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PART II

## Contributions to historical linguistics



# **Biactantial agreement in the Gongduk transitive verb in the broader Tibeto-Burman context**

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The Gongduk language is spoken in an enclave in south central Bhutan comprising several villages and hamlets in the mountains west of the Kurichu. The language occupies a distinct phylogenetic position within the Tibeto-Burman language family. The intransitive verb agrees for person and number with the subject, and the transitive shows biactantial agreement for person and number with both agent and patient. A morphological analysis has identified the individual agreement morphemes, their precise grammatical meaning and their patterns of allomorphy. The cognacy of the greater part of the desinences of the Gongduk verb with morphemes identifiable in the biactantial agreement systems of other Tibeto-Burman languages supports the view that at least a portion of such conjugational morphology must be reconstructed to the common ancestral language.

## **1. The discovery of the language**

The argument is sometimes heard that the New World was not really discovered by a Genoese seaman sailing for the Spanish crown in 1492 because the ancestors of native American peoples had colonised the Americas via the Bering passage many millennia before. Likewise, when another Italian mariner, sailing under an English flag, discovered Newfoundland in 1497, he was oblivious to the fact that Norsemen had already set ashore there several centuries before him. In the narrowest and strictest sense, a language too can never be discovered, since presumably any language is already known to its speakers.

In fact, of course, the New World was actually discovered several times, and in 1991 the Gongduk language was unknown to scholarship or, for that matter, to the Royal Government of Bhutan. What was locally known at the time was that the people of Gongduk were traditionally denominated འདྲེན་འཕྲུག་ *Dungjüt* or people of aboriginal lineage. Since this designation did not always confer

great prestige upon those thus designated, members of the language community sometimes found it expedient to pass themselves off as Khengpas to outsiders. Their unique language was accordingly taken for a local dialect of Khengkha.

In May 1991, I stumbled upon a speaker of this previously unknown language in Monggar district when I was conducting the First Linguistic Survey of the country for the Dzongkha Development Commission. When I perceived the peculiar nature of the language, the authority of Dr'asho Sanggä Dorji, then acting secretary of the Dzongkha Development Commission, had to be invoked to prevail upon this hapless Gongduk speaker and detain the man for one more day even though he was eager to return to his village. Later, I stayed in Gongduk myself in the spring of 1992 and again in the spring of 2001.<sup>1</sup>

The Gongduk language is spoken by a dwindling number of speakers in a remote enclave to the west of the Kurichu in south central Bhutan, surrounded by Khengkha-speaking territory. The native pronunciation of the area is [goŋduk]. The people call themselves [goŋdukpa] and their language [goŋdukpa 'aŋ] 'the Gongduk language' or [goŋdukse 'aŋ] 'the language of Gongduk'. Scholars of Classical Tibetan in East and West often cannot resist imputing a Tibetan orthography to a Himalayan toponym which may not be Bodish at all. In Bhutan, scholars in the service of the government are, moreover, compelled by practical exigencies to devise a suitable orthography in དབུ་ཅན་ 'Ucen script for place names within the kingdom. Both the orthographies དགོངས་འདུས་ and དགོང་རྟུག་ are attested in official documents for the name of the རྫོང་འོག་ geo or administrative block where the language is spoken.<sup>2</sup> In Dzongkha, the Gongduk language is known as དགོངས་འདུས་ལཱི་ཁ་ Gongdubikha.

## 2. Phonological and lexical observations

The phonological notation used in this contribution is provisional and deviates little from the notation used previously for Gongduk (van Driem 2001: 463–468). The notation used in my forthcoming Gongduk grammar may differ from the orthography used here. Obviously the grammar will strive to provide a more

1. I dedicate this contribution in homage of Scott DeLancey to the memory of my priceless friend ཚེ་རིང་དར་རྒྱུས་ Tshering Dârje, born in the year of the Earth Sheep (1979–1980). Tshering Dârje was the [səroŋən] or རྫི་དཔོན་ cibö of the Gongduk village of Phəjoŋ Pəm. He saved my life on 11 May 2001, shortly before his death.

2. The term རྫོང་འོག་ geo itself is often misleadingly anglicised as 'gewog'.

complete account of the verbal morphology than the present analysis and of the language as whole.

The Gongduk personal pronouns are *zǎ* 'I', *ziŋ* 'we', *gi* 'you' (singular), *giŋ* 'you' (plural), *gon* 'he, she, it' and *gonmä* 'they'. Separate ergative forms exist for the first person singular *ze* 'I' and the third person pronouns *gonze* 'he, she, it' and *gonmäe* 'they', where the ergative morpheme ⟨e⟩ can be readily recognised in each form.

The special character of some of the Gongduk lexicon from the Tibeto-Burman perspective was pointed out in the handbook. The Gongduk phonemes written here as /s/ and /z/, or as [s] and [z], are most usually realised as the interdental fricatives [θ] and [ð] respectively. In fact, the sibilant pronunciations seem to be attributable to the influence of neighbouring phonologies and appear to be limited to bilingual speakers who also speak Tshangla, Dzongkha or Nepali.

### 3. Transitive agreement morphology

The following morphological analysis of the Gongduk simplex has hardly been modified from the provisional first analysis, which was based on the simplex conjugations of eleven transitive verbs and three intransitive verbs as well as a word list and a corpus of utterances collected during the First Linguistic Survey of Bhutan in May 1991. Minor modifications are the result of corrections made in the data and additional materials collected in March 1992 and April and May 2001.<sup>3</sup>

A Gongduk simplex is defined as an inflected non-periphrastic indicative verb form containing person and number agreement affixes but lacking overt aspect markers. Three functional positions or slots must be posited to account for the conjugational morphology of the Gongduk verb: one prefixal slot and two suffixal slots. The prefixal slot can be occupied by the negative morpheme ⟨ma⟩, and the first suffixal slot can be occupied by the preterite tense morpheme. All agreement suffixes occur in the second suffixal slot.

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3. The provisional first analysis was contained in a paper entitled 'The Gongduk language of Bhutan', presented at the 24th International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics at Ramkhamhaeng University in Bangkok on the 8th of October 1991, and the modifications to the analysis discussed here were contained in a paper entitled 'The Gongduk language of central Bhutan', circulated at the 7th Himalayan Languages Symposium at Uppsala University on the 7th of September 2001.

Table 1. ⟨tɪŋ⟩ ‘look at’

		patient		
		1	2	3
a g e n t	1		tɪŋ-ni ma-tɪŋ-na tɪŋ-sani ma-tɪŋ-sana	tɪŋ-ɔŋje ma-tɪŋ-urɪ tɪŋ-duŋɪ ma-tɪŋ-duŋ
	2s	tɪŋ-ni ma-tɪŋ-na tɪŋ-sani ma-tɪŋ-sana		tɪŋ-ni ma-tɪŋ-ni tɪŋ-dini ma-tɪŋ-dini
	2p			tɪŋ-uri ma-tɪŋ-uri tɪŋ-duri ma-tɪŋ-duri
	3	tɪŋ-aŋje ma-tɪŋ-aŋ tɪŋ-ani ma-tɪŋ-aniŋ	tɪŋ-iri ma-tɪŋ-i tɪŋ-ani ma-tɪŋ-ana	tɪŋ-di ma-tɪŋ tɪŋ-are ma-tɪŋ-a

Table 2. ⟨mal ~ mɪt⟩ ‘see’

		patient		
		1	2	3
a g e n t	1		mɪt-ni ma-mɪt-na mɪt-sani ma-mɪt-sana	mal-ɔŋje ma-mal-urɪ mɪt-tuŋɪ ma-mɪt-tuŋ
	2s	mɪt-ni ma-mɪt-na mɪt-sani ma-mɪt-sana		mɪt-ni ma-mɪt-ni mɪt-tini ma-mɪt-tini
	2p			mal-uri ma-mal-uri mɪt-turi ma-mɪt-turi
	3	mal-aŋje ma-mal-aŋ mal-ini ma-mal-iniŋ	mal-iri ma-mal-i mal-ini ma-mal-ina	mɪt-ti ma-mɪt mal-iri ma-mal-i

Tables 1 and 2 provide the conjugation table of the transitive verbs ⟨tɪŋ⟩ ‘look at’ and ⟨mal ~ mɪt⟩ ‘see’. Each cell in the tables contains four finite forms

in the following order: non-preterite affirmative, non-preterite negative, preterite affirmative, preterite negative. The verb ⟨tiŋ⟩ ‘look at’ shows a constant stem throughout the paradigm, whereas the verb ⟨mal ~ mit⟩ ‘see’ shows a fixed pattern of stem alternation. Many Gongduk verbs show a fixed pattern of stem alternation throughout the agreement paradigm. These complex patterns differ from verb to verb. The stem alternation in the paradigm of the verb ⟨mal ~ mit⟩ ‘see’ *prima facie* resembles a straightforward morphophonologically conditioned pattern of alternation between a preconsonantal and a prevocalic stem, as observed in Limbu. However, Gongduk resembles Dumi more in that all verbs can be grouped into sets or ‘conjugations’ defined by their specific pattern of paradigmatic stem alternation. The conjugation of a verb and its various stems must therefore be specified in the lexicon.

Some Gongduk verbs exhibit tense-motivated stem alternation affecting the stem initial. For example, the verb ‘to give’ has the non-preterite stem ⟨pi⟩ and the stem ⟨bi⟩ in the preterite, whereas the verb ‘to eat’ shows the non-preterite stem ⟨za⟩ and the preterite stem ⟨sa⟩. In addition to fixed patterns of paradigmatic stem alternation, it is useful to distinguish between the ante-vocalic and the ante-consonantal form of a single stem. An exposition of the various Gongduk conjugations lies outside of the scope of the present article.

The Gongduk transitive verb distinguishes  $1 \rightleftharpoons 2$ ,  $1 \rightarrow 3$ ,  $2s \rightarrow 3$ ,  $2p \rightarrow 3$ ,  $3 \rightarrow 1$ ,  $3 \rightarrow 2$ , and  $3 \rightarrow 3$  forms. The notation  $1 \rightleftharpoons 2$  signifies a transitive relationship between a first and a second person actant, whereby the direction of the relationship is not part of the morphological meaning. The notation  $1 \rightarrow 3$  signifies a transitive relationship between a first person agent and a third person patient, and the notation  $2s \rightarrow 3$  signifies a transitive relationship between a second person singular agent and a third person patient, and so forth.

Gongduk agreement endings show allomorphy, and these desinenes are also subject to morphophonological alternations conditioned in part by vowel harmony. The present article does not seek to provide a full account of the latter. The Gongduk intransitive paradigm will also not be treated in great detail in this brief study, nor does the present account exhaustively treat all the complexities of Gongduk transitive simplex agreement. Yet this limited synchronic analysis provides ample material for reflection on the status of verbal agreement in Tibeto-Burman.

The negation and agreement affixes of the Gongduk simplex can be identified as follows:

1. the negative morpheme ⟨ma⟩ occurs as a prefix in all negative indicative forms and is attached immediately to the stem of the verb.
2. The preterite morpheme occurs as a suffix attached immediately to the verb stem. Non-preterite tense is expressed as zero. The preterite morpheme



exhibits allomorphy with the allomorph ⟨ti ~ di⟩ in 1/2→3 forms (with the allomorphs ⟨t ~ d⟩ appearing in 1/2→3 forms before a vowel), ⟨sa⟩ in 1⇌2 forms, and ⟨a ~ ε ~ i⟩ in all intransitive forms and in transitive forms with a third person agent. The preterite allomorph ⟨ti ~ t ~ di ~ d⟩ in 1→2/3 forms occurs in its voiced form following a nasal and in its unvoiced form after a plosive or vowel. The preterite allomorph ⟨a ~ ε ~ i⟩ occurs as ⟨ε⟩ after an open stem with the stem vowel /i/, and as ⟨i⟩ after verb stems with stem vowel [i], including the verb ⟨mal ~ mit⟩ ‘see’ where the stem vowel alternates, e.g. *mal-iri* ‘he/she/they saw him/her/them’. Elsewhere the form ⟨a⟩ of the preterite allomorph occurs. Vowel harmonic rules appear to apply. The morphophonological rule of *vocalis ante vocalem corripitur* holds for the preterite allomorph ⟨a ~ ε ~ i⟩, which is realised as zero before another vowel, viz. in first person and second person plural intransitive forms, and for the allomorphs ⟨ti ~ di⟩ in 1→2/3 forms, which are reduced to ⟨t ~ d⟩ before a vowel.

3. The 1⇌2 morpheme ⟨ne ~ ni ~ na⟩ marks a transitive relationship between a first and a second person actant. The form ⟨ni⟩ is a vowel harmonic form of the morpheme when the preceding vowel is /i/, /u/ or /i/. The form ⟨ne⟩ occurs when the preceding vowel is not a closed vowel, e.g. after /e/, /a/ or /o/. The 1⇌2 morpheme has a regular allomorph ⟨na⟩ in the negative.
4. The 1→3 morpheme ⟨unji ~ oŋe⟩ indexes a transitive relationship between a first person agent and a third person patient. The form ⟨unji⟩ is a vowel harmonic form of the morpheme when the preceding vowel is /i/, /u/ or /i/. In allegro speech, the segment /ŋ/ can become realised as nasality and the suffix consequently becomes totally vocalic in nature, i.e. /uĩ/. The form ⟨oŋe⟩ occurs when the preceding vowel is not a closed vowel, e.g. after /e/, /a/ or /o/. The 1→3 morpheme has a regular allomorph ⟨unj ~ oŋj⟩ in the negative. Glottal hiatus is observed between the ending and the stem vowel of the open stem verb ‘to give’, e.g. *piʔunji* ‘I/we shall give it to him/her/them’, but it is not observed in the other transitive open stem verb which occurs in the corpus, ‘to eat’, e.g. *zaŋe* ‘I/we (shall) eat [it]’.
5. The 2s→3 morpheme ⟨ni ~ ne⟩ expresses a transitive relationship between a second singular agent and a third person patient. The form ⟨ni⟩ is a vowel harmonic form of the morpheme when the preceding vowel is /i/, /u/ or /i/. The form ⟨ne⟩ occurs when the preceding vowel is not a closed vowel, e.g. after /e/, /a/ or /o/. The same morpheme indexes a second singular subject in intransitive verbs, but this analysis will be limited to the transitive agreement system.
6. The 3→1/2 morpheme ⟨Ti ~ Te ~ Ta⟩ expresses a transitive relationship between a third person agent and a first or second person patient. The same morpheme indexes a third person subject in non-preterite intransitive verbs.

The vowel harmonic allomorph ⟨Ti⟩ occurs after the vowels /i/, /u/ or /i/. The vowel harmonic allomorph ⟨Te⟩ occurs after non-closed vowels /e/, /a/ or /o/. The archiphoneme /T/ is /t/ after a plosive, /d/ after a nasal, /r/ after a vowel and /n/ in the preterite. The 3→1/2 morpheme has a regular allomorph ⟨ni ~ ne⟩ in the preterite and ⟨na⟩ in the negative preterite. The allomorphic pattern of the 3→1/2 morpheme within the preterite is reminiscent of the allomorphic pattern of the 1⇌2 morpheme ⟨ne ~ ni ~ na⟩.

7. The 2p→3 morpheme ⟨uri ~ ore⟩ indexes a transitive relationship between a second plural agent and a third person patient. The form ⟨uri⟩ is a vowel harmonic form of the morpheme when the preceding vowel is /i/, /u/ or /i/, but also, it appears, following the stem ⟨mal⟩ of the verb ⟨mal ~ mit⟩ ‘see’, where the stem vowel /a/ alternates with /i/, e.g. *maluri* ‘you (plural) see him/her/them’, *mitturi* ‘you (plural) saw him/her/them’. The form ⟨ore⟩ occurs when the preceding vowel is not a closed vowel, e.g. after /e/, /a/ or /o/. The 2p→3 morpheme has an allomorph ⟨ri ~ re⟩ immediately following the vowel of an open stem verb.

Although the focus of the present study is Gongduk biactantial agreement in the transitive verb, three morphemes restricted to the intransitive paradigm may be mentioned, i.e. the non-preterite first person subject morpheme ⟨yŋi ~ yŋ⟩, preterite first person subject morpheme ⟨yŋi ~ yŋ⟩ and the second plural subject morpheme ⟨-iri⟩.

#### 4. Tibeto-Burman historical grammar

Much has been written on verbal agreement morphology in Tibeto-Burman since James John Bauman’s 1975 doctoral dissertation. The literature list provided with this essay contains most of the work relevant to the reconstruction of a common Tibeto-Burman verbal agreement system since Bauman. Particularly Scott DeLancey’s work is of seminal importance for a proper appraisal of the discourse surrounding the antiquity of conjugational desinences in Tibeto-Burman. DeLancey gives a balanced treatment of the writings of several Tibeto-Burmanist scholars who have entertained historical linguistic misunderstandings in this regard, i.e. DeLancey (1989, 2009). All transitive agreement suffixes occur in a single suffixal slot in Gongduk. The Gongduk biactantial agreement desinences characteristically have complex meanings. In some morphological studies inflectional endings of this nature have been termed *portemanteau* morphemes. Yet the individual morphemes appear to be amenable to etymological analysis.

A reconstructed model of Proto-Tibeto-Burman verbal agreement morphology has been developed in the body of literature cited in the bibliography. The following comparative observations assume familiarity with the system of reconstructed agreement morphemes set out in earlier studies, esp. van Driem (1993a, 1999). The following correspondences appear to be in evidence:

1. The Gongduk negative prefix ⟨ma⟩ is the reflex of a widely attested Tibeto-Burman negative morpheme.
2. The various allomorphs of the Gongduk preterite allomorphs ⟨ti ~ t ~ di ~ d ~ sa ~ a ~ ε ~ ì⟩ represent a complex reflex of the Proto Tibeto-Burman preterite suffix \*⟨te⟩. This dental preterite suffix could also be reflected by the dentalisation of the nasal in the preterite first person subject morpheme ⟨ỵni ~ yṇ⟩ vs. the non-preterite first person subject morpheme ⟨ỵŋi ~ ỵŋ̣⟩, but the latter suggestion can only be made with reservations, for it would seem to violate a regularity observed in the element order of verbal desinences whereby reflexes of the Proto-Tibeto-Burman preterite suffix \*⟨te⟩ almost invariably precede agreement indices. Again, the analysis provided here is tentative, and a definitive analysis will have to await the more thorough account of the Gongduk verbal morphology which will form the central part of the Gongduk grammar.
3. The Proto-Tibeto-Burman third person patient morpheme \*⟨u⟩ is reflected in the Gongduk 1→3 portemanteau ⟨uŋi ~ oŋe⟩, when contrasted with the first person subject morphemes ⟨ỵŋi⟩ and ⟨ỵni⟩, and in the Gongduk 2p→3 ending ⟨uri ~ ore⟩, when contrasted with the second plural subject morpheme ⟨iri⟩.
4. An original Tibeto-Burman agreement morpheme, from which the Proto-Kiranti 1s→2 agreement morpheme \*⟨nya⟩ was also derived, appears to be reflected in the Gongduk 1⇌2 morpheme ⟨ne ~ ni ~ na⟩.
5. An extension of the meaning of an original Tibeto-Burman morpheme corresponding to the Proto-Kiranti second person morpheme \*⟨na⟩ appears to be reflected in the Gongduk 2s→3 morpheme ⟨ni ~ ne⟩ as well as in the preterite allomorphs ⟨ne ~ ni ~ na⟩ of the 3→1/2 morpheme ⟨Ti ~ Te ~ Ta⟩. Both Gongduk morphemes may have been derived by the reanalysis and coalescence of discrete morphological elements, one of which was the ultimate Proto-Tibeto-Burman source of the Proto-Kiranti second person agreement morpheme \*⟨na⟩.
6. The Gongduk 1→3 morpheme ⟨uŋi ~ uŋ̣ ~ oŋe ~ oŋ̣⟩ and the Gongduk non-preterite first person subject morpheme ⟨ỵŋi ~ ỵŋ̣⟩ reflect the Proto-Tibeto-Burman first person singular morpheme \*⟨ŋ̣⟩, which in Gongduk has been extended to include the first person plural. The same proto-morpheme is perhaps reflected in the Gongduk preterite first person subject morpheme ⟨ỵni ~ yṇ⟩, where the dentalisation of the nasal might

be the residue of a fused preterite proto-morpheme or some other lost morphological element.

7. A reflex of the Tibeto-Burman second person plural proto-morpheme \*⟨ni⟩ may be contained in the Gongduk second plural subject morpheme ⟨iri⟩ and the Gongduk 2p→3 portemanteau ⟨uri ~ ore⟩, both of which, like the other Gongduk biactantial agreement desinences, appear to have originated through the fusion of older morphological elements.

The current rudimentary state of the art in Tibeto-Burman historical phonology is illustrated by Matisoff's 2003 handbook (cf. Sagart 2006; Hill 2009). The work by Matisoff does, however, show progress as compared to Benedict's 1972 conspectus (cf. Miller 1974). Robert Shafer's earlier pioneering work also remains relevant today. In the late 1930s, when Shafer effectively came to run Alfred Kroeber's 'Sino-Tibetan Philology Project', funded at Berkeley through the the Works Progress Administration, he saw two things fundamentally wrong with 'Sino-Tibetan'. Shafer proposed to remove Kradai or Daic from the family, and to put Sinitic on par with other divisions in the family. The two operations would effectively have resulted in a return to Julius von Klaproth's original Tibeto-Burman model of the language phylum. However, Shafer was not permitted to subvert the then dominant paradigm.

As a framework for making progress in the field, the agnostic Fallen Leaves model proposed in 2001 provides a more suitable framework than a false tree. Fallen Leaves is no definitive phylogeny by definition. Although agnostic about higher-order subgrouping, the model does not deny that there *is* a family tree whose structure must be ascertained by historical linguistic methods. The continuing identification of subgroups presents a challenge to the current generation and to future generations of historical linguists to reconstruct the internal phylogeny of Tibeto-Burman on the basis of reliable data and regular sound laws, and not to accept false family trees that we inherit from our mentors or find in the literature without the support of conventional historical comparative evidence.

Some linguistic subgroups, such as Gongduk and Black Mountain Mönpa, were only discovered and identified as recently as the 1990s. As new subgrouping hypotheses are advanced, the Fallen Leaves model will continually undergo tweaking, presenting an ever clearer view. The rGyal-rongic subgroup was proposed and validated by Sun (2000). Black Mountain Mönpa was likewise identified as a distinct subgroup (van Driem 2011). Subgroups yet to be incorporated into future diagrams include Ersuish, for which evidence has been presented by Yu (2011), and a Naish subgroup has been proposed (Jacques & Michaud 2011).

Siangic is likewise possibly a new Tibeto-Burman subgroup, although Post and Blench (2011) interpret the evidence that they adduce as indicating either the substrate influence of an unknown non-Tibeto-Burman language or the

possibility that Koro and Milang themselves may represent a distinct language phylum, which has been partially relexified by Tibeto-Burman. Many scholars have voiced a similar claim to the effect that Sulung a.k.a. Puroik is not a Tibeto-Burman language. Yet all these languages exhibit a considerable amount of Tibeto-Burman lexicon. In view of the rudimentary state of the art, it might be prudent therefore to adopt a conservative stance for the time being.

The history of Indo-European is instructive in this regard. French does retain a smidgen of Celtic lexicon that can be viewed as the vestiges of a substrate language, whilst the French language itself is indisputably a Romance tongue. On the other hand, Albanian used to enjoy the status of a language isolate just like Basque until 1835. Today Albanian is recognised to be an Indo-European language because we know more about Indo-European historical grammar and phonology. By comparison, we still know little about Tibeto-Burman. Some even still believe in the Sino-Tibetan model, although the centre of phylogenetic diversity now clearly appears to lie squarely in the eastern Himalayas, and not between Sinitic and the highly diverse panoply of non-Sinitic subgroups.

Gongduk is also like Albanian, Puroik and Siangic. Some of the Gongduk vocabulary appears truly outlandish. Yet a good part of the lexicon is clearly Tibeto-Burman, and a portion of the seemingly unusual vocabulary does turn out to be Tibeto-Burman upon closer inspection. The biactantial verbal agreement system is also of unambiguous Tibeto-Burman provenance. The Tibeto-Burman analogues of Armenian, Hittite and Albanian appear all to be found within the eastern Himalayas, and Gongduk is one of them.

The present study does not permit more than speculatively positing the cognacy of agreement morphemes and discrete morphological elements which must have existed in the common proto-language. Some historical linguistic questions arising from the Gongduk material, unanswered now, should hopefully be answerable in the future when the Gongduk grammar has been completed, and a thorough account of the verbal system is made available.

On the basis of the analysis presented here, it can be concluded that the Gongduk verbal agreement system shows a high degree of fusion, whereby morphemes have arisen from the reanalysis and coalescence of discrete old morphological elements. Whereas superficially Gongduk verbal morphology is manifestly of the Kiranti type, much of the Gongduk lexicon is quite unlike Kiranti in nature. Indeed, Gongduk is no close relative of Kiranti, and the Gongduk homeland is geographically remote from the Kirant.

Biactantial verbal agreement desinences reflecting a common morphological system in the ancestral language are widely observed in most branches of the Tibeto-Burman family, from Dhimal to Jinghpaw. The widespread attestation of reflexes of this shared system of verbal agreement throughout the family, the degree

of fusion observed in many of the desinenes themselves, the manifest cognacy of the morphological elements and their relatively fixed sequential ordering in the affixal string appear to give the lie to those who contest that such verbal agreement systems, or at least some portions thereof, reflect Proto-Tibeto-Burman morphosyntax.

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