

The rise of two inverse markers via antipassive constructions

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This paper presents diachronic pathways for two separate inverse markers in the Trans-Himalayan (Tibeto-Burman) language Monsang (South Central, or “Kuki-Chin”, branch). Attested sources for inverse markers are passives, cislocatives, third person markers, or cleft constructions (Gildea and Zúñiga 2016). Instead, and surprisingly opposite to the well-attested passive source, there is strong evidence to reconstruct developments via antipassive constructions.

Monsang has two types of verb paradigms regarding person indexation. One is ‘postverbal-only’: all person markers occur after the verb stem (Table 1). The other is ‘pre+postverbal’, i.e., the paradigm includes prefixal person markers in addition to the postverbal ones (Table 2). The two types of paradigms employ different inverse prefixes: *i-* and the homorganic nasal prefix *ɲ-*, both with the same salient tonal pattern of L-H.

Both types of paradigms are equivalent in terms of person indexation: each scenario indexes exactly the same participants; the only difference is which set the person markers come from. In the inverse scenarios, i.e., $2 \rightarrow 1$ and $3 \rightarrow 1/2$, the A argument is indexed, with the same postverbal forms that also mark the S argument of intransitives: *-tʃ* for 2nd person, and a paradigmatic zero for 3rd person. These facts alone point towards an antipassive source: the A argument is indexed with a marker from the set that indexes the S argument, and rather than indexing O, we find a general inverse direction marker.

Considering (near-)homophonous prefixes that could be the source elements for the inverse markers, we find a versatile detransitivizer *ɲ-*, which typically creates a reflexive/reciprocal interpretation, and a versatile nominalizer *i-*. Both reflexive/reciprocal markers and various types of nominalizers are among the most common sources for antipassive constructions cross-linguistically (Sansò to appear).

While the Monsang detransitivizer *ɲ-* may, under very particular conditions, yield an antipassive reading but under other conditions a passive reading, the related South-Central language K’Chò has a canonical antipassive construction marked by the obviously cognate element *ng’-* (Mang 2006).

The nominalizer *i-* does not occur in an antipassive construction in Monsang. However, the very closely related language Anal has a plausibly cognate *i-* prefix, which functions as a reflexive/reciprocal marker (Ozerov, p.c.). It is also important to note that the detransitivizer *ɲ-* cannot co-occur with the nominalizer *i-* in Monsang.

As for why there are two separate inverse markers with separate paths of development, it is necessary to take a closer look at the morphosyntactic environments that gave rise to their evolution. The ‘postverbal-only’ is the conservative paradigm that employs indexes that reconstruct back to Proto-Trans-Himalayan (DeLancey 1989; 2013; Jacques 2012; among others). The ‘pre+postverbal’ is the innovative paradigm that also makes use of prefixal indexes, which are reanalyzed possessive prefixes that became person markers in the course of developing a new finite construction from clausal nominalization (DeLancey 2011a; 2011b). This would offer an explanation why the innovative, newly nominalized ‘pre+postverbal’ paradigm needed a new inverse construction, which in turn could readily be derived from the detransitivizing construction.

Data

Table 1. ‘Postverbal-only’ negative non-future singular paradigms of *bìn* ‘beat’ (transitive) and *kàr* ‘climb’ (intransitive) (*-maʔ~ma:* ‘negative’); inverse scenarios shaded

A	O	1SG	2SG	3SG	S
1SG		-----	bìn-má:-ŋ-tʃə̌	bìn-má:-ŋ	kàr-má:-ŋ
2SG		ì-bìn-má:-tʃə̌	----	bìn-má:-tʃə̌	kàr-má:-tʃə̌
3SG		ì-bìn-máʔ		bìn-máʔ	kàr-máʔ

Table 2. ‘Pre+Postverbal’ affirmative non-future singular paradigms of *bìn* ‘beat’ (transitive) and *kàr* ‘climb’ (intransitive) (*-naʔ~na:* ‘imperfective:transitive’; *-ne~-n* ‘imperfective:intransitive’); inverse scenarios shaded

A	O	1SG	2SG	3SG	S
1SG		-----	kí-bìn-ná:-tʃə̌	kí-bìn-náʔ	kàr-n-ín
2SG		m̄-bìn-ná:-tʃə̌	-----	ná-bìn-náʔ	kàr-né-tʃə̌
3SG		m̄-bìn-náʔ		á-bìn-náʔ	kàr-né

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