

A FIRST ACCOUNT ON WESTERN MEWAHANG CASE MORPHOLOGY

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This paper constitutes a first account on the case morphology of Western Mewahang (Kiranti, Trans-Himalayan; Sankhuwasabha district, eastern Nepal), presenting the individual case markers, illustrating their function and morpho-phonological properties and providing historical-comparative notes on the etymologies of selected case markers.

Keywords: Mewahang, case, Kiranti, morphology, syntax

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to give a first descriptive account on the case marking morphology of Mewahang, a Kiranti language (Upper Arun branch) whose native speaking area are the Sankhuwa and Arun valley in Sankhuwasabha district of eastern Nepal. This introduction will provide some general information about Mewahang (section 1.1) and about previous research on the topic of case marking in Mewahang (section 1.2). Some general notes on Mewahang case marking will be given in section 1.3. The main part, section 2, will describe the individual case markers of Western Mewahang and illustrate them with examples. Additionally, occasional comparative notes will be added, especially when Mewahang deviates from its Upper Arun sister languages, in order to show that (Western) Mewahang exhibits some similarities in case marking to Kulung (Khambu branch of Kiranti) which are due to borrowing and demonstrate the close contact between the two languages. Section 3 will give a short conclusion.

1.1 General information on Mewahang

Mewahang belongs to the Upper Arun subgroup of Kiranti, together with Lohorung and Yamphu (cf. van Driem 2001: 689–698). The Mewahang language has two main dialects, a western dialect spoken in the Sankhuwa valley (Silicong Municipality) in the villages Bala and Yamdang, and an eastern dialect spoken on the western

slopes of the Arun valley (Silicong and Makalu Municipalities) in the villages Mangtewa, Yaphu and Choyang. The two dialects are quite different, diverging in lexicon, phonology as well as morphology, including the case marking, from each other. The focus of this paper lies on Western Mewahang. The data were collected by the author during field work on site from 2017 to 2019 in the context of his Ph.D. Thesis. Some notes on Eastern Mewahang (data are, if not otherwise indicated, from the field notes of the author) will, however, be given in passing.

1.2 Previous work on Mewahang case marking

Mewahang constitutes a scantily described language. The only concise accounts on its grammar are Mewāhāñ Rāi (VS 2073 [2016/7]) and Banjade (2009). Some grammatical information can also be found in the introductory section of Mewāhāñg Rāi Yā-khommā (ed.) (VS 2062 [2005/6]) and in Ebert & Gaenzle (2008).

Ebert & Gaenzle (2008: 34) identify nine case markers for (Western) Mewahang, namely *-ʔa* “Ergative/Instrumental”, *-mi* “Genitive”, *-loŋ* “Comitative”, *-pi* “Locative”, *-tu* “Locative for higher altitude”, *-mu* “Locative for lower altitude”, *-yu* “Locative for even altitude”, *-paŋ* “Ablative” and *-lam* “Mediative”.

The information in Mewāhāñg Rāi Yā-khommā (ed.) (VS 2062 [2005/6]: iii–iv, x–xi, xviii), Banjade (2009: 16–17) and Mewāhāñ Rāi (VS 2073 [2016/7]: 48–50) on case marking pertain to the eastern dialect of Mewahang and will therefore not be discussed here.

1.3 Some general remarks

Case is defined for Mewahang as an inflectional category that defines the syntactic and semantic role of a nominal in the clause. The case markers are suffixes bound to the nominal host with which they morphophonologically interact. Syntactically, Mewahang shows ergative alignment in its case marking, so that the agent of a transitive verb will be marked with the ergative, whereas the single

argument of an intransitive verb and the patient of a transitive verb will both be treated the same, i.e. be unmarked. Since the distribution of ergative and unmarked constituents is determined by grammatical rather than pragmatic factors and the opposition ergative vs. unmarked can therefore be analysed as equipollent, the unmarked form could be said to constitute an absolutive case “marked” with a zero morpheme $-\emptyset$. However, in verbs with three arguments like *pitt-* “give”, both theme and recipient are unmarked for case. In this case, only argument indexation on the verb, which is with the recipient rather than with the theme, morphosyntactically differentiates the two arguments. With ditransitive verbs, it is therefore impossible to say which one, if any, of the two object arguments is “marked” with $-\emptyset$ and which one is unmarked. Consequently, the assumption of a zero absolutive morpheme, while being analytically justifiable to a certain extent, is superfluous since case marking is not the means by which speakers of Mewahang are able to retrieve the argument structure of a given verbal clause, but rather verb agreement and the communicative context.

Syntagmatically, the case markers follow the nominal non-singular suffix *-ci*, as can be seen in examples (6a), (9b), (19d) or (19f).

2. Case markers

The author’s research yielded eleven case categories for Western Mewahang, formally expressed by twelve suffixes, namely ergative/instrumental *-ʔa*, genitive *-mi*, comitative *-loŋ*, similaritive *-tok*, locative *-piʔ*, higher altitude locative *-(ʔ)tu*, same level altitude locative *-(ʔ)yu*, lower altitude locative *-(ʔ)mu*, ablative *-paŋ*, vocative *-ou*, *-ye* and frozen locative *-ta*. Three of these categories are not listed by Ebert & Gaenzle (2008: 34), namely the similaritive *-tok*, the vocative *-ou*, *-ye* and the frozen locative *-ta*. In contrast, the mediative *-lam* mentioned by Ebert & Gaenzle (2008) has so far not been attested in the data of the author.

2.1 Ergative/instrumental *-ʔa*

The ergative/instrumental *-ʔa* marks the agent of a transitive verb as well as the instrument or cause of an action. The ergative in Mewahang is

not pragmatically conditioned, but marks the agent argument of a transitive verb regardless of the grammatical or pragmatic context, viz. examples (1a)–(1c).

- (1) a. *baŋaʔa khaŋpu*
 baŋa-ʔa khaŋ-k-pu
 yFB-ERG watch-NPT-NMLS
 “Uncle is watching you.”
- b. *itsigaʔa ema ŋidatsuga*
 iciga-ʔa emak
 1DU.EXCL-ERG yesterday
 ŋit-a-c-u-ka
 cook-PST-DU-3.P-EXCL
 “The two of us cooked [rice] yesterday.”
- c. *munimaʔa ɛa tso:kuphou*
 munima-ʔa sa co:-k-u=phou
 cat-ERG meat eat.3P-NPT-3.P=EMPH
 “The cat will eat the meat!”

Examples (1a) and (1b) show that the ergative in Mewahang is not conditioned by a certain tense, whereas example (1c) shows that its occurrence is not restricted to human agents, but includes animals as well.

The ergative/instrumental *-ʔa* does not only encode the grammatical category of agent of a transitive verbs, but is additionally employed to code the instrument or cause of an action or event, viz. examples (2a)–(2d).

- (2) a. *tshameʔa lu:bukukpu*
 chameʔ-ʔa lu:p-uk-u-ŋ-pu
 needle-INS sew-NPT-3.P-1SG-NMLS
 “I am sewing it with a needle.”
- b. *dhuppu ɛoraʔa ka:ʔakpu rəitssha*
 dhuŋpa sora_{NEP}-ʔa
 big voice-INS
 kas-k-aŋ-pu rəiɕa_{NEP}
 shout-NPT-1SG-NMLS NK
 “I seem to be shouting with loud voice [on this recording]!”
- c. *bi:chuʔa luŋma tugukgo kuŋwa*
duŋma puŋu
 bi:chu-ʔa luŋma tuk-uk-go
 chili-INS heart hurt-NPT-COND
 kuŋwa duŋ-ma puŋ-uk
 water drink-INF become-NPT

“If the heart hurts because of [eating] chili, one has to drink water.”

d. *waliʔa baʔ tabam*

wali-ʔa bak tap-a-m
rain-INS pig wet-PST-NMLS

“Due to the rain, the pig got wet.”

In examples (2a) and (2b), *-ʔa* encodes the instrument of the action performed, whereas in (2c) and (2d), it marks the cause of the feeling or state expressed by the verb.

The ergative and instrumental functions of the morpheme *-ʔa* are morphosyntactically separable. First, the instrumental occurs in intransitive verbs as in examples (2b)–(2d) above, whereas ergative marking with an intransitive verb is rejected by the speakers. Second, the agreement of the verb is always with the agent of a transitive verb, but never with the instrument, so that if there is an unexpressed agent and an overtly expressed instrument, as in examples (2a) above and (3), the verb will nevertheless agree only with the covert agent and not with the overt instrument.

(3) *waʔa ŋaktshoŋmi say po:gutsi*

wa-ʔa ŋakchoŋ-mi saya
chicken-INS priest-GEN head.soul
po:k-a-u-ci
raise-PST-3.P-NSG

“They raised the head soul of the priest with a chicken.”

Example (3) cannot be read as “The chicken raised the head soul of the priest”, because the agreement suffix *-ci* indicates a (covert) non-singular agent. Similarly, in (2a), the needle is not the agent of the sewing, because the agreement ending *-ŋ* indicates a first person singular agent. If the needle were the agent, the verb would have the form *lu:b-uk-u* [sew-NPT-3.P], cf. example (1c).

Third, both functions of the morpheme *-ʔa* may occur in one and the same clause, as in example (4).

(4) *akaʔa kaphiʔmaʔa ɛuŋ biʔbukun*

aka-ʔa kaphiʔma-ʔa suŋ
1SG-ERG tongs-INS wood
bi:p-uk-u-ŋ
clamp-NPT-3P-1SG

“I’m clamping wood with the tongs.”

Consequently, the two functions of *-ʔa* are glossed differently in this paper. Although their clear etymological and semantic relationship and formal identity may speak against such a procedure, it is justified by their synchronically divergent morphosyntactic behaviour.

With nouns ending in a nasal or voiceless stop, the ergative/instrumental sometimes shows an extended form [aʔa], which seems to stand in free alternation with the more frequent form [ʔa], cf. *cunŋ* “coldness” > *cunŋ-aʔa* ~ *cunŋ-ʔa*. In the case of a final velar stop, the extended allomorph corresponds to a realisation of the stop as [g], whereas it is realised as glottal stop in syllable-final position, that is both unmarked for case as well as with the regular ergative/instrumental marker *-ʔa*, viz. *baʔ* “pig” > *bag-aʔa* ~ *baʔ-ʔa*, *huʔ* “hand” > *hug-aʔa* ~ *huʔ-ʔa*. In the case of a historical dental stop, which is more thoroughly glottalised in syllable-final position in present-day Mewahang than a bilabial or velar stop, this dental stop does not resurface in combination with the ergative/instrumental, i.e. *teʔ* (< **tet*) “clothes” > *teʔ-ʔa*. Further research has to evaluate whether the disyllabic form [aʔa] came about secondarily by vowel insertion to resolve consonant clusters or whether it constitutes the original form, which was later reduced to [ʔa].

The ergative/instrumental has an allomorph *-saʔa* with the third person pronoun *o:* and the deictic roots *ko-* “proximal”, *mo-* “distal” and *hako-* “focal”. Examples are given in (5a)–(5b).

(5) a. *ɔβɔ ŋkhal i:kubuu koeaʔ?*

ɔβɔ_{NEP} ŋkha-lo is-k-u-puu
well what-Q.CON say-NPT-3.P-NMLS
ko-saʔa
PROX-ERG

“So what will this [= the recorder] say?”

b. *oeaʔa ne tsam maŋidu*

o:-saʔa ne cam ma-ŋit-a-u
3SG-ERG also rice NEG-cook-PST-3.P
“He has not cooked rice neither.”

Since *-saʔa* is not the regular post-vocalic allomorph of the ergative/instrumental, viz. examples (1a), (2b), (2d), (3) or (4), the two morphemes *-ʔa* and *-saʔa* cannot reflect the same etymon, and *-saʔa* must be morphologically complex. One explanation could be that the sibilant [s], although

dropped in the meantime, was originally part of the third person pronoun and the deictic roots, i.e. **os-*, **kos-*, **mos-*, **hakos-*, and that with these consonant-final roots, the extended ergative/instrumental allomorph *-aʔa* (discussed above) was used. This is indirectly supported by the fact that the loss of /s/ in syllable-final position is a process actually observable in Mewahang, namely in verbs ending historically in /s/, cf. examples (2b), (5a), (7b), (12a), (16a), (17e), (23a), (23b), (26a).

However, external evidence suggests that the sibilant [s] is not part of the demonstratives, but rather of a suffix. In Eastern Mewahang, the ergative is marked by *-e*. Like Western Mewahang, the ergative shows an allomorph *-se* with the third person singular pronoun, i.e. *use ~ ose*. However, unlike in Western Mewahang, this allomorph is not restricted to third person singular, but also occurs with the pronouns for first and second person plural, *ekka* and *anin ~ anin*, yielding the forms *ekcase* and *anise*, respectively. This distribution of *-se* suggests that the element *-s-* is not part of a third person pronominal root or demonstrative, but rather (part of) an independent suffix. In other Kiranti languages, there is additional comparative evidence for an element *-sV-* appearing with (mainly third person) pronominal elements. In the Upper Arun languages Lohorung and Yamphu, the closest relatives of Mewahang, the third person pronoun root *kho:* has the ergative form *kho:se* in Lohorung (van Driem n.d.) and *kho:sæʔ* in Yamphu (Rutgers 1998: 91), the regular ergative morphemes being *-e* in Lohorung and *-(t)æʔ* in Yamphu. In the Khambu language Kulung, the ergative *-ʔa* has an allomorph *-sa* with “[d]emonstratives used as third person pronouns” (Tolsma 2006: 26). For the Southern Kiranti language Bantawa, Doornenbal (2009: 101–102) describes a “pronominal marker” *-sa ~ -so* which occurs between the pronominal element *o* “this”, *kho* “that”, *mo* “that”, *di* “what” and *ʃʰarak* “all” as well as quantifiers, and the ergative and genitive case markers *-ʔa* and *-ʔo*. Doornenbal (2009: 101) notes that the morpheme *-sa ~ -so* has no synchronic function and may be prosodically motivated. Tilung, another Kiranti language probably closest to Thulung and Koyi

(cf. Opgenort 2011, 2014, Gerber & Grollmann 2018: 117–118), shows an ergative suffix *-se ~ -so* (Opgenort 2014: 352). Conceivably, the traces of the non-functional element *-s(V)-* in Upper Arun, Khambu and Southern Kiranti represent frozen, lexicalised instances of an ergative marker that is still productive in Tilung. The shared aberrancy exhibited by Southern, Khambu and Upper Arun languages in the retention of the sibilant element is noteworthy, but since the marker itself constitutes a retention rather than an innovation, it is no valid argument for classifying these three Kiranti groups together. For Western Mewahang, these observations indicate that *-s(a)-* is historically an old suffixal element rather than part of the pronominals *o:*, *ko-* and *mo-*.

A final morphophonological observation concerning the ergative/instrumental marker *-ʔa* is that it assimilates the final vowel /i/ of the non-singular suffix *-ci* and the dual pronouns to [a], viz examples (6a)–(6b).

- (6) a. *wathakpatsa te bakutsi*
 wathakpa-ci-ʔa te ba-k-u-ci
 boy-NSG-ERG only weave-NPT-3.P-NSG
 “Only men weave [bamboo].”
- b. *tshe:yuknatsibu yinyeʔtsuna antsaʔa*
 che:tt-yuk-naci-pu
 call-NPT-1 → 2DU-NMLS
 yeŋ~yen-c-u-na anci-ʔa
 EMPH~hear-DU-3.P-NEG 2DU-ERG
 “The two of you just aren’t listening to me calling you!”

Etymologically, the ergative/instrumental marker of Western Mewahang does not seem to be related to the ergative markers of the other Upper Arun languages, Eastern Mewahang *-e*, Lohorung *-e* (van Driem n.d.) and Yamphu *-(t)æʔ* (Rutgers 1998: 58), but rather seems to be a borrowing of Kulung *-ʔa*, reflecting the close contact situation of Western Mewahang and Kulung in the Sankhuwa valley (cf. also section 2.3).

2.2 Genitive *-mi*

A relationship of possession or affiliation between two nouns is marked in Western Mewahang with the genitive *-mi* on the dependent of the phrase, as is shown in examples (7a)–(7b).

- (7) a. *akaŋmi khum*
 akaŋ-mi khum
 1SG.OBL-GEN house
 “My house.”
- b. *nammemi takro nuletabha?*
 namme?-mi takro
 sister.in.law-GEN head
 nus-lent-a-pha
 be.positive-AUX.INCHO-PST-Q.POL
 “Has sister-in-law’s head got better?”

In contrast to these genitive phrases, compounds without genitive marker are less specific and more generic in meaning, cf. examples (8a)–(8b).

- (8) a. *tshame? tshoywa*
 chame? choywa
 needle bird
 “Needle-bird [= a bird species].”
- b. *khamaŋ di: phobu pitukpu*
 khamaŋ di: phoba
 house.altar beer grandfather
 pitt-a-u-ŋ-pu
 give-PST-3.P-1SG-NMLS
 “I gave grandfather *Khamang Di*: [= a special kind of beer brewed only once a year].”

The genitive *-mi* has a phonotactically conditioned allomorph *-m* (cf. the allomorph *-ŋ* of the emphasis marker in section 2.4). This allomorph occurs when the genitive is attached to an open stem, as in examples (9a)–(9b). However, the genitive may also appear in its full form in this environment, as examples (9c) and (10a) show.

- (9) a. *nanam bə tugabha?*
 nana-mi bok tuk-a-pha
 eS-GEN belly hurt-PST-Q.POL
 “Does sister’s stomach hurt?”
- b. *ko dzəŋgəlpipuuu ku:pat̪sim kətha, ma:kəatsim kətha, ɛyælat̪sim kətha tsu:kpha?*
 ko jəŋgəlp̪i?puu ku:pa-ci-mi
 PROX forest-LOC-NMLS tiger-NSG-GEN
 kətha_{NEP} ma:k̪sa-ci-mi kətha_{NEP}
 story bear-NSG-GEN story
 syæla_{NEP}-ci-mi kətha_{NEP}
 jackal-NSG-GEN story
 cu:-k-pha
 exist-NPT-Q.POL

“Are there stories about the tigers, the bears, the jackals living in the forest?”

- c. *anami bo kaɕam*
 ana-mi bok kas-a-m
 2SG-GEN belly make.noise-PST-NMLS
 “Your stomach made noises.”

The genitive allomorph *-m* is homophonous with, but etymologically distinct from the nominaliser *-m*, e.g. examples (2d), (9c) or (10a), inter alia.

The noun marked with the genitive does not only appear as dependent of another noun, but may also be used on its own as head noun, as shown in examples (10a)–(10c).

- (10) a. *antsimi he?nam*
 anci-mi he?na-m
 2DU-GEN NEG.COP.EQTV-NMLS
 “[These] are not yours [= chicken].”
- b. *tshadepmam ko?o*
 chade:pma-mi ko?o
 female.last.born-GEN DEM.PROX
 “[The food] of *Kanchī* is this one.”
- c. *kəwə ŋkhamilo?*
 ko?o ŋkha-mi-lo
 DEM.PROX what-GEN-Q.CON
 “What is this made of?”

For certain genitive phrases, a simultaneous, additional marking of the head noun with the third person possessive prefix *om-* is attested, resulting in doubly marked genitive phrases, see examples (11a)–(11c).

- (11) a. *somnimam optsha pəhila watsekla:mu*
 somnima-mi om-cha pəhila_{NEP}
 Somnima-GEN 3SG.POSS-child before
 wacekla:ma
 Wacekla:ma
 “*Sominma*’s child, at first, [was] *Wacekla:ma*.”
- b. *wu:ruŋmu khaktsulukpam mbuŋhiphou*
 wuhuruŋma khakcuulukpa-mi
 Wuhuruŋma Khakcuulukpa-GEN
 om-buŋfi_{NEP}=phou
 3SG.POSS-wife=EMPH
 “*Wuhuruŋma* was *Khakcuulukpa*’s wife!”

- c. *bak[?]mi omma[?]a makei:ʔmu ietsibu nu*
 bak-mi om-ma-ʔa
 pig-GEN 3SG.POSS-mother-INS
 maksi:tt-ma is-u-ci-puu na
 worship-INF say-3.P-NSG-NMLS FOC
 “So what they said was: “let’s do the
Deva Pujā with the mother sow”.”

All instances of this structure attested so far have kinship terms as head nouns. Potentially, lexemes of this semantic class are more readily marked with possessive prefixes in genitive phrases because of their status as inalienably possessed nouns which cannot be used without reference to the person affiliated to them.

2.3 Comitative *-loŋ*

The suffix *-loŋ* is used to express accompaniment, as shown in examples (12a)–(12c).

- (12) a. *asaloŋ puʔluʔnabha?*
 asa-loŋ puʔklus-k-na-pha
 who-COM speak-NPT-2SG-Q.POL
 “Who are you speaking with?”
- b. *akaloŋ dabu*
 aka-loŋ dap-a
 1SG-COM come-PST
 “Come with me!”
- c. *koʔoloŋ koʔo toŋpu*
 koʔo-loŋ koʔo
 DEM.PROX-COM DEM.PROX
 toŋ-k-puu
 match-NPT-NMLS
 “This one is similar to this one.”

This comitative function of *-loŋ* can morphosyntactically be differentiated from another function of *-loŋ*, namely the coordination of two nominal arguments. In the case of the comitative function, the agreement expressed by the verb is only with the subject and does not involve the accompanying constituent, as can be seen in example (12b) or (12c). However, when *-loŋ* coordinates two nominal constituents, the verb will agree with both constituents, viz. examples (13a)–(13b).

- (13) a. *mamaloŋ nanaʔa ema ŋidatsu*
 mama-loŋ nana-ʔa emak
 mother-COM eS-ERG yesterday

ŋit-a-c-u
 cook-PST-DU-3.P
 “Yesterday, mother and elder sister
 cooked [lentils].”

- b. *opaloŋ omma te tsu:ksi*
 om-pa-loŋ om-ma
 3SG.POSS-father-COM 3SG.POSS-mother
 te cu:-k-ci
 only exist-NPT-DU
 “His father and his mother are on their
 own [said about the parents of a deceased
 person].”

In examples (13a) and (13b), the dual number marking on the verb shows that both coordinated arguments are indexed. Apart from this clear morphosyntactic evidence, the suffix *-loŋ* in example (13b) can also not be interpreted as a comitative from a semantic-pragmatic point of view, since the speaker was explicitly referring to both parents equally and therefore did not mean to say “only his mother is with his father”.

The semantic and morphosyntactic difference between the comitative and coordination functions of *-loŋ* seems to be triggered pragmatically and to depend on the context and communicative intention of the speaker. Besides the argument indexation on the verb, there is no syntactic difference between the two constructions, the suffix following the first constituent in both cases. There is also no indication that *-loŋ* is more or less bound to its host in one or the other construction type.

Interestingly, the comitative marker *-loŋ* can not only be added to unmarked nouns, but also to nouns already marked with another case suffix, as in example (14a), or even to conjugated, finite verb forms, as in example (14b).

- (14) a. *kholeailoŋ kholeapi obom, hoinΛ?*
 kholsa_{NEP}-ʔyu-loŋ kholsa_{NEP}-piʔ
 creek-LVL-COM creek-LOC
 obom hoin_{NEP}
 one.INANM be.EQTV.NEG.3SG
 “*kholsai* and *kholsapi* mean the same,
 don’t they?”
- b. *yuʔai ho, tsa:kumloŋ tsa:kupka*
 yuʔai_{NEP} ho_{NEP}
 one.INANM.EMPH be.EQTV.3SG

ca:-k-u-m-loŋ
eat-NPT-3.P-SAP.PL.A-COM
ca:-k-u-m-ka
eat-NPT-3.P-SAP.PL.A-EXCL

“*tsa:kum* and *tsa:kupka*, that’s the same.”

Historically, the comitative marker of Western Mewahang seems to be another case suffix borrowed from Kulung, since Kulung shows *-lo* for comitative (final [ŋ] was regularly lost in Kulung) (Tolsma 2006: 25), whereas the other Upper Arun languages show an etymologically distinct marker, i.e. Eastern (Yaphu) Mewahang *-nuŋ* (Banjade 2009: 17), Lohorung *-nu* (van Driem n.d.) and Yamphu *-nuŋ* ~ *-nu* (Rutgers 1998: 76-78). Note, however, that the Mangtewa dialect of Eastern Mewahang also shows *-loŋ*, despite being less influenced than Western Mewahang by Kulung in other domains like the verbal morphology.

2.4 Similaritive *-tok*

The similaritive suffix *-tok* expresses similarity or resemblance to something or somebody. The suffix is illustrated in examples (15a)–(15b).

- (15) a. *ikkatok^ʔ me?me:tsuke ne puɡu^ʔmipha?*
ikka-tok me?~me?cuk-e
1PL.EXCL-SIM EMPH~be.small-NMLS
ne puuk-uk-min-pha
also become-NPT-3PL-Q.POL
“Are there also people as tiny as we are?”
- b. *aka anatoŋ ɲe:ʔaŋ*
aka ana-tok-ŋa ɲe:tt-k-aŋ
1SG 2SG-SIM-EMPH look.like-NPT-1SG
“I look like you.”

Whereas the similaritive has a voiceless initial also with vowel-final nouns, with the deictic roots *ko-* “proximal”, *mo-* “distal” and *hako-* “focal” it shows a voiced allomorph *-dok*, viz. examples (16a)–(16b).

- (16) a. *tsanueabu kodoŋ puuk^ʔlu:ea tsutsama*
canus-a-pu ko-tok-ŋa
tasty-PST-NMLS PROX-SIM-EMPH
puuklus-sa?a cu:-ca:-ma
speak-ADVS.CTP exist-AUX.PROG-INF
“It is nice to be sitting like this, chatting.”

- b. *hag^ʔdo? muetsi niii*
hako-tok mus-a-u-ci ni_{NEP}
FOC-SIM do-PST-3.P-NSG EMPH
“This is how they did it!”

As examples (15b) and (16a) show, the similaritive marker is also often attested as *-toŋ*, which contains the emphatic marker *-ŋa*. Since the similaritive often inherently bears emphatic semantics by means of stressing the similarity between two objects or people, the frequent addition of *-ŋa* makes sense.

The form *-ŋ* is a regular postvocalic allomorph of *-ŋa* (cf. the genitive allomorph *-m* in section 2.2). Interestingly, this indicates that, combined with the marker *-ŋa*, the similaritive has the form *-to* and not *-tok*, which would yield unattested **-tokŋa*.

2.5 Locative *-pi?*

The suffix *-pi?* marks a location or a spatial goal as in examples (17a)–(17e).

- (17) a. *kuŋwapi tappala tomaŋ homam*
kuŋwa-pi? tap-pala tomaŋ hom-a-m
water-LOC wet-NMLS.P then swell-PST-NMLS
“Having been soaked in water, it swoll.”
- b. *aŋtakropi eu: ma?am*
aŋ-takro-pi? suuk
1SG.POSS-head-LOC louse
ma?-a
COP.NEG.EXST-PST
“There are no lice on my head.”
- c. *iein o: khuipi ma?a*
isin o: kuum-pi?
today 3SG HOUSE-LOC
ma?-a
COP.NEG.EXST-PST
“Today she was not at home.”
- d. *nana thapnapi kheda*
nana thapnam-pi? khet-a
eS forest-LOC go-PST
“Elder sister went to the forest.”
- e. *hako ultha mu:ma ne le:kubha toma,*
tshade pa?a? Nepalipi?
hako?o ultha_{NEP} mus-ma ne
DEM.FOC translation do-INF also
les-k-u-pha tomaŋ
know-NPT-3.P-Q.POL then

chade:pa-ʔa nepali-piʔ
 male.last.born-ERG Nepali-LOC
 “Will you also know how to translate
 this into Nepali, *Kanchā*?”

As examples (17a)–(17c) show, the location expressed by the suffix *-piʔ* is not restricted to the spatial notion of “inside”, but has a broader, more general meaning, including “on (top)” or “at”, cf. examples (17b) and (17c). Examples (17d)–(17e) show instances of *-piʔ* with allative meaning.

As the examples above show, the locative mostly appears as [pi] without audible glottal stop. However, there is internal as well as external evidence for the assumption of a final glottal stop. The internal evidence comes from the fact that a final glottal stop surfaces when the locative is followed by the nominaliser *-pu*, as shown in examples (18a)–(18b), where the glottal stop is phonologically assimilated to the following bilabial stop of the nominaliser.

- (18) a. *thapnappippu kotsuma*
 thapnam-piʔ-pu kocuma
 forest-LOC-NMLS dog
 “The dog [living] in the forest.”
- b. *bihepippu*
 bihe_{NEP}-piʔ-pu
 wedding-LOC-NMLS
 “The one [= pig] [shot] at weddings.”

Word-final glottal stops in Mewahang are generally hardly audible, which explains the lack of [ʔ] in examples (17a)–(17e). The assumption of *-piʔ* as the actual form for the locative is corroborated by external evidence, namely the cognate locative *-peʔ* in Yamphu (Rutgers 1998: 72), which also shows a final glottal stop.

2.6 Altitude locatives *-(ʔ)tu*, *-(ʔ)yu*, *-(ʔ)mu*

Western Mewahang exhibits three altitude locatives, namely *-(ʔ)tu* “higher”, *-(ʔ)mu* “lower” and *-(ʔ)yu* “same level”. These markers express a location or goal and additionally specify whether the place in question is relatively above, below or on approximately the same level as the speaker. At present, it is not entirely clear whether the glottal stop is part of these altitude locatives or whether it constitutes (part of) another morpheme (see below). The altitude markers can either be combined with the locative marker *-piʔ*, as in

examples (19a)–(19c), or are directly attached to a noun, as in examples (19d)–(19f). Semantically, the two constructions do not seem to exhibit considerable differences.

- (19) a. *dakpittu*
 dak-piʔ-tu
 loom-LOC-HGH
 “Up to the weaving loom.”
- b. *khuppiʔyu*
 khum-piʔ-yu
 house-LOC-LVL
 “To the house over there.”
- c. *khuppiʔmu*
 khum-piʔ-mu
 house-LOC-LOW
 “To the house down there.”
- d. *banatsittu kheʔdam ma:ma*
 baŋa-ci-ʔtu khet-ʔda-m ma:ma
 yFB-NSG-HGH go-PRF-NMLS mother
 “Mother has gone to the place of uncle’s family.”
- e. *macawaʔyu*
 macawa-ʔyu
 Macawa-LVL
 “Over there at *Macawa* [= name of water source].”
- f. *momatsiʔmu*
 moma-ci-ʔmu
 grandmother-NSG-LOW
 “Down at grandma’s people’s place.”

In examples (19a)–(19c), the glottal stop before the altitude locatives can be analysed as the coda of the locative *-piʔ*. However, in examples (19d)–(19f), the glottal stop before the altitude locatives is less readily allocable. Since the glottal stop is not part of the nouns or the non-singular suffix *-ci*, it must either belong to the altitude markers or constitute an independent intermediary morpheme. While a definitive account must await further analysis, the latter hypothesis is supported indirectly by the fact that it would result in an uniform morphotactic behaviour of the altitude markers, always following another suffix and never being directly added to the noun. Additionally, there is external evidence in favour of this analysis. For the close relative Yamphu, Rutgers (1998: 73) assumes that the altitude

markers (“vertical locatives” in his terminology) have the forms *-tu*, *-yu* and *-mu*. Furthermore, Yamphu has a possessive case marker *-æʔæ*, which can be combined with the altitude markers to form “possessive locatives” (Rutgers 1998: 73). In this combination, the possessive suffix is reduced to *-ʔ- ~ æʔ-* (Rutgers 1998: 73), and the resulting formatives *-(æ)ʔtu*, *-(æ)ʔyu* and *-(æ)ʔmu* look very similar to the Mewahang forms in examples (19d)–(19f). The glottal stop in these examples may therefore be cognate to the possessive suffix of Yamphu.

Etymologically, the altitude markers have cognates in other Kiranti languages, e.g. Khaling (cf. Jacques & Lahaussais 2014), Wambule (cf. Opgenort 2004: 177–182, 208–215), Limbu (cf. van Driem 1987: 534, 546), Khambu (cf. Tolsma 2006: 25, 30–31), Greater Yakkha (cf. Bickel 2001, Schackow 2015: 183–202) or Southern Kiranti (cf. Ebert 1999, Doornenbal 2009: 83, 85–86). Note, however, that the sound correspondences for the higher altitude marker are irregular. Since the Southern Kiranti languages show *d-*, Khaling shows *t-* and Limbu shows *th-*, we would expect Upper Arun **du* (**ʔu* in Yamphu) instead of *tu* (cf. Michailovsky 1994, van Driem 2001: 618–621, Gerber & Grollmann 2018: 117–119). The reason for this irregularity is not yet understood (see section 2.9 for another case).

2.7 Ablative *-paŋ*

The ablative *-paŋ* marks a spatial origin or source, as shown in examples (20a)–(20c). Note that for the ablative, unlike the locative, there is no specification of the relative altitude.

- (20) a. *aka suʔtshəkpaŋ heʔdetan*
 aka suəkchok-paŋ het-dent-a-ŋ
 1SG tree-ABL fall-AUX.MD-PST-1SG
 “I fell down from the tree.”
- b. *aka thapnaʔpaŋ endabaŋ*
 aka thapnam-paŋ ɛn-dab-a-ŋ
 1SG forest-ABL return-come-PST-1SG
 “I came back from the forest.”
- c. *oboppaŋ huʔ tsho:kwetatsihəu*
 obom-paŋ huk
 one.INANM-ABL hand
 cho:k-wett-a-ci-hou
 wash-AUX.TEL-PST-DU-IMP
 “Wash your hands out of one [vessel]!”

The suffix *-paŋ* is also used to express a source in a metaphoric sense, that is a reason or cause, as in example (21).

- (21) *umthaʔpapaŋ*
 om-thappa-paŋ
 3SG.POSS-husband-ABL
 “[she got angry] because of her husband.”

The ablative marker *-paŋ* has certain additional functions. First, it is used to mark the comparandum in a comparative construction, as in example (22).

- (22) *aka anapaŋ dhudhu bhe:ʔaŋ*
 aka ana-paŋ dhudhuək bhett-k-aŋ
 1SG 2SG-ABL much be.long-NPT-1SG
 “I am taller than you.”

Second, the ablative is used to mark the actant being affected or concerned in a specific way by the action, as in examples (23a)–(23b).

- (23) a. *akakpaŋ kuŋwa yokəe:pi khimma nu:nam*
 akaŋ-paŋ kuŋwa yokse:piʔ
 1SG.OBL-ABL water basket-LOC
 khin-ma nus-na-m
 carry-INF be.positive-NEG-NMLS
 “For me, it would not work to carry water in a *doko* / I cannot carry water in a *doko*.”
- b. *akapaŋ tsaʔi:kpu*
 akaŋ-paŋ caʔis-k-puu
 1SG.OBL-ABL not.tasty-NPT-NMLS
 “For me, it’s not tasty / I don’t like it.”

Third, the ablative marks the medium of communication, similar to the Nepali ablative marker *-bāta*, viz. examples (24a)–(24b).

- (24) a. *mewahakpaŋ ieuho*
 mewahaŋ-paŋ is-a-u-hou
 Mewahang-ABL say-PST-3.P-IMP
 “Say it in Mewahang!”
- b. *kodoʔ paru baʔ aʔpmueuŋ dhənu, ikim puəkpaŋ?*
 ko-tok para_{NEP} bak
 PROX-SIM way pig
 ap-ma-suŋ dhənu_{NEP}
 shoot-INF-NMLS.INS bow
 ikin-mi puək-paŋ
 1PL.INCL-GEN language-ABL

“A bow to shoot pigs like that, [what is it called] in our language?”

2.8 Vocative

Mewahang shows different strategies to mark that a person is directly addressed. One strategy with vowel-final nouns consists in using the two markers *-ou* and *-ye* which look suspiciously similar to the imperative indices *-hou* and *-ye* (20c, 24a, 25a), viz. examples (25a)–(25c). Note that the far more frequent *-ou* fuses with the stem-final vowel and is often realised as [o] and expressively stressed and lengthened, viz. example (25b). The semantic difference between the two markers is not yet understood.

- (25) a. *"hu?u!" iee, ne:tsha?a, "hu?u phobou!"*
iee
 hu?u is-a-u-ye ne:cha-?a hu?u
 yes say-PST-3.P-IMP ySb-ERG yes
 phoba-ou is-a-u-ye
 grandfather-VOC say-PST-3.P-IMP
 “Say “yes”, brother, say “yes,
 grandfather!””
- b. *tshade pooo, iei nkhal tso:buu?*
 chade:pa-ou isin nkha-lo
 male.last.born-VOC today what-Q.CON
 ca:-a-u-puu
 eat-PST-3.P-NMLS
 “*Kanchā*, what did you eat today?”
- c. *tshadepmaye*
 chade:pma-ye
 female.last.born-VOC
 “O *Kanchī*!”

Additionally, for transitive verbs, the addressed person may bear the ergative suffix *-?a* (cf. section 2.1) instead of any of the vocative suffixes, as shown in examples (17e) and (25a) above.

However, the addressee may also not be marked with any specific vocative morphology, i.e. examples (26a)–(26b), parallel to the imperative markers, which may also be omitted, viz. example (12b).

- (26) a. *lə, i:kho bu·bu*
 lə_{NEP} is-kha-a-u bu:bu
 so say-AUX.OCC-PST-3.P eB
 “Come on, brother, sing!”

- b. *amhu? tugabha, tshade:paa?*
 am-huk tuk-a-pha
 2SG.POSS-hand hurt-PST-Q.POL
 chade:pa
 male.last.born
 “Does your hand hurt, *Kanchā*?”

Finally, there are specific vocative variants of certain kinship terms, namely *ma:ma* “mother” > *ama* and *pa:pa* “father” > *apa*, which could be analysed as containing a synchronically unproductive vocative prefix *a-*. Another possible trace of an earlier vocative strategy are bisyllabic, repetitive kinship terms like *bu:bu* “elder brother”, *na:na* “elder sister”, *ma:ma* “mother” or *pa:pa* “father”. Those are monosyllabic in combination with possessive prefixes, i.e. *aŋ-bu* “my elder brother”, *aŋ-na* “my elder sister”, *om-ma* “her mother”, *ap-pa* “your father”, which indicates that the bisyllabic forms are secondary and constitute reduplicated derivations originally used affectionately or as vocatives.

2.9 Frozen locative *-ta*

The marker *-ta* occurs in a small number of lexicalised instances, all of them denoting a certain time of the day, i.e. *letta* “day-time, during the day”, *setta* “night-time, at night”, *yuta?a* “evening, in the evening”.

Whereas the form *letta* “day-time, during the day” is transparently derived from *len* “day” (with oralisation of the final dental nasal), the form *setta* “night-time, at night” has no *ta*-less source form **sen* in Mewahang. However, the morphological complexity of *setta* and, thus, an earlier form **sen-* can be inferred from external evidence, as Yamphu shows the form *senda* for “night” (Rutgers 1998: 575) and Lohorung has *sensen* “all night” (van Driem n.d.). Likewise, for the form *yuta?a*, there is no internal source form **yu*, but again the other Upper Arun languages exhibit cognates, i.e. Yamphu *yuda* (Rutgers 1998: 596) and Lohorung *yuta* (van Driem n.d.), respectively. This allows for the isolation of *-ta* as a synchronically unproductive suffix which is tentatively assigned a locative function here.

A piece of evidence for this analysis is that other Kiranti languages, namely Southern Kiranti and Thulung, exhibit a productive locative with dental initial, namely Bantawa *-da*, Camling *-da* and

Thulung *-da* ~ *-ra* (cf. Doornenbal 2009: 83, Ebert 1999: 106, Lahaussais 2002: 78–83). However, a problem to the assumption of cognacy here is that, as with the high altitude marker *-tu* (see section 2.6), the sound correspondences do not match, as we would expect Upper Arun to show **-da* (**-ʔa* in the case of Yamphu). The oralisation in the word *letta* and *setta* in Mewahang, however, proves that the suffix has the shape *-ta* and not *-da* in Mewahang, as only /t/, but not /d/, causes oralisation of preceding nasals. Therefore, the cognacy of the Upper Arun suffix *-ta* to the productive locatives in Southern Kiranti and Thulung remains speculative until the irregular sound correspondence is accounted for in future research.

3 Conclusion

This paper presented a first analytical account on case marking morphology in Western Mewahang (Upper Arun branch of Kiranti), identified twelve case suffixes, described their function and morphophonology and provided examples for each marker. Furthermore, this paper provided first empirical evidence for the conjecture that the close sociocultural interaction between the Mewahang and Kulung in the Sankhuwa valley (cf. Gaenszle 2000) may have led to linguistic convergence by showing that Western Mewahang borrowed certain case markers from Kulung, replacing inherited suffixes which have been retained in its Upper Arun sister languages Eastern Mewahang, Lohorung and Yamphu.

Another formative in Western Mewahang which might constitute a case marker is *-halma*, which marks a source like *-pan*, but with a stronger temporal connotation, comparable to Nepali *-dekhi*. However, since this marker, in contrast to the case markers discussed in this paper, is bisyllabic and has a non-native phonology (syllable-final [l] does not occur elsewhere in Western Mewahang), it seems to be of more recent date and to belong to a younger layer of morphology. Future research will have to account for this morpheme as well as for the open questions raised in this paper.

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Abbreviations

The lexical abbreviations *eS*, *eB*, *yFB* and *ySb* stand for the kinship terms “elder sister”, “elder brother”, “father’s younger brother” and “younger sibling”. Ad hoc-loans from the lingua franca Nepali, transcribed phonetically as pronounced by the Mewahang, are indicated by the subscript abbreviation NEP in the second line of the examples. Grammatical Abbreviations follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules, with the following addenda:

ADVS: adverbialiser	NSG: non-singular
SAP: speech act participant	OCC: occasional
CTP: cotemporal	POL: polarity
EMPH: emphatic	SIM: similaritive
EQTV: equative	TEL: telic
EXST: existential	NPT: non-past
HGH: higher altitude	INANM: inanimate
LOW: lower altitude	INCHO: inchoative
LVL: same level altitude	NK: new knowledge
MD: movement downwards	CON: content

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