∅ break-INF (unintentionally)
I broke a plate (by mistake).

(26c) demā tajyā-ta.
plate break(VI)-PFT.
A plate broke.

(27) wõ: kathi beko-yā-k-a-la.
he-ERG stick-∅ bend-CAUS-PFT
He bent a stick.

(28) wo manukhã: sĩ: pāl-a/dhyan-a.
that man-ERG wood-∅ cut-PFT
The man cut wood.

(28a) wo manukhã: sĩ: pāl-i.
that man-ERG wood-∅ cut-IPF
The man will cut wood.

(28b) wo manukhã: simā pāl-ā con-a.
that man-ERG wood-∅ cut-INF stay-IPF
The man is cutting wood.

In all the examples above, the transitive agent is ergative-marked while the patient is unmarked. This marking is consistent.

Comparing the sentences (26) through (26b), we see the agent marker is suffixed by the ergative marker, either proximal or distal.

Volitionality of action may have nothing to do with ergative marking in Newari, since (26a) and (26b) are identical in terms of ERG-ABS setting.

Perfectivity also has no connection with ergativity in this language.

Sentences (28) through (28b) show the reason.

The following sentences are the examples for a2) group:

(29) shresthã : jigu kusã tan-k-a-la.
Shrestha-ERG I-of umbrella-∅ lose-CAUS-PFT
Shrestha lost my umbrella.

(30) shresthã : kalamã pau co-yã con-a.
Shrestha-ERG pen-INS letter-∅ write-INF stay-IPF
Shrestha is writing a letter with a pen.

(31) ji-mi-sã : ta :-pu mye hāl-ā.
I-PL-ERG many-CLA song-∅ shout-PFT
We sang many songs.

(32) jĩ : kusā to:t-ā.
I-ERG umbrella leave-PFT
I abandoned an umbrella.

(33) shresthã : cosā cha-pu nyā-nā con-a.
Shrestha-ERG pen-∅ one-CLA buy-INF stay-IPF
Shrestha is buying a pen.

(34) wõ : chẽ da-nā con-a.
he-ERG house-∅ build-INF stay-IPF
He is building a house.

(35) jĩ : bista-yāta cha-gu saphu : bi-ye.
I-ERG Bista-DAT one-CLA book-∅ give-IPF
I give a book to Bista.

(36) jĩ : mari na-yā con-a.
I-ERG bread-∅ eat-INF stay-IPF
I am taking bread.

(37) wo misã : jā na-la.
that woman-ERG rice-∅ eat-PFT
The woman ate rice.

(38) wo manukhã : jyā yā-ta.
that man-ERG work(N)-∅ do-PFT
The man worked.

(39) wo manukhã : jyā chu-ta.
that man-ERG work(N)-∅ start-PFT
The man started the work.

(39a) wo manukhã : jyā dhun-k-a-la.
that man-ERG work(N)-∅ end-CAUS-PFT
The man finished the work.

(40) jĩ : tho chanta jon-ā
I-ERG that-∅ you(DAT) catch-PFT

I caught it for you.

(41) chã : ji-ta : dā-la.
you-ERG I-DAT beat-PFT.
You hit me(PAST).

(42) wõ : ji-ta : lākamā cwā-ta.
she-ERG I-DAT shoes-INS beat-PFT
She kicked me with (her) shoes.

(43) wo manukhā : chanta na-k-a-la.
that man-ERG you(DAT) eat-CAUS-PFT
The man fed you.

Ergative particle always appears with the A-NP in this group, among which sentences (29) through (40) require zero-marking for O-NP whereas those (41) through (42) need a so-called dative particle.

It is not readily understandable why 'me' in (41) and (42) as well as 'you' in (43) are marked by a dative particle, but it may properly be regarded as 'goal' instead of 'patient'. A parallel phenomenon can be observed in modern Tibetan too. Thus,

(44) kho-s mo-r zhus-pa-red.
he-ERG she-LOC hit-PFT-AUX : S
He hit her.

The occurence of ergative marker is becoming inconsistent from this a3) group onward. Thus,

(45) jĩ : cosā mā-lā.
I-ERG pen-0 look-for-PFT
I looked for a pen.

(46) ji chanta pi-yā con-e.
I-0 you(DAT) wait-INF stay-FUT
I will wait for you.

(47) ji bista-yāta pi-yā con-e.
I-0 Bista-DAT wait-INF stay-FUT
I will wait for Bista.

(48) jĩ : bistā : jyā dhun-k-e-ta pi-yā con-e.
I-ERG Bista-DAT work(N) end-CAUS-NMR wait-INF stay-FUT
I will wait for Bista finishing the work.

The verb 'to look for' requires the ERG-ABS combination, while 'to wait for' needs an unmarked agent and a dative particle for O-NP. 'To look for' may be classified in the a2) group instead of this; if so, it is natural that verb takes ERG-ABS setting. In both (46) and (47), jĩ: at their A-NP is fully grammatical but it seldom occurs.

Let us compare the following examples of 'knowledge':

(49) wõ: shrestha mha-syu:.
he-ERG Shrestha-0 CLA-know(PFT)
He knew Shrestha.

(50) shresthã: wo bhāe thu:.
Shrestha-ERG that language-0 understand
Shrestha understands the language.

(51) jĩ: woyāgu nã loman-a.
I-ERG his name-0 forget-PFT
I forgot his name.

(51a) ji-ta: woyāgu nã loman-a.
I-DAT his name-0 forget-PFT
I forgot his name. (lit: His name is forgotten in me.)

(52) jĩ: woyāgu nã lumã:.
I-ERG his name-0 remember.
I remember his name.

(52a) ji-ta: woyāgu nã lumã:.
I-DAT his name-0 remember
I remember his name.

(53) jĩ: woyāgu nã luman-k-ā.
I-ERG his name-0 remember-CAUS-PFT
I recalled his name.

In (49), (50) and (53), we see a typical ergative structure, whereas, in (51) through (52a), the agent can be suffixed by either ergative or dative marker. In the colloquial language, (51a) and (52a) are much more natural for native speakers of Newari than (51) and (52) respectively. For the agent of sentence (53) too, ji-ta:, instead of jĩ:, is expected, but it never happens. This is reasonable since 'to recall' has the formation of 'to remember' + causative marker, being regarded to have a higher transitivity than 'to remember'.

'Sense' is expressed in the following ways:

(54) jĩ: shrestha(-yāta) khan-a.
I-ERG Shrestha(-DAT) see-PFT
I saw Shrestha.

(55) jĩ: wo-yāta khan-i ma-khu.
I-ERG he-DAT see-FUT NEG-COP
I am not going to see him.

(56) jĩ: jhanga: hā:-gu tā:
I-ERG bird cry-NMR hear
I hear a bird singing.

(57) jĩ: jhanga: hā:-gu nyan-ā.
I-ERG bird cry-NMR listen to-PFT

I listened to a bird singing.

(58) jĩ : attar bās tā-yā.
I-ERG perfume good smell feel-PFT
I smelt the perfume.

(58a) jĩ : attar-yā na-tā-yā.
I-ERG perfume-GEN smell(N)-feel-PFT
I smelt the perfume.

(58b) jĩ : atter-yā-na tā-yā.

'Ji' (I) is marked by the ergative particle in all the instances but only (58) takes ERG-ABS formation. (58a) was collected from of Mr. I. Shresthacarya (German Nepal Research Programme, Kathmandu), and its genitive particle is noteworthy. I do not know if this marker appears because of the compound verb. The above interpretation accords with the native informant's conception that na-tā-ye is a unit, but, for me, the segmentation shown in (58b) is easier to understand.

Examples of 'emotion' are:

(59) bistã : ji-ta : nhāpā ma-hi :.
Bista-ERG I-DAT formerly NEG-tolerate
Bista formerly hated me.

(60) ji-ta : sharmā ya :.
I-DAT Sharma-Ø like
I like Sharma.

(61) ji-ta : cosā māl-a.
I-DAT pen-Ø need-IPF
I need a pen.

(62) wo misā : sukhi jui-gu so-la.
that woman-Ø happy become-NMR pretend-PFT
The woman wanted to be happy. (imitate)

(63) wo manukhã : jā na-ye-ta so-la.
that man-ERG rice-Ø eat-INF-NMR want-PFT
The man wanted to take rice. (imitate)

(64) wo manukhã : dugu-cā na-i dhakā wo misā gyā-ta.
that man-ERG goat-DIM eat-FUT QUO that woman fear-PFT
The woman was afraid that the man would eat the goat.

The basic case-marking pattern of the group seems to be DAT-ABS, as are observed in (60) and (61). In the case of (59), it is closer to group c) because the verb shows a relatively high transitivity. The sentences (62) through (64) have the ABS-NMR/QUO pattern, where the experiencer is zero-marked whereas the agents in a subordinate clause are ERG-marked.

Possession is represented by genitive subject.

(65) wo manu:-yā ni-mha macā du.
that man-of 2-CLA child AUX:E
The man has two children. (lit. Of the man, there are two children.)

Let us compare the following sentences of 'potentiality' which show ABS-INF-can pattern. Thus,

(66) wo manu: na-ye phu-mha ju-la.
that man-∅ eat-INF can-CLA become-PFT
The man was able to eat.

By replacing *phu-mha ju-la* to *phu,* we get sentence (67) in which the agent is ERG-marked. However, *manu:*, instead of *manukhã:*, is more frequent; the ERG-marked agent might be an idiolect.

(67) wo manukhã: na-ye phu.
that man-ERG eat-INF can
The man can eat.

2.2 Summarizing the above, the distribution of nominal case-markings is illustrated as follows:

group	*subject position*	*object position*
a1	ERG	ABS
a2	ERG	ABS
	ERG	DAT (goa.: hit, give, kick) (bnf.: feed)
a3	ERG	ABS
	ABS	DAT (wait for)
b	ERG	ABS
	DAT	ABS (forget, remember)
c	ERG	ABS
	ERG	DAT (see)
d	DAT	ABS
e	GEN	ABS
f	ABS	INF+AUX

From this chart, we can see that the ERG-ABS setting is more consistent in a1) and a2), and gradually decrease towards c) group. In contrast with it, the DAT/GEN-ABS combination is predominant in d) and e).

3. Split in rGyarong

Ergativity in rGyarong[11] is observed in both nominal case-marking and pronominal agreement in the verb phrases.

3.1 Let us begin with the nominal case-marking system.

Intransitive agent is always unmarked. Thus,

(68) wu-yo-jis to-*thal*-Nch12) ko.
3DL up-go-3DL AUX:S
They two went up (ascended).

(69) ka-dza no-*kyu* ko.
grass down-grow AUX:S
Grass has grown.

Then, what happens in the transitive group?

(70) nə-yo-ki chi-gyo kəw-*na-sngo*-ch13) ko.
2SG-ERG 1DL 2>1-scold-1DL AUX:S
You scold us.

The agent of 'to scold' requires the ergative marker but the 1SG agent stands alone. Thus,

(71) nga wu-yo ta-*na-sngo*-n ko.
1SG 2SG 1>2-scold-2 AUX-S
I scold him.

In the instance of GIVE, on the other hand, no agent marking occurs; this is because what we have at the object position is not the patient but goal or beneficiary.

(72) nə-yo chi-gyo kəw-*wu*-ch ko.
2SG 1DL 2>1-give-1DL AUX:S
You give (it to) us.

(73) nga wu-yo *wu*-ng ko.
1SG 3SG give-1SG AUX:S
I give (it to) him.

This behavior of *-ki* in (70) through (73) can be summarized as follows:

a) it is certain that *-ki* is the ergative marker which marks transitive agent(s),
b) but, *-ki*, appears only when patient co-exists,
c) and, the 1SG transitive agent never requires *-ki*, regardless of the co-existence of patient, goal or beneficiary.

These rules are also valid for the sentences in which agent, patient and so on are in full noun forms. Therefore, the hypothesized points are correct. But, the following examples disprove it:

(74) wu-yo-nye tə-chim-gə tu-po<{to-wu-*pa*} ko.
3PL SUB-house-one up-3PL-make AUX:S
They have built a house.

(75) yi-nyo nyi-gyo nə-mnyok-tə to-nə-*dza*-y me?
1PL 2PL of-grain-that up-PRO-est-1PL AUX:NS
We were eating that grain of yours.

(76) wu-yo kə-na-gə nga-ngə-Nbre nə-Nthun<{nə-*Nthun*-w}.
3SG dog-one 1SG-of-towards PFT-show-3SG
He has shown the dog to me.

The patients are marked by *-gə* or *-tə* in these three sentences while the agents are unmarked. Does this mean that the two suffixes can be interpreted as 'accusative' markers? Or, do they have another function?

As mentioned above, *-gə* is from *kə-rgi* 'one' and *-tə* originates in *te* 'it'. The main role of adding them to the end of a particular noun phrase is to signal the closure of it; in such cases, no specific pitch is required. Although rGyarong is neither a stress-accent language nor a pitch-accent language phonologically, each word has a somewhat fixed pitch pattern, and the two suffixes in question are neutral in those terms (i.e. totally dependent on the preceding syllable).

In sentences (74) through (76), on the other hand, *-gə* and *-tə* have a remarkably high pitch like the 'step-up' tone. This fact leads us to hypothesize that the suffixes are focus markers rather than patient-NP boundary signals and that, if the focus marker occurs with patient(s), the ergative marker is dropped.[14]

Summarizing the above discussions, we conclude:

a) rGyarong is primarily an 'ergative' language, where the agent is marked by *-ki* when the sentence has an overt patients(s).
b) The 1SG transitive agent is the only exception to this rule above; it never takes *-ki*.
c) If the patient is focussed by either *-gə* or *-tə* accompanied by a high pitch, the ergative marker does not occur.
d) In the sense of b) and c), rGyarong will be defined as of a 'split-ergative' characteristics, and the rGyarong split-ergativity is not sensitive to meaning of verbs.[15]

3.2 If we call the ergative case particle 'overt', the pronominal affixes incorporated into final verb phrase to specify agent, patient, beneficiary and goal would be said to covertly manifest ergativity.

rGyarong has a highly developed pronominal affix system in VP's, where pronominal agreement is observed. rGyarong lCog-rtse (卓克基) dialect has the following general structure of final verb phrase final and it constitutes a word:

VPf——→(ka)-(P1)-P2-P3-(P4)-ROOT-(S1)-S2.[16]

Among these affixes, P3 and S2 are the pronominal ones, which mandatorily appear as a set.

There are two ways of affixing in the transitive group;

1) if both the agent(s) and patient(s) (or goal or beneficiary) are present in the sentence, some sets of affixes specify who acts on/toward/for whom,

2) if not, other sets of affixes occur to indicate the agent(s) only.

In the case of 1), a more complicated agreement appears. Tables 1 and 2 show the affixing patterns in 1).

〈**Table 1**〉

agt. / ptt. bnf. goe.	1	2	3
1SG		kəw-ng	wu-ng
1DL		kəw-cn	wu-ch
1PL	ka-y	kəw-y	wu-y
2SG	ta-n		təw-n
2DL	ta-ɴch		təw-ɴch
2PL	ta-ny		təw-ny

〈**Table 2**〉

agt. / ptt.	1SG	1DL	1PL	2SG	2DL	2PL	3SG	3DL	3PL
3	0-ng	0-ch	0-y	tə-n	tə-ɴch	tə-ny	0-w	wu-0	wu-0

These forms are induced to be from those described in Tables 3 and 4, through some morphological analyses of their underlying forms.

[[ptt.]-[agt.]] — [ptt.]

From these data, we can deduce the following general structure for the rGyarong system of agreement.

〈**Table 3**〉

agt.	ptt.	proto-forms		
		P3		S3
1	2SG	*tə-kə	—	n
1	2DL	*tə-kə	—	ɴch
1	2PL	*tə-kə	—	ny
2/3	1SG	*kə-wu	—	ng
2/3	1DL	*kə-wu	—	ch
2/3	1PL	*kə-wu	—	y
(*2/) 3	2SG	*tə-wu	—	n
(*2/) 3	2DL	*te-wu	—	ɴch
(*2/) 3	2PL	*tə-wu	—	ny
1	1PL	*kə-kə	—	y

⟨**Table 4**⟩

agt. ptt.	3SG	3DL • PL
3	*Ø-Ø——w	*-wu——Ø

Now, if the pronominal affixing reflects ergative marking, there should be a regular correspondence between the ergative marker and the agent component of P3 and/or S2.

On the basis of Kin P'eng's data, DeLancey argues,

> 'the distribution of the inverse prefix *u*- and the ergative postposition *k* is the same; both occur when and only when the more natural viewpoint is not starting-point' (DeLancey 1981: 642–643).

The sentences he cited are:

no-kə nga kə-u-nasno-ng
you-ERG I T-inv.-scold-1st
You will scold me.

mə-kə nga u-nasno-ng.
he-ERG I inv.-scold-1st
He will scold me.

nga no tə-a-nasno-n.
I you T-A-scold-2nd
I will scold you.

mə-kə no tə-u-naso-n.
he-ERG you T-inv.-scold-2nd
He will scold you. (ibid.)

DeLancey was the first to point out the co-occurrence of *wu* and ERG marker. Although kə- and tə- are not tense marker (T) as he thought, his proper segmentation of P3 prefix led him to a successful hypothesis. Looking into our data, the inverse prefix *wu* is observed in the following:

agt.	ERG	ptt.	proto-forms
2/3	yes	1	*kə-wu
(*2/)3	yes	2	*tə-wu

wu indicates agent and ergative marker *-ki* co-occurs.

The P3 structure for 3 > 3 agreement is as follows:

agt. ptt.	3DL	3PL
3	*Ø-wu	*Ø-wu

Contrary to these, any inverse prefix does not occur for 1st person agent.

-ki does not appear either, as was mentioned before.

From these facts, we hypothesize that rGyarong ergativity is a non-1st person matter. The 1st person never takes *-ki* nor does the inverse prefix for the 1st person participate in any ergative structure. This might be related to Bauman's argument that PTB ergative was for the 3rd person only.

3.3 Let us touch upon the relationship between ergativity, topicalization and pronominalization for further study. On the basis of a variety of types of languages, Plank claimed,

> 'the accusative construction originates from the basic topicalization of the agent role in transitive clauses, and the ergative construction from basic patient-topicalization' (Plank 1979: 15).

Since my basic idea is that accusativity and ergativity belong to different levels of analysis, I am quite doubtful about Plank's claim. However, ergativity and topicalization of rGyarong may be connected to each other through pronominalization.

In 3.2, I have shown two ways of affixing patterns in transitive verbs. The structure of them can be summarized as follows:

	ERG	P3	S3
VT1)	yes	[ptt.]-[agt.]	[ptt.]
VT2)	yes	[agt.]	[agt.]

In VT2), where no agreement occurs, both affixes carry the meaning of agent, while in VT1), *-ki* marks ergative agent (which is also marked by a following pronominal affix). At the same time, two pronominal affixes which specify patient echo each other. Especially, the patient marking at S2 which originates from personal pronouns is regarded as highly marked in contrast to the other paradigm, since the postpositional component of pronominal settings is the most essential synchronically and diachronically. In this context, the patient in the VT1) paradigm may be interpreted as a 'grammaticalized topic'.

This interpretation may not be necessarily what Plank had in mind, since his idea seems to originate from the syntactic order of ergative structures. However, rGyarong's long strings of morphemes in the VP are a sort of epitome of its syntactic philosophy, and Plank's suggestion has stimulating implications for our field.

4. Epilogue

The descriptions above clarify two types of ergative phenomena in Tibeto-Burman; in one type, case-making system is sensitive to the meaning of verbs, and in the other, ergativity is manifested both by nominal case-marking and by pronominal agreement. Some languages, such as Jinghpaw, may be a possible third type, where a focus marker has extended its function to ergative marker.

Ergative phenomena seem to present a good number of clues to draw a more detailed picture of the history of Tibeto-Burman. We have had, indeed, several works concerning ergative morphology and morphosyntax. Limiting our scope to their morphological analyses, however, there are many aspects to be reconsidered or resegmented. We must cumulate good textual data and precise morphological analyses.

In this paper, some syntactic viewpoints, such as 'topic-prominency' (Li & Thompson), 'actor-undergoer', 'syntactic pivot' and so on, were left unreviewed. It deserves future study from both the historical and the typological approaches.

NOTES

1) = Vayu. Spoken in eastern Nepal. According to a recent description (Michailovsky 1982), Hayu slightly shows split.

2) This is spoken in Nepal and very near to Kiranti. cf. Caughley & Caughley (1970).

3) 'Rawang dialect of Nung language' may be more accurate. It is spoken in northern Kachin State, Burma, by 60,000 natives. It genetic relationship is near to Trung (Yunnan, China).

4) Not Khams dialect of Tibetan but Kham spoken in Nepal.

5) I deal with Modern Tibetan in this paper. The informant was the late Rev. Sonam Gyamtso, a former fellow at the Toyo Bunko.

6) Orthographic transcription follows Kitamura (1974).

7) I consider that Tibetan maintains, in principle, uniform characteristics in terms of ergativity. As evidence to support this claim, two examples from classical Tibetan (Yamaguchi 1974: 52–53) will be shown here.

8) This term is claimed by Chafe (1974: 102–104).

9) DeLancey (1984), for instance.

10) This language is spoken by half a million people, the majority of whom are inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley. There are manuscripts written in this language dating from the 14th century. Note that Nepali, the present national language of Nepal, is an Indo-European language introduced by the Gurkha dynasties.

The informant is Professor Kamal P. Malla, Dept of English, Tribhuvan University, who is a native speaker of the Kathmandu dialect of Newari. He has written a grammar of his mother language, and the transcription of Newari in this paper follows his system. (Malla 1985: 3–18.)

11) Spoken in the northwestern part of Sichuan, China. The number of native speakers is approximately a little less than 100,000. rGyarong has a complicated verb phrase structure, providing many clues for the reconstruction of proto-Tibeto-Burman morphology. See Nagano (1984) for the details.

The sentences cited hereafter are these of lCog-rtse (卓克基). The informants are Rev. Chamba Rabgyay, Sera Monastery, Karnataka, India, and the late Mr. Gyarong Gyambum.

12) The verb root in the sentence examples is in italics hereafter. *to-* in (68) and *no-* in (69) are directives. See Nagano (長野泰彦) (1984a).

13) The sign > stands for the direction of action. 2 > 1, for example, shows that action of 2nd person agent goes towards 1st person.

14) Bauman, on the basis of King P'eng (1949), classifies rGyarong in the 'mixed type' of

split-ergativity, where both ergative and accusative markers co-exist (Bauman 1975: 249). According to him, *-kə* is the nominative marker while *-ko* accusative. Looking at Kin P'eng, we find the following five:

t'i *ko* təpau.
Que fais-tu?

nyi sei *ko* təZIE.
Qui accusez-vous?

nyi t'i ji ts'ong *ko* təpau.
Quel métier allez-vous faire?

nyi sei *ko* təSIEr.
Qui cherchez-vous?

nyaja t'i *ko* təched.
Que tenez-vous à la main? [金鵬 1949: 274–275]

In all these five sentences, *-ko* is always suffixed to interrogatives. It seems quite difficult to define *-ko* as an accusative marker under this kind of special syntactic environment. Rather than that, the probability is that *-ko* is cognate to our -gə, a focus marker, which may possibly be compared with Jinghpaw *gaw* and Lahu *phèʔ gaw*.

15) rGyarong is an ergative language, and no accusative marker can be found.

16) Non-final verb phrase does not require any affix, except for *ka-*, the verb phrase signal.

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