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YOGENDRA P YADAVA

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WARREN W GLOVER

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Verb Agreement in Classical Newar and Modern Newar Dialects

Tej R. Kansakar
Tribhuvan University
Kathmandu, Nepal

E-mail: tejk@vishnu.csl.com.np

1. Classical Newar and Kathmandu Newar Verbal Morphology

The Newar language is now well known as a Tibeto-Burman language of the Kathmandu Valley, and a number of native and foreign linguists and scholars have contributed to our knowledge of the structural, historical and socio-cultural aspects of the language through research and publications. However, there has not been any in-depth study on the diachronic phonology or morphology of Newar nor any consistent research on the large number of old Newar texts that are available in archives and private collections. The Danish scholar Hans Jørgensen's pioneer studies of the lexicon and grammar of Classical Newar, namely Jørgensen (1936, 1941), are based primarily on the late 17th and 18th century narrative texts. The earliest written text is a palm-leaf document which dates back to the early 12th century (Malla 1990:15-26), and the other scholars who have shed light on some of the vexing problems in the diachronic study of Classical Newar verb system include Kölver and Kölver (1978), Genetti (1990), Tamot (1990), Hargreaves and Shakya (1991), Van Driem (1993a) and Kansakar (1992, 1996).

Based on what is known of the Classical Newar verbal morphology, Van Driem (1993a:33) argues that although Classical Newar retains some traces of the old agreement system presently reflected in the Dolakha Newar dialect of eastern Nepal, "the rudiments of a conjunct-disjunct system characteristic of modern Kathmandu Newar were fully in place in Classical Newar". He also hypothesizes that the Dolakha Newar, which is more similar to Kiranti than to the current system in Kathmandu, is reconstructable for Proto-Newar. Genetti (1990:128-29) however argues against any firm hypothesis "since more

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extensive data on other Newari dialects and more historical materials are really necessary to decide conclusively between hypotheses". She also points out that although "Kiranti morphology is much more complex than the simple system of subject agreement in Dolakha ... the presence of any agreement in Newari still suggests a possible old genetic link to this family." DeLancey (1992) also views the conjunct-disjunct system as a secondary development within the context of its historical changes in the Bodic branch of Tibeto-Burman. This issue is one of the most important single questions in Newar linguistic studies today and yet has remained controversial and unsolved.

If this problem were to be settled to the satisfaction of all linguists working in the field, we would have taken a significant step towards resolving another related problem of determining a less ambiguous place for Newar within the genetic classification of Tibeto-Burman. Newar has traditionally occupied a tentative position between the Bodish and East Himalayan sections of the Bodic Division. In an earlier paper (Kansakar 1981) I had pointed out that Newar separated from the "Tibetan" group and the basically pronominalized Himalayan languages at an early period of its history, and it is difficult or at least arbitrary to reconstruct a Proto-system of verb agreement for Newar without adequate evidence. Shakya (1990) also advocates further research on the Newar dialects to allow us to locate the language firmly in its historical and geographical context.

In this article, I discuss materials from Classical Newar in relation to Dolakha and modern Newar dialects to show their historical connections. I also refer to the findings of Genetti, the contribution of Van Driem and native Newar scholars to determine whether there has been a certain trend in development from Dolakha through the earlier and later phases of Classical Newar to the present system in Kathmandu. There is historical evidence to show that Dolakha Newar dates back to over a thousand years, but we have no evidence whatsoever of how the language may have evolved over this long period of isolation from Kathmandu. Genetti (1990:185-93) provides several arguments in favour of reconstructing a Dolakha-type of verbal agreement for Proto-Newar. Her first argument is the presence of a complex agreement system in Dolakha to include not only the indicative, but also the imperative and optative forms. Her second argument is that Classical Newar data as presented by Jørgensen (1941) retain traces of an old agreement system, e.g. the finite past marker <-o> was used with the first and second person; <-am> is normally used with the third person; and <-a> with any person following the quotative

speech marker *dhakam*. Her third argument rules out any pronominal source for flexional affixes used in Dolakha.

In Table 1 the finite agreement system as found in the Classical Newar texts dated between 1114 AD to ca 1450 AD provides more complete historical evidence on the development of the older verbal morphology. The texts examined are all authentically dated and therefore form a part of attested data in a historical perspective. Table 1 represents data organized in terms of the conjunct-disjunct (c/d) pattern and verb class distinctions as originally formulated by Jørgensen (1941). According to his classification, the various verb classes are defined by their stem-final consonants, while the variations in the flexional suffixes indicate the evolution in the c/d system of verb marking.

Verb Class	Non-Past Conjunct (NPC)	Non-Past Disjunct (NPD)
I	j > ñ > ny > n -a	j > y -u > -a
II	c > y -a > -e	y -u
III	y -a > -e ~ -au	l > y -u > -au
IV	c > l > y -e > -a	p > b -u
	Past Conjunct (PC)	Past Disjunct (PD)
I	ñ -a	w > gw > n -u > -o > -a
II	tān > y -a	t > w > k -u > -a > -a
III	rān > y -a	kw ~ w > r > l -o > -a > -u
IV	l > y -a	lw ~ l > tw -a ~ > -u

Table 1: Finite verb agreement morphemes in Classical Newar (1114 – 1450 AD)

We notice that both the stem-final consonants and the suffixes have undergone radical changes over a period of some 350 years. The c/d marking for the various verb classes under NPC show a clear development from <-a> to <-e> with <-au> as a variation for Class three verbs. The NPD verbs have <-a> and <-u> markings where the latter is found more frequently in the earlier manuscripts. The PC paradigm is the most consistent in the conjunct marking <-a> that is still reflected in present-day Kathmandu. The PD paradigm represents a rather different development in the marking system from <-u> to <-o> or <-a> and in later texts to <-a> with variations in nasal vowels. A further point of

interest in the PD column is the presence of labial glide <-w> as part of the final consonant which reflects the on-going controversy in modern Kathmandu on the status of <-gw-a vs -gw-o. It has for example been claimed that the Devanagari spellings with <wa-> best reflect both the pronunciation and spelling convention in the language. I have however taken the view that sequences such as <kwa-, gwa-, nwa-, lwa-> etc do not have phonemic status but are phonetic realizations of /ko-, go-, no-, lo-/. If we then accept <o> as the underlying vowel, it is logical to assign it a historically earlier status. We can thus safely reject <-a> as a finite marker when preceded by a labial glide. The PD opposition <-a, -o, -u> is quite similar to Jørgensen's A I forms <-a, -am, -o> but their grammatical functions are not identical as can be seen in Table 2. When we compare this system with the finite markings observed by Jørgensen (1941) in his study of the 17th and 18th century Classical Newar texts, we obtain the following situation (Table 2):

Classical Newar (12-15th century)		Jørgensen (1941:47-56)
<-u, -o, -a, -a>	Finite PD	<-am, -a, -o>
<-a, -e, -au>	NPC	<-i, -iwo, -ino>
<-u, -a, -au>	NPD	<-i, -i:>
<-a>	PC	<-a>

Table 2: Earlier and Later Classical Newar finite morphemes.

The development of flexional morphemes is syntactically significant specially in the finite verb. As discussed above, Jørgensen recognized the morph <-am> as a third person marker, the morph <-o> was associated with the first and second, while <-a> was used with any person in direct speech. The attestation of <-u> as a finite marker in the early texts between the 12th and 15th centuries is significant as this has been identified by DeLancey (1989:381) as a direction marker at the Proto-TB level, and as a third person patient marker at the Proto-TB and Proto-Kiranti levels by Van Driem (1991, 1994). The earlier data however indicate that the use of the subject as agent or patient overrode the person agreement as attested in the following examples:

- (1) *bhvanta Jayasingharam Mahatha-sa thava kiäja-to tāñ-a*
 Banepa Jayasinghram officer-GEN his brother-DAT die-3PD
 The younger brother of officer Jayasinghram from Banepa died.

- (2) *Sri Anantamalla-deva-sa doya haw-o*
 Sri Anantamalla-HON-AGT doyas bring-3PD
 Sri Anantamalla brought the doyas (to attack).
- (3) *tipura manigalahatha-ra thakula-to tel-o*
 Tripura Manigalaattack-by Thakura-AGT suppress-3PD
 Thakura attacked and suppressed both Tripura and Manigala (lit = by attacking).

In example (1) the subject is a third person patient which normally takes <-a> as a finite past verb such as *tāṇ-a* 'died'. It may be noted that the patient *kijā-to* is a dative subject with the literal meaning of 'death came to the brother' rather than 'the brother died'. It is also possible that the suffix <-to> or <-tva> is commonly used in Classical Newar texts as a honorific marker for deities or high ranking persons. In the examples (2) and (3) the subjects are third person agentives followed by control verbs *haw-o* and *tel-o*. The finite past marker <-o> is clearly not associated with the first and second person as suggested by Jørgensen (1941:60) where he pointed out that "<-o> which on the whole is infrequently found, mostly occurs after the first and second persons in the older MSS, in the younger MSS its use with the third person becomes more frequent". This remark seems to indicate possibilities of historical change based on frequency of attestation in earlier and later manuscripts. This however should not be concluded as evidence that there might have been an early distinction at least between the first and second person as opposed to the third, and this distinction was later lost. If this is so, one would expect to find clearer person marking differentiation in the manuscripts that are much earlier than those analysed by Jørgensen. This has not been the case with the data I have examined and thus far I have not found enough evidence to substantiate Jørgensen's claim. There are however substantial data in the earlier manuscripts to show the correctness of his observation that the morph <-am> is a sentence-final suffix usually associated with the third person, and the finite ending <-a> can be used for both the second and third persons, especially when followed by the quotative marker *-dhakam* in direct speech. The following examples however show that <-am> may not be a finite past morpheme in all cases as it can also be attached to non-finite participial forms.

- (4) *liva liva bvāṇ-am van-āva*
 follow follow run-PTP go-PTP
 Following (him) by running.

- (5) *rāja bāla-khas babu-nam vān-am tāth-u*
 king child-time father-AGT abandon-PTP leave-PD
 The king was abandoned by his father while still a child.

In example (4) the expected perfective marker <-am> does not occur in a sentence-final position and instead is attached to a non-finite verb *bvain-* with a participial meaning. In example (5) the verb *van-am* is also nonfinite as it does not express perfective action but rather denotes what Jørgensen (62) refers to as “a relative participle used predicatively with a past meaning”. Jørgensen did not make a clear distinction between past tense and perfective action, and hence the suffix <-am> is ambiguous as it does not function purely as a perfective marker in earlier texts similar to *-juro* or *-jurom* attested very frequently in later manuscripts.

We thus need to view the comparative data given above as development in morphological categories and new grammatical functions. The earlier and later Classical Newar data do not provide convincing evidence of first, second and third person agreement within the c/d system that existed during these periods. Given our present knowledge of Classical Newar materials it seems more likely that the system is based more on volitionality of the subject in terms of agent/patient relation, and the transitivity (i.e. the control/non-control) of verbs are the underlying roots of the morphological distinctions in Kathmandu Newar. In an earlier paper (Kansakar, forthcoming) I had referred to a lack of clear distinctions between Newar nouns/noun phrases and verb/verb phrases which result in a wide-spread use of so-called ‘verbal nouns’ in the language. The verb system itself is governed by aspect rather than tense distinctions in past, present and future time. The crucial aspect of a Newar verb is related more to perfective or imperfective action/event rather than its placement at a point in time, inception of action or duration in time like the grammatical functions of the preterite verb in Limbu. The simplicity of the c/d pattern as an evidential system seems to be clearly reflected in the texts so far examined although it has been suggested that traces of a verb agreement system can be discovered in the 17th and 18th century manuscripts studied by Jørgensen. The morphological behaviour of some finite Classical Newar verbs within this framework can be illustrated as follows:

- (6) *ji-na thava kinja-to dhāl-a dhun-o*
 1s-AGT own brother-DAT say-PST have-PD
 I have told my younger brother.

- (7) *ji-panis-ta chisapola-sã bila-o / om*
 1s-PLU-DAT 2s(HON)-AGT give-PD
 You gave it to us.
- (8) *khadga-n pãr-avã moca-kar-am*
 sword-INST cut-PTP kill-CAUS-PD
 (The king) smote him with his sword and killed him.
- (9) *ji-n thathi-pani chot-a chãe*
 1s-AGT such-people send-PD why
 Why did I send such people away ?
- (10) *chiskar-pani-sen chu kha hlãñ-ao di-yã*
 2 (HON)-PLU-AGT what matter speak-PTP be(HON)-PC
 What matter do you speak / are you speaking ?

Example (6) is a conjunct construction with the finite past suffix <-o> in the final auxiliary, while (7) has a second person subject-actor which has the verb marked with <-o / -om>. This confirms Jørgensen's observation referred to earlier that the suffix <-o / -om> is associated with the first or second person in the earlier manuscripts but later became more frequent with the third person. This view clearly indicates a development from <-o / -om> to <-a / -am> which most probably functioned as allomorphs in the earlier Classical Newar period (see Table 1). The third person actor-subject in (8) is marked with the PD <-am> in the sentence-final verb which expresses perfective action, but as pointed out in example (4) and (5) this suffix may also be used as a participial marker in non-final positions. Commenting on the frequency in the use of <-am>, Jørgensen wrote that “-am is the usual form at the end of a sentence; it is but rarely found after the 1st and 2nd persons”. Examples (9) and (10) are direct quote question forms where the first person actor in (9) is marked with a PD suffix <-a> and in example (10) the second person actor is optionally marked with a participial suffix <aio> followed by a honorific PC auxiliary *di-yã*.

Two points are worth noting with regard to examples (6-10). Firstly, the c/d verb marking system seems to have been well established from the time of the earliest historical and religious manuscripts to the technical and popular narrative texts of the later period. Jørgensen's observations may hint at the possible existence of a verb agreement system in Classical Newar but these are based rather loosely on tendencies and shifting

frequency of usage in the later 17th and 18th century texts. The earlier materials from the early 12th century onwards do not seem to contain any recognizable verb agreement. The person and number agreement as it presently exists in Dolakha therefore is hardly reflected in the Classical Newar verbal morphology. Secondly, does the ergative case marking of the volitional actor or agent relate to the transitivity of verbs in Classical Newar? In Newar, like in Tibetan, the distribution of ergative case apply to simple and complex clauses with volitional actors. Examples (6-10) all have ergative marking on the first, second and third person subjects. The verbs show c/d distinction but do not differ in transitivity. In modern Newar and Tibetan, however, the verb encodes a contrast in volition and non-volition for first person but not for non-first persons, as can be seen in (11) for Lhasa Tibetan (DeLancey 1987:57) and (12) for Kathmandu Newar.

- (11) a. *na-a dkaryol bcag-pa-yin*
 1s-ERG cup break-PERF/VOL
 I broke the cup (deliberately).
- b. *na-s dkaryol bcag-soñ*
 1s-ERG cup break-PERF/NONVOL
 I broke the cup. (inadvertently)
- c. *kho-s dkaryol bcag-soñ*
 3s-ERG cup break-PC
 He broke the cup.
- (12) a. *ji-n kayo tachyā-nā.*
 1s-ERG cup break-PC
 I broke the cup. (deliberately)
- b. *ji-n kayo tachyā-ta*
 1s-ERG cup break-PD
 I broke the cup. (accidentally)
- c. *wa-n kayo tachyā-ta*
 3s-ERG cup break-PD
 He broke the cup.

The Tibetan verb further reflects differences in transitivity in relation to the volitionality of the subject, as can be seen in the following examples (DeLancey 1987:64):

(13) a. *na-s deb der bzag-pa-yin*
 1s-ERG book there put-PERF/VOL
 I put the book there.

b. *na-s deb brlags-son*
 1s-ERG book lose-PERF
 I lost the book.

c. *khø-s deb der bzag-son*
 3s-ERG book there put-PERF
 He put the book there.

The first person subjects in (13a) and (13b) are both volitional but the markings on the two verbs differ in transitivity. Since this distinction is not applicable to Newar, we must thereby conclude that ergativity in Classical Newar is not syntactically significant as it relates simply to the volitionality of the subject which is not adequately reflected in the verb marking. Modern Newar however developed other discourse strategies such as intentional and involuntary initiation of action illustrated in (12) which are not attested in the Classical Newar texts so far examined. Other syntactic devices such as verb serialization and complex clause chaining may also be of recent origin as such constructions are quite rare in the Classical Newar corpus of the earlier period. The central fact in Newar syntax is based on what many scholars (Hale and Watters 1973; Kölver and Kölver 1975; Malla 1985; Nagano 1986) have characterized Newar as an 'actor-undergoer' language rather than a 'subject-object' language where verb agreement is with the actor or agent and not the subject. The actor or agent occupies a dominant role in the hierarchy of animacy, viewpoint and attention flow which DeLancey (1980) refers to as 'deictic reference' in the organization of the Tibeto-Burman verb.

2. Dolakha Newar and modern Newar dialects

There is extensive lexical similarity in root morphemes among all Newar dialects, including Kathmandu and Dolakha. The similarity is very high among the Kathmandu

Valley and the outlying dialects which share the c/d system. The major differences between Kathmandu and Dolakha are in the area of morpho-syntactic features, especially in the person and number agreement morphology of Dolakha. When dialect boundaries are distinguished by grammatical differences, we expect to obtain problems of intelligibility. A Kathmandu speaker who encounters Dolakha speech for the first time will find that he can comprehend less than 40 % of what is said. This is remarkably low in intelligibility level – a situation that arises primarily from a very different morphological and syntactic arrangements in Dolakha. Watters (1993:94) in analysing the dialect differences between Takale and Gamale Kham, made this interesting observation:

“Each dialect, from the time of its separation from the parent stock, has been free to develop, innovate, and branch off in its own unique way, but always within the bounds of its genetic makeup – a predefined set of common mega-traits inherited from the parent language.”

This view implies that although there are ‘points of divergence’ and ‘points of compatibility’ across dialects, some points of ‘fundamental identity’ are bound to exist in historically related dialects. The nature of relationship between dialects and the processes of change that may have taken place in individual dialects, however, are subject to debate and controversies. Van Driem (1993a:25) for example hypothesises that “the conjunct/disjunct conjugation of Kathmandu Newar apparently derives from the Classical Newar system, whereas the Classical Newar system derives from a more complete verbal agreement system more faithfully reflected in the Dolakha verb”. This view assumes that Dolakha is a conservative dialect that has retained the old agreement system now lost completely in Kathmandu and most other modern dialects of the language. It has also been claimed that the Classical Newar materials discussed by Jørgensen (1941) retain traces of an agreement system presumably derived from Dolakha with possible correlations in pronominal morphology as well (e.g. Kathmandu first person singular pronoun *ji* is comparable to first person singular suffix *-gi* in Dolakha; Kathmandu third person plural pronoun *i-(pī:)* and the third person plural suffix *-hin* in Dolakha). Van Driem (1993) has therefore argued in favour of reconstructing the verbal agreement of Dolakha for Proto-Newar. This conclusion seems to presuppose that Dolakha has retained the earliest form of the language since the Lichhavi period (ca 300 – 879 AD) when the Newars of Kathmandu Valley were reported to have first migrated to the Dolakha district.

We do not however have any evidence of historical changes that Dolakha Newar may have undergone during the past millennium and what was the original form of the Newar verb. If we are to assume that the Dolakha type of agreement evolved into a c/d system in Kathmandu and related dialects, we would first need to explain the development in terms of diachronic data following the separation of the two groups of speakers, and secondly, what time depth can be deduced for the loss of the agreement system in Kathmandu. On the first question, it is fairly certain that Dolakha has been an island surrounded by Kiranti speakers for over a thousand years and we cannot therefore rule out completely the area pressures arising over centuries of close proximity. This raises the question of whether its existing verb agreement system is a remnant of genetic inheritance or the outcome of language contact situation. Van Driem (1993c:50) had however stated that "the wholesale borrowing of an elaborate flexional system such as verbal conjugation is unattested... and conjugational systems do not spread by diffusion". This of course implies that a language tends to retain aspects of its grammar such as the conjugational system while the phonological and lexical components can be borrowed. This view does not however explain why and how the Dolakha verb remained fossilized over the centuries while Kathmandu underwent drastic changes to the extent of losing its original conjugational morphology.

The evolution from a Dolakha type of agreement to a c/d system of Kathmandu has been recognized as a later development which DeLancey (1992:49) has characterized as "an areal phenomenon arising from the linguistic and cultural influences of Tibetan". The matter of Tibetan influence also is not a straightforward phenomenon as Newar does not duplicate the very complex sets of prefixes and suffixes of written Tibetan although the tradition of writing in Newar dates back to the 8th or 10th century AD. DeLancey goes on to point out that "while the Tibetan and Newari systems are strikingly similar in structure, the morphological exponents do not appear to be cognate". This fact has led him to the conclusion that the c/d system "apparently does not reconstruct for Proto-Tibetan or Proto-Newar". This view on the reconstruction hypothesis apparently recognizes the original verbal agreement to be a complex system reflected more convincingly in the Kiranti languages and Dolakha Newar than in the highly simplified c/d marking system in Kathmandu. Benedict (1972) had also identified Newar as belonging possibly to the Kiranti nucleus from which it has diverged to a considerable extent.

LaPolla (1993:301) on the other hand argues against the view that the Proto-Tibeto-Burman verb agreement system has degenerated to simpler systems in those languages that have come in contact with morphologically simpler languages. He contends that "those languages that do not have verb agreement systems, the vast majority of all Tibeto-Burman languages, have no trace whatsoever of ever having had one", and goes on to point out "it is highly unlikely that Tibetan, Burmese, Newari, and Yi would all have lost every trace of their agreement systems while Tangut's did not age at all". I drew a parallel case of the clear contrast between Kathmandu and Dolakha Newar which, in the absence of adequate historical evidence especially in the Dolakha dialect, may well turn out that both the systems are outcomes of areal influences.

The question of the conservative vs innovative distinction usually made to refer to Dolakha and Kathmandu may have also to be redefined in terms of the nature of contact with other speakers and discourse use. The Dolakha speakers have obviously been in close localized contact with Kiranti speakers living in a relatively compact area of eastern Nepal, and their pragmatic needs of discourse are also much more pervasive and frequent than the contact of their Kathmandu counterparts with Tibetan, Tamang or the Gurung group of languages. This of course does not mean that there has been a high degree of linguistic and cultural integration between Dolakha and Kiranti, nor did the trade relations of the Kathmandu Newars with Tibetan produce any profound impact on their language and culture. While the scenario epitomised by Benedict's Newar - Kiranti link has been accepted by most western linguists working in the field, the native Newar scholars like Mali (1979/80), R. Shakya (1981), Tamrakar (1981/82), Sayami (1986), Shrestha (1988/89, 1989, 1996) and D. Shakya (1992) who have investigated Dolakha Newar and the outlying dialects intuitively feel that Newar and Kirat are not related by race, culture or language, and the Newars in general have refused to recognize Kiranti as their parent language.

In Table 3 the conjugation of the Dolakha indicative verb <yat-> 'to do' is given, showing the variation provided by Mali (1979/80), Shrestha (1989) and Genetti (1990). The Dolakha verbs have the stem finals /-n/, /-t/, /-r/ or /-l/ which we said earlier are regular for all verb classes in this dialect as compared to their inconsistent occurrences in Kathmandu. The tense morphemes occupy the first suffixal slot after the stem, and this is followed by the flexional suffixes. The main points of difference among the three scholars who have analysed the Dolakha verb system include the following: while Mali

presents a simple paradigm of past, present and future, Genetti recognizes habitual past as a distinct category and presents a more complete set of future tense morphemes and second person honorific suffixes which are missing in Mali. Shrestha, on the other hand, makes a two-way distinction between present - habitual present, and past - habitual past/stative. She has also argued that variations in suffixal morphemes need to be recognized for transitive - intransitive verbs as well as the distinct sets of honorific and non-honorific imperative forms. Shrestha (1989:41) also stated that "in their finite forms the verbs inflect for tense (past and nonpast), mood (imperative), person (first, second, third), number (singular, plural) and aspect (present habitual, past habitual or stative)".

	Pr.H	PH	PST	PRES	FUT
1s	yat-a-gi	ya-ku/gu-ĩ- <i>iu</i>	yat-ki-gi	yat-a-gi	yer-gi- <i>i</i>
1p	yat-a-gu	ya-ku-pe	yat-ku-gu	yat-a-gu	yer-gu- <i>i</i>
2s	yat-a-n	ya-ku/gu-n	yat-mun	yat-a-n- <i>i-na</i>	yer-i-na- <i>mun</i>
2p	yat-a-min	ya-ku/gu-min	yat-min	yat-a-min	yer-i-nan- <i>min</i>
2h		ya-ku-pe	yat-ku	yat-a-gu	yer-i- <i>ta</i>
3s	yat-a-i	ya-ku-ju	yat-cu-ju- <i>u</i>	yat-a-i	yer-e-u-gy- <i>N</i>
3p	yat-a-hin	ya-ku-tan	yat-hin	hyat-a-hn	yer-e-in- <i>u</i>

Table 3: Conjugation of <yat-> 'to do'. Mali (1979, Shrestha (1989), and Genetti (1990)

The Dolakha verb is characterised by two slots, the tense suffixes followed by the person and number morphemes. The stem-final consonant <-t> does not appear in the PH column and <-t> is changed to <-r> in the future column. The present-habitual and past-habitual distinguished by Shrestha (1989) are significantly different in form. Firstly, the stem <-t> is maintained in the present-habitual but not in the past-habitual. Secondly, the present-habitual suffix <-gu> is not devoiced to <-ku> after stem-final <-t> as in the past-habitual paradigm. Thirdly, Shrestha (43) notes that the flexional suffix <-u> in its stative form occurs only with impersonal past-habitual verbs and is not attested in the present-habitual. All her past-habitual examples for the third person singular category such as *ta-u*, *ya-u*, *yak-u*, *kal-gu*, *pyenk-ye-u* 'used to keep, take away, do, scramble (eggs) and kick' are marked with <-u> while Genetti has the allomorph <-ju>. The first person singular is

marked as <-g> in the past by Genetti (and devoiced to <-ki> after the stem-final <-r>), and recognizes the number distinction <-g> and <-gu> for the present but not for the future where the form *yer-i* with zero tense suffix is not marked for number. Genetti's representation of the first person plural and second honorific forms are identical and hence ambiguous for the past-habitual, past and present paradigm, but the second person honorific suffix <-ta> in the future is quite distinct from the rest. Van Driem (1993a:26) has also observed the widespread use of second person honorifics in a number of Kiranti languages such as Limbu and Dumi.

Shrestha and Genetti have both recognized the need to distinguish between transitive and intransitive imperatives and their relation to honorific and nonhonorific verb forms (see Table 4). This paradigm is interesting for the clear distinctions in transitive-intransitive and singular-plural forms which occur in non-finite imperatives. Genetti also goes on to discuss the historical status of the prefixal morphology of prohibitives and optatives in Dolakha, but of these we shall not elaborate here.

	Singular	Plural		Honorific
n-stems				
Trans.	to- <i>ŋ</i>	to- <i>n</i>	'drink!'	tō- <i>sin-isin</i>
Intrans.	ō	o- <i>n</i>	'go!'	ō- <i>sin</i>
t-stems				
Trans.	s̄yat	s̄yat-un	'kill!'	s̄yar- <i>sin-isin</i>
Intrans.	sit	sit- <i>un</i>	'die!'	sir- <i>sin</i>
r-stems				
Trans.	na- <i>u</i>	na- <i>n</i>	'eat!'	nar- <i>sin</i>
Intrans.	yā	yā- <i>n</i>	'come!'	yār- <i>sin</i>
l-stems				
Trans.	pul	pul- <i>dun</i>	'pay!'	pul- <i>di-sin</i>
Intrans.	tul	tul- <i>dun</i>	'fall!'	tul- <i>di-sin</i>

Table 4: Dolakha Imperative Verb forms, expanded from Genetti (1990:163)

The central question that concerns us here is the distribution of verb agreement systems in other modern Newar dialects. The comparisons that can be made with the available data from Dolakha and numerous Newar dialects spoken in and around Kathmandu Valley may provide insight into the various stages of evolution in the verb agreement morphology of the language. Shakya (1992) has classified the Newar dialects into six groups: (1) Kathmandu and Patan, (2) Bhaktapur, (3) Pyangau, (4) Bandipur, (5) Dolakha, and (6) Pahari (Badikhel). The subject-verb agreement with some variations is evident only in Dolakha and Pahari, while the remaining dialects that are associated closely to Kathmandu/Patan or Bhaktapur have the volitional-evidential *c/d* system. In a previous paper, Shakya (1990) suggested two major sub-groupings, Kathmandu-Patan, Bhaktapur forming the first group, and Dolakha, Pahari and Citlang as the second group. The first group has *c/d* and the second group has subject agreement system inflecting for person and number. A subsequent study however has revealed that the Citlang dialect is quite similar to Kathmandu and cannot be grouped with Dolakha and Pahari. Shakya also collected data from the eastern, central and western hill dialects of Newar, but all of them seem to testify to the wide areal spread of the *c/d* system. It thus turns out that Dolakha and Pahari are the only two dialects to date that have acquired analogous systems in agreement morphology. The flexional morphemes in the two dialects however are not identical, as can be seen in Table 5.

	Dolakha	Pahari	
	Past	Past	nonpast
1s	nar-gi	nia:-ni	-i
1p	-gu	-rau	-i
2s	-mun	-na	-iu
2p	-min	-rau	-au
3s	-ju	-ri	-ai
3p	-hin	-ri	-ai

Table 5: Dolakha and Pahari finite past agreement morphemes, adapted from Shakya (1990:3).

It is clear even with these limited data that Dolakha and Pahari represent different stages in the development of verb agreement. If Dolakha is recognized as the earliest form of the language, Pahari may be a link between Dolakha and Kathmandu. But I am taking the view that Dolakha and Pahari may represent innovative systems which have been subjected to intense areal influences over the centuries. The morphological data in Table 5 however reveal different degrees of divergence in the two dialects. Firstly, the Dolakha four-way tense system is reduced in Pahari to a two-way past/nonpast distinction like in Kathmandu. The question of which system is earlier and reconstructable for Proto-Newar is debatable as we do need more historical evidence before definite conclusions can be made. Secondly, Pahari has also lost the stemfinal consonants in some of its verbs, resulting in final long vowels similar to Kathmandu noun and verb stems. Thirdly, the person and number distinctions in the two dialects also differ in vowel and consonant segments, some of which like <-g> (D) / <-n> (P); <-mun>/<-na>; <-ju>/<-r> are significant for two reasons: (1) the change from <-u> to <-a> or <-i> on the one hand and the emergence of the conjunct <-a> and disjunct <-a> distinction on the other are also evident in the Pahari data; (2) the nonpast column in Pahari provides further evidence of simplification in the flexional morphemes which are deprived of all the consonants. The vowels too show a marked change from Dolakha <-u> to <-i> and <-i> to <-a> which are diphthongized and nasalized in Pahari. The Pahari morphology therefore seems to represent not a degenerate stage of Dolakha agreement but rather an example of what Watters (1993:109) has referred to as "just another innovative spin-off from an earlier but identical core".

Shakya (1990:5) divides the Newar language spoken outside the Kathmandu Valley into eastern, central and western groups, and relates the eastern dialects to Kathmandu/Patan and the western dialects to Bhaktapur. He established these relationships on the basis of linguistic and cultural links. Among the verb paradigms available in the three groups, the dialects spoken in Bandipur (of the western group) seems the most interesting in terms of speaker-participant (SAP) relationship.

Bandipur					
Past			Non-past		
Speaker	Hearer		Speaker	Hearer	
1. wān<-ā>	wānn<-a>	'go'	wān<-tāŋ>	wānn<-a>	
2. by<-a>	bi<-a>	'give'	bi<-tāŋ>	biyenn<-ā>	
3. Lwā<-ye>	lwott<-a>	'quarrel'	lwae<-tāŋ>	larayenn<-ā>	
4. nhilā<-ye>	nhill<-a>	'laugh'	hnila<-tāŋ>	nhilenn<-ā>	
5. dikk<-e>	dikull<-a>	'stop'	dikke<-tāŋ>	dikenn<-ā>	
Bandipur		Past	Bhaktapur		
Speaker	Hearer		Speaker	Hearer	
<-ā>	<-a>		<-āe>	<-a>	
<-āe>	<ā>		<-ā>	<-ā>	
<-e>	<-a>		<-ā>	<-ā>	
		Non-past			
<-tāŋ>	<-a>		<-e>	<-i>	

Table 6: Past/Nonpast SAP's verb forms in Bandipur and Bhaktapur Newar dialects.

These data reveal three points of interest: (1) the full set of stem-final consonants are retained in the five classes of verbs, and these are more obvious in the perceptive hearer forms than in the speaker paradigm; (2) the suffix <tāŋ> in the nonpast verbs is consistent in the speaker column which corresponds to <-a ~ ā> in the hearer column; and (3) the direct influence of Bhaktapur can be seen in the paradigms of Bandipur where the vowel alternations between <-a> and <-ā> are quite prominent. In other words, the <-a>/<-ā> alternations apply to both the verb stems and the suffixes: /waŋ-ā/ in Bhaktapur is /wānn-a/ in Bandipur and vice-versa. The nonpast suffixes in Bandipur seem to indicate a major departure from Bhaktapur, i.e. <-e> and <-i> in Bhaktapur appear as <-tāŋ> and <-a> in Bandipur. The suffix <-tāŋ> in particular is not native to the dialects of Kathmandu Valley nor to the Dumre, Ridi and Pokhara dialects of the western group. It may well be a contact-induced form from the Tibetan group or the Gurung-Tamang-Thakali group of languages since we note that /-tan/ or /-tāŋ/ indicates a causative or perfective action in the Tibeto-Burman languages of western Nepal.

3. Conclusion

The following are some of the tentative conclusions arrived at on the basis of available evidence from the historical materials of Classical Newar and modern Newar dialects still spoken in different parts of the kingdom.

(1) Jørgensen (1941) does not correctly reflect the verb morphology of earlier Classical Newar. The references to person distinctions are not consistent and finds no support in the earlier materials.

(2) Jørgensen's remarks on the meaning and use of the verbal forms in Classical Newar are based on attested frequency of usage which do not represent absolute distinctions in grammatical functions. His interpretation of the finite markers <-am, -a, -o>, for example, suggests a historical change rather than a case of synchronic alternation.

(3) Newar Verb marking system reflects a semantic role of 'agent' and patient' and not a grammatical role of 'subject' and 'direct object'. Agent and patient in Newar are not marked for person or number, and this may well be the situation in the earliest form of the language.

(4) The vast corpus of Classical Newar literature dating back to the earliest sources testify that the Newars of Kathmandu Valley have made creative use of their language within the framework of a simple evidential system that characterized the languages of the Bodish sub-division of Tibeto-Burman, with the sole exception of the Tibeto-Kanauri group which has verb agreement systems. Thurgood (1985, cited by LaPolla 1992:299) "has also given evidence that the Kanauri-Almora group, usually considered a branch of Tibeto-Kanauri, is actually genetically closer to the Kiranti and Kuki-Chin languages". This shows that verb agreement languages within the Bodish branch constitute only a small minority and it is unlikely that Newar ever belonged to this group.

(5) Finally, the placement of Newar within the Bodic Division has been ambiguous and controversial since the classification of Tibeto-Burman family by Grierson (1909, Vol III). Van Driem (1993b:294) has attempted to resolve this problem by placing Newar firmly under the East-Himalayan branch along with Kiranti and Kham-Magar. DeLancey (1987:802) on the other hand regards Newar as probably belonging to Bodish among the middle-level relationships within Tibeto-Burman. While Van Driem has argued for a

closer genetic relationship of the Dolakha Newar verb with the Kiranti languages, Delancey's view links Newar to the Tibetan dialects both of which have 'aspectually split ergative or active/stative patterns'. The crucial question therefore is whether the c/d system in Kathmandu Newar is a secondary innovation parallel with the other Tibeto-Burman languages of the area and whether we are to regard Dolakha as the only surviving reflex of the parent language. The current work on the morphological structures of the two systems suggests that Kathmandu c/d agreement is a result of 'wholesale borrowing', while Dolakha represents the 'ancient trait' in the form of fossilized verbal conjugation. It is not at all clear at this point why and when a conservative system such as the suffixal morphology was lost in Kathmandu and whether a prefixal system ever existed in Kathmandu and Dolakha. We can argue for a suffixal and/or prefixal agreement system for Proto-Newar. The enclitics attached to modern Newar verbs such as *wone-ki*, *khay-ta* or the causative - noncausative distinctions in *dum-e* 'to collapse' and *thun-e* 'cause to collapse' are often cited as evidence of a previous prefixal paradigm in the language. Assuming that Newar had a prefixal morphology in the remote past, we do not know why Dolakha has not retained it despite its close proximity to the Kiranti languages, some of which have prefixes associated with person and number agreement. Our present knowledge of the diachronic phonology and morphosyntax of Newar however is neither exhaustive nor deep enough to arrive at definite conclusions, but I am inclined to believe that Dolakha, Pahari and Bandipur represent a continuum in the development of the language exposed to varying degrees of external influences over the centuries and not isolated relics of genetic inheritance. Hale (1982:55-59) in discussing the theory of genetic classification highlights the basic problem of making a clear distinction between the inherited status of shared features or characteristics and those that result from either universal tendencies or areal pressures. For Newar and most cognate T-B languages of the area, the reconstruction methodology may not yet be explicit or adequate enough to establish a definite relationship between the forms in a proto-language and the forms in the daughter languages. What is definitely reconstructable for Proto-Newar is the verb root with its stemfinal consonants. Many scholars working in the field are not yet convinced that proto-Newar has a verb agreement system based on complex morphological and syntactic relations.

Abbreviations

1	first person	INST	instrumental
2	second person	NEG	negative
2h	second person honorific	NPC	non-past conjunct
3	third person	NPD	non-past disjunct
ca	about (circa)	p	plural
AGT	agent	PAST	past
c/d	conjunct-disjunct	PAT	patient
CAUS	causative	PC	past conjunct
DAT	dative	PD	past disjunct
DIR	directional	PH	past habitual
FUT	future	Pr H	present habitual
GEN	genitive	PRES	present
HON	honorific	PTP	participle
IMP	imperative	s	singular
		STAT	stative

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