Argument patterns and variation along the Karakorum

Baltistan and Ladakh can be seen as the eastern extension of the 'Peristan' area. First of all, there is a deeper pan-Pamirian cultural layer with links to Gilgit (Zeisler 2022). But there are also shared linguistic traits, pointing to a larger area of convergence. One of the most outstanding features – from the viewpoint of most Tibetic languages – are oblique experiencer subjects for transitive non-controllable verbs for perception, reception, (1), and ability, (2) (Read 1934:64, Zeisler 2007).

(1) AES-ABS, object topicalised, Baltipa (Read)
di *peni* *ŋa-la* *thops.*
this coin I-AES find.past
'I found this coin.'

(2) AES–ABS Shamskat Ladakhi
dordʒe-a *la* *khel.*
Dorje-AES pass-ø be.able.to.cross
'Dorje was able to cross the pass.'

In modal verb constructions with embedded transitive verbs syntax and semantics of modal and embedded verbs intertwine, (3) (Zeisler 2014).

(3) a. Intransitive ±control → ABS subject; Shamskat
kho *ʧha-rgos-duk.*
s/he-ø go-need-VIS
'S/he must go. / S/he wants/ needs to go (for his/her own benefit).'

b. Transitive –control → AES subject; Shamskat
kho-a *di* *las-po* *ʧo-rgos-duk.*
s/he-AES this work-DF do-need-VIS
'S/he must do this work.'

c. Transitive +control → ERG subject; Shamskat
kho-s *di* *las-po* *ʧo-rgos-duk.*
s/he-ERG this work-DF do-need-VIS
'S/he wants/ needs to do this work (for his/her own benefit).'

The Ladakhi dialects, in particular, show an extreme variety of combinations, with such 'exotic' patterns as oplique one-place predicates, double or even tripple oblique constructions as well as double and tripple absolutive constructions. However, it is not so much the individual role of an individual argument that is reflected by case marking, but different combinations of the case markers (sentence patterns) reflect different types of situation (Zeisler 2012), (4).

(4) a. ABS-ABS Kenhat Ladakhi
dorʒe *lampo* *ton.*
Dorje-ø road-ø get.out
'Dorje crossed the road' (holistic perspective, not focussing on start or end point.)

b. ABS-ALL Shamskat
dordʒe *lampo-a* *biŋ.*
Dorje-ø road-ALL get.out
'Dorje crossed the road.' (focus on the starting point.)

c. ABS-ABL Shamskat, Kenhat
dordʒe *lampʻikana* *biŋ.*
dorʒe *lampʻikane* *ton.*
Dorje-ø road-PPOS:ABL get.out
'Dorje crossed the road (and reached the other side).' (focus on the end point.)

Apart from variation between the dialects, further complications are pragmatic downgrading from ergative to absolutive subject marking with present time reference and, less frequently, upgrading from absolutive to dative subjects for emotional emphasis, as well as valency raising with an additional dative subject, indicating either the (dis-) ability to get something done or the experience of a calamity, (5).

(5) *primary*				*ʃaŋku*	*ʃor.*			V1
				wolf-ø	flee			
				'A wolf fled.'				
primary (collocation)			*rama-ŋun-la*	*ʃaŋku*	*ʃor.*			V2
			goat-PL-ALL	wolf-ø	flee			
			'A wolf came over the goats.'					
derived		*rardzi-a*	*rama-ŋun-la*	*ʃaŋku*	*ʃor*	*lo.*		V3
		goatherd-AES	goat-PL-ALL	wolf-ø	flee	QM		
		'It happened to the goatherd that a wolf came over the goats.'						
2.derivation	*julpa-ŋun-la,*	*rardzi-a,*	*rama-ŋun-la*	*ʃaŋku*	*ʃor*	*lo.*		V4
	villager-PL-AES	goatherd-AES	goat-PL-ALL	wolf-ø	flee	QM		
	[Why, did they say, is there such an excitement among the villagers?] 'It happened to the villagers that to their goatherd the wolf came over the goats.'							

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