# Double oblique case and agreement across two dialects of Wakhi

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## 1 Background

- Wakhi is an Iranic language with (at most) 58,000 speakers in the area where Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and China intersect.
- Previous descriptive work includes: Morgenstierne (1938), Lorimer (1958), Pakhalina (1975), Grünberg and Steblin-Kamensky (1988), Bashir (2009), Bashir (1986), Reinhold (2006), Steblin-Kamensky (1999). Recent theoretical work on Wakhi clitics: Hughes (2011), Fuchs (2015), SanGregory (2015).
- The data reported on here comes from speakers in NYC from Gojal, Pakistan and the Upper Pamiri region.

# 2 Case marking pattern

- Like certain Kurdish and Zazaki dialects, several Pamiri languages display double oblique case marking in which both the A and P argument of a transitive take oblique case in the past tense.
- Payne (1980) argues that this marking can be reconstructed for the immediate ancestor of the Pamiri languages but has disintegrated in various ways in the modern languages.

	Tr	ansitiv	ve past	Transitive present			Intransitive past	
	А	Р	V	А	Р	V	S	V
Old Iranian	DIR	ACC ↓	ACTIVE	DIR	ACC	ACTIVE	DIR	ACTIVE
	GEN	DIR	PASSIVE					
			Ų					
Ergative stage	OBL	DIR	ACTIVE	DIR	OBL	ACTIVE	DIR	ACTIVE
		Ų						
Wakhi	OBL	OBL	ACTIVE	DIR	OBL	ACTIVE	DIR	ACTIVE

#### 2.1 Forms

- Two "primary cases": NOMINATIVE & OBLIQUE and two "secondary cases" build on top of the oblique: Ablative & DATIVE
- The personal pronouns follow the same general pattern: all pronouns except the 3sg and 1PL have distinct forms in the nominative and oblique.

	Sing	gular	Plural
NOMINATIVE	. Ø		-i∫t
OBLIQUE	Ø/-e	2	-ve
- ABLATIV	′E −en		-ve-n
- DATIVE	-er		-ve-r
Table	1: Case	markei	rs
Table	1: Case	markei	rs
Table Si	1: Case : ngular	markeı Plura	rs al
Table Si 1 w	1: Case : ngular uz	markeı Plura sak	rs al
Table Si 1 w 2 tu	1: Case 1 ngular uz	markeı Plura sak saſt	al

Table 3: Nominative pronouns (G)

Table 4: Oblique pronouns (G)

#### 2.2 Functions

- The nominative/direct case is used to express the subjects of intransitive predicates (in both past and non-past) as well as subjects of transitive predicates in the non-past.
- The past transitive clause shows the DOUBLE OBLIQUE, as shown below.

(1)	intransitive non-past – <i>Gojali</i>	TRANSITIVE NON-PAS	т – Gojali
a.	wuz gefs-am	b. <b>wuz</b> to wir	n-am
	1sg.nom run-1sg	ISG.NOM ZSG.OBL see	-1SG
	'I run.'	'I see you.'	
(2)	INTRANSITIVE DAST - Goiali	TRANSITIVE PAST - (	Goiali
(2)		1	1
a.	wuz=m gefst-ε	b. maz to wind	d
	1sg.nom=1sg run.pst-pst	1sg.obl 2sg.obl see.	PST
	'I ran.'	'I saw you'	

• Second position clitics are not only used in the intransitive past, they are used with any non-agreeing predicate, as seen in (3), as well as fragments (in Gojali), as shown in (4).

(3) a.	wuz=əm ∫p <del>i</del> n	(4) A:	kuj ∫p <del>i</del> n?
	1sg.nom=1sg shepherd		who shepherd
	'I am a shepherd.'		'Who is a shepherd?'
b.	wuz=əm drəm	B:	wuz=əm
	1sg.nom=1sg here		1sg.nom=1sg
	'I am here.'		ʻI am.'

• Finally, oblique subjects can be expressed alternatively as 2P clitics, as in (5), which can be compared with (2b).

(5) taw=əm wind 2s.obl=1sg see.pst 'I saw you.'

#### Generalizations over both dialects:

- (i) Objects are always marked with OBLIQUE case.
- (ii) Verbal agreement is always with a NOMINATIVE/DIRECT argument.
- (iii) Verbs built on past tense stems never bear agreement.
- (iv) When a predicate cannot bear agreement, the subject's person/number features must be expressed by second-position clitics.
- (v) Oblique case subjects can also be expressed as second-position clitics (but the two cannot co-occur).

## 3 Baker 2016: Dependent case + Phase Impenetrability Condition

• Baker (2016), in the spirit of Marantz (1991), formalizes the notion of dependent case in the following way:

- (6) DEPENDENT CASE (Baker 2016:74)
  - a. If  $NP_1$  c-commands  $NP_2$  (with both in the same domain) then  $NP_1$  = ERGATIVE
  - b. If  $NP_1$  c-commands  $NP_2$  (with both in the same domain) then  $NP_2$  = ACCUSATIVE
  - c. If NP has no other case feature, value its case as NOMINATIVE/ABSOLUTIVE



- Among other points in its favor, Baker argues that dependent case can account for the assignment of subject and object case to arguments of non-finite verbs.
- The full arsenal deployed by Baker and Atlamaz to handle gaps in a pure dependent case analysis of Kurdish dialects:
  - (10) **Expanded case realization disjunctive hierarchy** (Baker and Atlamaz 2014)
    - a. Lexically governed case
    - b. Dependent case (accusative case and ergative case)
    - c. Agreement-assigned case
    - d. Unmarked case (e.g., genitive in NPs)
    - e. Default case
- (a) refers to unpredictable case which must be learned together with a verb. For instance, *help* assigns dative case to its object in several Germanic languages.
- (c) Arguments are assigned case under agreement, a local relationship between a head and an NP (Chomsky 2001). Following Rezac (2003) and Béjar and Rezac (2009), the relevant head looks downwards and then upwards for an argument to agree with. This agreement should be sensitive to the presence or features of the agreeing head, e.g. the finiteness of T.
- (d) "unmarked case" is a domain-specific default and (e) is a general default (i.e. citation form).

#### 3.1 "Crossed case" in Kurmanji Kurdish

- The following pair of sentences exemplifies the "crossed case" pattern of Kurmanji Kurdish.
- (11) KURMANJI KURDISH (Baker and Atlamaz 2014)
  - a. Eşxan-ê **ez** di-**m**. Eşxan-OBL 1SG.DIR saw.PAST-1SG 'Eşxan saw me.'
- b. **Ez** Eşxan-ê dı-vun-**ım**-e 1SG.DIR Eşxan-OBL IMPRF-see.PRES-1SG-PRES.COP 'I am seeing Eşxan.'
- We know that case marking cannot be a direct reflection of grammatical relations in modern Kurdish languages.<sup>1</sup> B&A thus posit the following structures for past and present clauses:



#### (13) The basics of B&A's analysis

- a. F in Kurmanji assigns direct case to the NP it agrees with in person.
- b. Otherwise, an NP in argument position gets oblique case when its phase is spelled out.
- The main claim is that vPAST is a weak phase and that vPRESENT is a strong phase when it assigns an agent role. Therefore the agreeing head can look into vP only in the past tense. In the present tense, the vP is already spelled out and thus invisible to the agreeing probe.
- But note: the agent in the past tense is also generated above the FP, as the specifier of an auxiliary.
- Historically correct: Past tense verbs were originally resultative (non-active) participles that could have required auxiliaries to become predicates. As Baker & Atlamaz note, this unites the phenomenon with English past/passive participles:
  - (14) ENGLISH PAST/PASSIVE PARTICIPLE (Baker and Atlamaz 2014:11)
    - a. A well-written book
    - b. John <u>has</u> *written* the book
    - c. The book <u>was</u> written by John.
- But it also renders the phase-based explanation redundant! The transitive agent has been removed from the c-command domain of F regardless of whether vP is a weak or strong phase.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>"All observers of Kurmanji agree that the ergative subject c-commands and can bind the direct object in a past clause in Kurmanji, just as the nominative subject c-commands the direct object in a present clause as shown by phenomena like reflexive binding and quantifier scope (see Haig 1998, 2008: 215-223, Dorleijn 1996:85-89, Gündoğdu 2011, and Atlamaz 2012)."

• Two asymmetries between past and present is overkill. I attempt here to do away with the phase-based side of this analysis and further explore the role of the auxiliary.

#### 3.2 Muş Kurdish

• Muş Kurdish, as described by Gündoğdu (2011), shows the double oblique pattern, as in Wakhi.

(15)	Muş	Kurdisi	н (Gündoğdu 2011:77,81)	(16)	Muş Kurdısh (Gündoğdu 2011:77,81)			
a.	Ez 1sg.1 'I see	Ez <b>te</b> di-bin-im 1sg.dir 2sg.obl impF-see.pres-1sg 'I see you.'		a.	Ez ket-im 1sg.dir fall.past-1sg 'I fell down.'			
				b.	Mın 1sg.oi 'I saw	te BL 2sg.o you.'	dit BL see.past.3sg	

• B&A's analysis of the double oblique pattern is radically different from that of the "crossed pattern".

- (17) B&A's analysis of Muş Kurdish (double oblique pattern)
  - a. **Dependent case**: If NP1 c-commands NP2 at the spell out of TP, then assign NP1 ergative case.
  - b. **Agreement based case**: T agrees with NP only if NP has no case feature, and T assigns NP direct case. (Oblique subjects intervene between T and the object, thus blocking assignment of direct case on the object.)
  - c. **Unmarked case**: Otherwise NP in argument position at Spell Out receives oblique. ...and ergative case and oblique case are realized by the same morphemes at PF.
  - Several problems:
    - Oblique case on objects of past tense clauses is not the same as case on non-past objects. It is a default resulting from the oblique subject blocking assignment of the direct case.
      - \* But non-past clauses probably provided the model for past tense clauses becoming accusative (Haig 2008:230).
      - \* In Upper Pamiri Wakhi both non-past and past objects take oblique case plus the accusative *-ej/-i* marking (cf. the tripartite Sangesari example cited by Baker and Atlamaz with accusative: OBL-*de*). The suffix uniquely marking accusative arguments cannot be the unmarked case. If anything, it should be the unmarked oblique that serves as ergative in most tripartite systems which should be analyzed as the default argument case.
      - \* No good evidence that oblique is an unmarked case more generally in Wakhi.
    - How can a PIC-based explanation avoid syntactic ergativity?
      - \* Aldridge (2004 *et seq*) and others employ the notion of phases to make the ergative argument and anti-passive objects inaccessible to extraction in Austronesian languages. We might expect the same for the object of present tense clauses on B&A's account of Kurmanji.
      - \* But no good evidence has ever been presented for syntactic ergativity in any Iranic language. How can we get strong phases to render arguments inaccessible to agreement but not overt movement and wide scope?
    - The PIC-based analysis predicts that the unmarked argument case is assigned to unaccusative subjects in the present tense (the strong phase).
    - Baker claims that an analogy from past clauses to present ones such that oblique case is used for present tense subjects is ruled out by his phase-based approach. But this change is also militated against by the

case paradigm: In the overall ergative pattern (including intransitives), nominative subjects will always outnumber oblique ones. Objects, on the other hand, are oblique half the time (in present tense clauses) and nominative half the time (in past tense clauses).

# 4 An analysis for the Wakhi double oblique pattern

#### 4.1 2P clitics as Aux

• Recall that 2P clitics take the place of verbal agreement with past tense verbs in both transitive and intransitive clauses.

(18)	intransitive past – <i>Gojali</i>	(19)	transitive past – <i>Gojali</i>
	wuz=m gefst-ε		ja şelzin <b>=em</b> wind
	1sg.nom=1sg run.pst-pst		DEF woman=1sg see.pst
	'I ran.'		'I saw the woman.'

- As Haig (2008) notes for Old Persian, oblique/genitive clitics could co-occur with copulas in construction with a past participle predicate but the copula was apparently not obligatory.
- The fact that they often occurred without the copula could lead to a reanalysis of the clitics as copula/auxiliary.<sup>2</sup> This then could be assimilated to the auxiliary posited by B&A for Kurmanji, seen earlier in (12).
- Clitics function like an obligatory copula with non-verbal predicates, as in (20), where there's no correlation between the presence of Aux and past tense (or a past stem) (Bashir 2009:841).
  - (20) tu=t niv ustoð 2sG=2sG now teacher 'You are a teacher now.' (G)
- Recall that the past stem was historically a participle which needed an auxiliary to become a predicate. This categorial distinction between past and present forms was still clear in Middle Persian, e.g. Parthian (Sundermann 1989:129, cited by Haig 2008:92).

(21)	PRESENT TRANSITIVE – Parthian	(22)	Past Transitive -	- Parthian
	hawīn abgundām		man abgust	(a)hēnd
	DEM:PL uncover:PRES:1s		1s uncover:ptcpi	L COP:3PL
	'(I) uncover them'		'I uncovered them'	

- Only verbs built on a non-past stem can host agreement. All other predicate types require an Aux.
- I posit that Aux assigns DIRECT/NOMINATIVE case to a subject (the highest argument) when this case cannot be assigned by Tense via an agreement bearing (i.e. non-past stem) verb.
- But what happens with past tense transitives? In the Gojali dialects, Aux does not enter the picture to assign NOM case to the subject. Instead, we get ERGATIVE plus ACCUSATIVE to yield the DOUBLE OBLIQUE pattern.
- I take this as a result of dependent case being assigned prior to (or taking priority over) Aux case.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup>Payne (1989:159) "From a synchronic, as well as a diachronic point of view, the intransitive particles are identical to the present-tense cliticized copula." Historically, they derive from genitive pronominals of the Old Iranian construction and thus do not co-occur with the full oblique pronouns. There is, however, significant variation in the use of the 3sG. Haig (2008:105) enumerates five functions for pronominal clitics in Western Middle Iranian: (i) A-past, (ii) P-present, (iii) Indirect Participant, (iv) adpositional complement, (v) adnominal possessor. Note that Wakhi does *not* use clitics for functions (ii)-(v).

- The entire pattern can be summed up in the hierarchy in (23).

 $NP_P$ 



(23) Case assignment hierarchy for Gojali Wakhi T-ASSIGNED (NOM) » DEPENDENT (ERG/ACC) » AUX-ASSIGNED (NOM)

### 4.2 Upper Pamiri Wakhi

ACC

- The Upper Pamiri dialect has, as one of its options, the same basic distribution of cases as Gojali, shown in below.
- (24) INTRANSITIVE NON-PAST Upper Pamiri
  - a. wuz gefs-am 1sg.nom run-1sg 'I run.'
- (25) INTRANSITIVE PAST I Upper Pamiri
  - a. wuz=m gefst-ε 1sg.nom=1sg run.pst-pst 'I ran.'

#### TRANSITIVE NON-PAST – Upper Pamiri

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b. wuz taw-i win-am 1sg.NOM 2sg.OBL-ACC see-1sg 'I see you.'

TRANSITIVE PAST I – Upper Pamiri

b. maz taw-i wind 1sg.obl 2sg.obl-Acc see.pst 'I saw you'

- Unlike Gojali, Upper Pamiri has (for our speaker) obligatory accusative marking *-i/ej* on objects, making it a tripartite system if we consider pronominal case and suffixal case together.
- But the major distinction with Goajli is found in the other options for past tense clauses:

(26)	INTRANSITIVE PAST II – Upper Pamiri		TRANSITIV	e past II – U	Ipper Pamiri
a.	maz gefst-ε	b.	wuz=m	taw-i	wind
	1sg.obl run.pst-pst		1sg.nom=1	sg 2sg.obl-A	ACC see.PST
	'I ran.'		ʻI saw you'		

- The pattern in (26-b) is common to Shughni and other Pamiri languages.
- The pattern in (26-a), on the other hand, is unique in the Pamirs (and outside the Pamirs has only been described for Mutli Kurdish, see Akkuş, this conference).<sup>3</sup>
- Putting aside (26-a) for the moment, the Gojali analysis can be adapted to Upper Pamiri as follows:
  - In (27-a), T and Aux are conflated for case assignment purposes and take priority over dependent case marking. This means that an auxiliary will always be deployed to assign nominative case in the presence of a past tense verb (both intransitive and transitive).
  - The ranking in (27-b) is that of Gojali: T-assigned nominative case takes priority over dependent case, which takes priority over Aux-assigned nominative case. The result is that transitive subjects of past tense verbs will be assigned dependent (oblique) case rather than trigger the insertion of an auxiliary, deriving the pattern in (25-b).

(27) Case assignment hierarchy for Upper Pamiri Wakhi

- a. T/Aux-Assigned (NOM) » **dependent (ERG/ACC)**
- b. T-ASSIGNED (NOM) » DEPENDENT (ERG/ACC) » AUX-ASSIGNED (NOM)

<sup>3</sup>Based on the analysis of texts, Bashir (1986) claims that discourse factors determine case marking choices. I have as of yet been unable to create a context that demands or even prefers one pattern over the other for my Upper Pamiri consultant.



- But what about (26-a), where oblique case is assigned to an intransitive subject in the past tense? Pamiri Wakhi appears to have reanalyzed pronominal clitics as short forms of oblique pronouns (in subject position).
  - Gojali Wakhi requires 2P subject clitics in the past tense clauses except for 3rd person singular subjects.
  - Pamiri Wakhi extends the exceptions to cover third person and second person plural as well (Table 7).
  - It is precisely those subjects which are not doubled by 2P clitics that do *not* show the NOM/OBL alternation in the past. Thus, it appears to be the clitics that trigger the oblique option in intransitives.<sup>4</sup>
- Although time does not permit, the same approach taken here can account for the ergative or "crossed pattern" familiar from Kurmanji Kurdish dialects with the hierarchy in (28).
  - (28) Case assignment hierarchy for the "crossed pattern" T-ASSIGNED (NOM) » DEPENDENT (ERG) » AUX-ASSIGNED (NOM) » DEPENDENT (ACC)

## 5 Some conclusions

 B&A, expanding on Marantz (1991), recognize five mechanisms for case assignment: lexically governed case, dependent case, agreement-assigned case, unmarked case and default case in addition to a central distinction between weak and strong phases and variation in the location of the case assigning head (F) as well as use of defective intervention effects. I have attempted an analysis of Wakhi that dispenses with the phase distinction,

<sup>&</sup>quot;This potentially solves the paradox noted by Bashir (1986:29), namely, that persons higher on the animacy hierarchy are more likely to follow a NOM-ACC alignment: "The fact that OBL (cf. ERG) marking occurs in situations and with participants in which enhanced agentivity is semantically natural rather than unnatural, shows that, in fact, OBL subjects in Wakhi behave in complete opposition to the way they behave in a prototypical ergative system as characterized in Silverstein (1976)."

the appeal to "elsewhere case" and intervention effects, relying solely on a single syntactic structure and ranking of case assignment mechanisms.

- The analysis proposed here makes the double oblique pattern minimally different from the crossed pattern, a welcome result given the close historical and typological relations.
- It also avoids a difficult theoretical problem in the use of phases to constrain certain types of phenomenon in some language families (e.g. case and agreement in Iranic) and other phenomena in other families (e.g. extraction in Austronesian) but where the implications of one family do not carry over to the other.
- While a wealth of new case and agreement patterns are now being discussed in the theoretical literature, we are still lacking basic data on case and agreement in non-finite clauses, non-verbal predication and other contexts in the lesser known languages.
- The detailed study of double oblique patterns raises the larger question of what patterns are left truly unattested. Recent generative work on case and agreement in Iranic implies that any theory that can yield unattested patterns is overgenerating...but we are still discovering novel patterns in the lesser known Iranic languages!

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## 6 Appendix: Transitive and intransitive agreement patterns

Subject	Past	Non-past			
1sg	ma <mark>z jo</mark> diç-t jo=əm diç-t	wuz jo di-m			
	ʻI hit <mark>him</mark> .'	ʻ <mark>I</mark> (will) hit <mark>him</mark> .'			
2sg	to jo diç-t	tu jo di	Subject	Past	Non-past
	jo=ət diç-t 'You hit him.'	'You (will) hit <mark>him</mark> .'	1sg	wuz=m gεzda 'I stood.'	wuz giz-əm 'I (will) stand.'
3sg	<mark>jo jo diç-t</mark> 'S/he hit him.'	jo jo diç-t <i>'S/he (will) hit him</i> .'	2sg	tu=t gεzda 'You stood'	tu giz 'You (will) stand'
1pl	sak jo diç-t jo=ən diç-t 'We hit him'	sak jo di-n 'We (will) hit him'	3sg	jo gɛzda 'S/he stood.'	jo giz-d 'S/he (will) stand.'
2pl	sav jo diç-t jo=əv diç-t	sa∫t jo di-jɪt	1pl	<mark>sak=ən</mark> gεzda 'We stood.'	<mark>sak giz-ən</mark> 'We (will) stand.'
	'You (pl.) hit him.'	' <u>You (pl.)</u> (will) hit <mark>him</mark> .'	2pl	<mark>sa∫t=əv</mark> gɛzda	<mark>sa∫t</mark> giz-it
3pl	jav jo diç-t	ja∫t jo di-n		'You (pl.) stood.'	'You (pl.) (will) stand.'
	<b>jo=əv diç-t</b> <i>'They hit <mark>him</mark>.'</i>	'They (will) hit him.'	3pl	<b>ja∫t=əv gεzd</b> a 'They stood.'	<b>ja∫t giz-ən</b> 'They (will) stand.'

## Table 5: Gojali: to hit him

Table 6: Gojali: to stand

Subject	Past	Non-past
1sg	uz=m jaw-i diç-t-i jaw=əm diç-t-i maz jaw-i diç-t-i	uz jaw-i di-m jaw-i di-m *maz jaw-i di-m
	<mark>'I</mark> hit <mark>him</mark> '	ʻI (will) hit <mark>him</mark> '
2sg	tu=t jaw-i diç-t-i jaw=ət diç-t-i to jaw-i diç-t-i	tu jaw-i di jaw-i di *to jaw-i di
	'You hit him'	' <mark>You</mark> (will) hit <mark>him</mark> '
3sg	(j <mark>aw) jaw</mark> -i diç-t-i	(jaw) jaw-i diç-t
	'S/he hit him'	' <mark>S/he</mark> (will) hit <mark>him</mark> '
1pl	sak=ən jaw-i diç-t-i jaw=ən diç-t-i	sak jaw-i di-n jaw=ən di-n
	'We hit <mark>him</mark> '	'We (will) hit <mark>him</mark> '
2pl	saji∫(*=əv) jaw-i diç-t-i *sav jaw-i diç-t-i jaw=əv diç-t-i	saji∫ jaw-i di-v *sav jaw-i di-v jaw-i di-v
	'You (pl.) hit him'	' <mark>You</mark> (pl.) (will) hit <mark>him</mark> '
3pl	jawi∫(*=əv) jaw-i diç-t-i *jav jaw-i diç-t-i jaw=əv diç-t-i	jawi∫ jaw-i di-n *jav jaw-i di-n jaw-i di-n
	'Ihey hit him'	They (will) hit him'

Subject	Past	Imperfective
1sg	uz=m gøz-di maz gøz-di 'L stood'	uz giz-im *maz giz-im 'Lstand'
2sg	tu=t gøz-di to gøs-di 'You stood.'	tu giz-i *to giz-i 'You stand.'
3sg	jaw gøz-di 'S/he stood.'	<b>jaw giz-d</b> <i>'S/he stand.'</i>
1pl	<mark>sak=ən gøz-di</mark> 'We stood.'	<mark>sak giz-ən</mark> 'We stand.'
2pl	<mark>saji∫</mark> gøz-di * <mark>sav</mark> gøs-di	saji∫ giz-əv *sav giz-əv
	'You (pl.) stood.'	'You (pl.) stand.'
3pl	jawi∫ gøz-di *jav gøs-di 'They stood.'	jawi∫ giz-ən *jav giz-ən 'They stand.'

Table 7: Upper Pamiri: to hit him

Table 8: Upper Pamiri: to stand