Multiple agreement in Kishtwari and Poguli: Consequences for the diachronic trajectory of Old Indo-Iranian enclitic pronouns in Indo-Aryan and Iranian

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Kishtwari [kɪʃtə̆ʊqːʈi(ː)] and Poguli [poːgə̆li(ː)] are Indo-Aryan languages spoken at the south-eastern margin of the wider Peristan region (Liljegren, 2020) in side valleys and districts around the Acesines river in Jammu & Kashmir, India.[1] These languages are often mentioned together with their larger and better-studied neighbor, Kashmiri /kɤ̝ːʃʊɾ/, disappointingly relegated to the designation of divergent dialects thereof. While Kishtwari truly is closely related to Kashmiri, the same may not be true of Poguli, and, in any case, speakers of neither language identify ethnically with Kashmiris, preferring rather a *Pahāṛī* identity in common with other peoples along the Acesines, viz., speakers of Sarazi [sɐɾäːzi(ː)], Bhadrawahi [bʱəɖ͡ʒ̄äːi], Padari [pɑ̝ːɖə̆ɾi(ː)], et c.

Both Kishtwari and Poguli are severely underdocumented. Early records of the languages from the turn of the 20th century (Bailey, 1908; Grierson, 1927) are very short and formulaic. Newer attempts at documentation of Kishtwari (Kaul, 2006; Kuchay, 2013) are equally brief. Poguli is somewhat better studied, notably the description of pronominal suffixation by Hook (1987), but see also the work of Wani (2014, 2018, 2019) listing interesting paradigms, and Sohil (2022) compares the lexicons of two Poguli dialects. A small amount of textual data from these languages were also utilized by Verbeke in her monograph (2018) on Kashmiri argument structure.

The proposed presentation will shed light on patterns of agreement and alignment in Kishtwari and Poguli based on data collected by the author, with particular focus on the grammaticalization as agreement-indexes of (historical) pronominal suffixes as still in Kashmiri. Compare the experiencer construction in (1) from Kishtwari with variants in (2) from (Srinagar) Kashmiri.

(1) Kishtwari

me	tʰ-æ-m	pə̀t̪͡ʃʰə	(lɐg-ɐn)
1.SG.OBL	COP.PRS-3.SG.F-1.SG.OBL	hunger{F.SG}	(stick-PRS.PTCP)

'I am hungry.'

(2) Kashmiri

a.

me	t̪͡ʃʰ-ɐ	bɔt̪͡ʃʰɨ̥	lɐg-ɑ̥ːn
1.SG.OBL	COP.PRS-3.SG.F	hunger{F.SG}	stick-PRS.PTCP

b.

bɔt̪͡ʃʰɨ̥	t̪͡ʃʰ-ɐ-m	lɐg-ɑ̥ːn
hunger{F.SG}	COP.PRS-3.SG.F-1.SG.OBL	stick-PRS.PTCP

'I am hungry.'

In Kashmiri, either the full oblique pronoun /me/ or the oblique pronominal suffix /-m/ occurs, usually (except in poetry) in complementary distribution, but in Kishtwari this /-m/ has fully grammaticalized as argument-indexing on the verb, now co-occurring with the full pronoun.[2]

In fact, not only have oblique pronominal suffixes grammaticalized, but so have their ergative counterparts, leading to obligatory multiple agreement on finite verbs, including recipients (3).

[1] Transcriptions are in fairly narrow IPA, not yet phonemized for either language in focus.

[2] In Kashmiri, oblique and ergative second-person clause-participants do trigger verbal-agreement just as in Kishtwari. The difference is that in Kishtwari, this has been extended to the first- and third-persons as well.

(3) Kishtwari

t͡se trɣ̟ːj-t-ʊs tɪs ʃwɑ̟ːʈʰ
2.SG.ERG let_go.PST.AGT{SG}.PAT{F.SG}-2.SG.ERG-3.SG.OBL 3.SG.M.OBL slap{F.SG}

'You{SG} slapped him!' (Lit. "You{SG} released a slap to him.")

In Poguli, there is no agreement with oblique arguments as contrasted in (5) below with Kishtwari (4). Ergative agents don't agree either (6),[3] not even, unlike Kashmiri (7), in second person. While oblique and ergative pronominal suffixes do exist, they seem to be optional.

(4) Kishtwari

me tʰ-ʊ-m jɪ pɐtɐ
1.SG.OBL COP.PRS-3.SG.M-1.SG.OBL DEM.PROX.M.SG address{M.SG}

'I know this.'

(5) Poguli

mi ju pɐtɑ̟ː t͡ʃʰ-ʊ
1.SG.OBL DEM.PROX.M.SG address{M.SG} COP.PRS-3.SG.M

'I know this.'

(6) Poguli

ti iːs mæːt͡ʃʰ kʰɑ̟ː-ʊɑ̟ː
2.SG.ERG yesterday fish{M.SG} eat.PST-M.SG

'You ate fish yesterday.'

(7) Kashmiri

t͡se kʰej-ɪt ɾɑ̟ːt ɡɑ̟ːɖ
2.SG.ERG eat.PST.PAT{F.SG}-2.SG.ERG yesterday fish{F.SG}

'You ate fish yesterday.'

Direct case objects (Hook's (1987) accusatives), however, trigger agreement whether or not an independent pronominal antecedent is present for it, as in (8).

(8) Poguli

ɑ̟̃ːʊ̟̃ su ti=lɐb-ən pɛ̠nəl-m-ɪn
1.SG.DIR DEM.DIST.DIR.M.SG 2.SG.OBL=toward-? send-FUT.1.SG.DIR-3.SG.ACC

'I'll send him to you.'

We shall first describe the above agreement patterns in detail including conditions for agreement-blocking, and stressing especially points where Kishtwari and Poguli differ from Kashmiri, and from each other. We hypothesize a grammaticalization cline of the pronominal suffixes from the

[3] At least not obligatorily.

Poguli system to the complete grammaticalization of multiple agreement in Kishtwari, via a Kashmiri intermediate.

If there is time, the plan in the latter part of the talk is to use the agreement data, especially the forms of the suffixes and their relative ordering in the suffixal chain to make make observations on the diachrony of split-ergative alignment in NIA languages, a topic that has hithertofore been studied from the perspective of Hindi-Urdu, but is probably approached better through languages with pronominal suffixes or clitics such as these ones and Sindhi (Basu & Riaz, 2026; Jegorova, 1964; Jetley, 1964). In particular, we will argue that Indo-Aryan languages end up with distinct series of ergative and oblique weak pronouns in contrast to Iranian languages that usually have a single series (Korn, 2009; Mohammadirad, 2020) because it's the Old Indo-Iranian genitive that became the agent of ergative constructions in Iranian, while in Indo-Aryan it was the instrumental, which notably lacked Wackernagel clitic pronouns, the modern ergative suffixes being later innovated. This is further leveraged to identify why the "post-ergative" development in Iranian languages like dialects of Balochi and Kurdish (Akkuş et al., 2025; Mohammadirad, 2020), and the Pamir languages (Payne, 1980; Sergienko, 2025) looks so different from that in Indo-Aryan.

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