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A survey of alignment features in the Greater Hindukush with special references to Indo-Aryan*

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The Hindukush Indo-Aryan ('Dardic') languages (Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kashmir) display a great range of variation in alignment patterns. The diversity is primarily evidenced in the case-marking of core argument noun phrases and verbal person marking properties. Along these parameters, six distinct alignment types emerge, each, in combination with language-specific developments, reflecting contact-induced changes that can be attributed to three significant areas or subareas that conflate in the region: first, a large Persian-dominated area overlapping with the Western part of the region, characterized by overt patient marking; second, an area in the East with e.g. ancient Tibetan influences, characterized by overt agent marking; and third, an area in the South bordering on the influential Hindi-Urdu belt, stretching over large parts of the Indian Subcontinent, characterized by patient agreement in the perfective.

Keywords: accusative; agent; alignment; areal; case; contact-induced change; Dardic; ergative; grammatical relations; Hindukush; Indo-Aryan; language diversity; patient

1. Introduction

This study is a survey of alignment patterns in a group of lesser-studied Indo-Aryan languages closely related to one another and all spoken in the same mountainous region of north-eastern Afghanistan, northernmost Pakistan, and in the disputed territory of Kashmir. Those differences are defined in terms of case-marking of core argument noun phrases, verbal person marking properties and conditioning factors behind various types of alignment splits. Generalizing the findings, six distinct types

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are identified and exemplified. The spectrum includes one purely accusative type and five manifestations of part ergative/part accusative systems. An attempt is made at explaining the present diversity as well as predicting further configuration changes with reference to historical developments, general tendencies in alignment shifts as well as to particular areal or subareal pressures. The latter pressures are seen as having overriding importance for the present distribution and are described in terms of three major regional ideals or models: (1) A consistent accusative model with patient marking, (2) A split-ergative model with ergative case and accusative agreement, and (3) A split-ergative model with ergativity in the perfective and accusativity in the non-perfective.

In Section 2, the region itself is defined and characterized, both from a non-linguistic and a linguistic point of view, and the languages sampled for the present study are identified. In Section 3, the term “alignment” is defined and an introduction is given to previous studies of the subject matter in the region and in related languages. Section 4 contains the survey itself, with the six different types described and exemplified. This is followed, in Section 5, by a discussion of the driving forces behind the present diversity and in Section 6 this is summarized and an attempt is made at predicting further developments in the systems found in the region. Finally, in Section 7, the present study is related to areal-typological research at large, and some directions for further research are suggested.

2. The Greater Hindukush

The Greater Hindukush is not an established term, but is in the void of any other unambiguous term used here to refer to the multi-ethnic and multilingual highland region which lies at the crossroads of South and Central Asia, geographically as well as culturally. Historically, it is the geographical centre of the so-called Great Game that was played out between British, Russian and Chinese political interests in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Today it is still the hotbed of one of the most drawn out territorial disputes in post-World War times, namely that between Pakistan and India. This is where the territories of modern-day Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, China and India all meet up, more or less. Although being the focal point of grand imperial aspirations for a long time, the region itself is nevertheless peripheral to any of the centres of power and has in many ways been left at its own mercy.

Linguistically speaking, four important and wide-spread genera confluence, or at least find one of their endpoints, here: It is the easternmost extension of the Iranian languages, the north-western frontier of Indo-Aryan, the westernmost extension of

the Sino-Tibetan family, while also lying just south of the Turkic belt. The overall most dominant element of the region itself are the 20+ ethno-linguistic communities comprising the Hindukush Indo-Aryan languages, stretched out in an almost contiguous crescent-shaped area, from west to east (see Map 1), starting in the mountain region just north of Kabul River in north-eastern Afghanistan, continuing north-eastward along Kunar River, then covering most of the extremely mountainous northern tip of Pakistan, and finally ending in the India-administered Kashmir Valley. “Dardic” is a (somewhat controversial) cover term, often used in the past, for those Indo-Aryan languages that are and have been spoken in this particular region. In order to stress that no particular stance on issues related to genealogical classification is taken in this paper, the term “Hindukush Indo-Aryan” (abbreviated HKIA) will instead be used henceforth, referring to the same set of languages that the term “Dardic” previously was attributed to. *Hindukush Indo-Aryan* comprises six relatively established subgroups (Bashir 2003: 824–825): Pashai, Kunar, Chitral, Kohistani, Shina, and Kashmiri. Its centre of gravity has historically shifted from a more southern, perhaps even lowland, position, gradually pushed into more remote highland locations due to, in particular, a rather aggressive Pashtun expansion from southwest (Strand 2001: 251, 254).

The closest linguistic neighbours of Hindukush Indo-Aryan (HKIA) are a mixed group, both classification-wise and in a sociolinguistic sense. Iranian languages are surrounding large parts of the western half of the HKIA realms. In the south and southwest it is mainly Pashto, represented by many different dialects and sub-varieties. Although not a language directly associated with formal power or administration *per se*, Pashto is nevertheless a strong force and exerts a noticeable pressure on the HKIA languages spoken in Afghanistan and in Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, particularly on those belonging to the Pashai, Kunar and Kohistani Groups. Further to the north, it is primarily Persian in the form of a Dari-Tajiki continuum. As the court language, the medium of instruction and virtually the only known written language in the former principality of Chitral, it has exerted considerable influence on some of the HKIA languages, particularly those of the Chitral Group, but extending well into other parts of this continuum; Persian was for instance the administrative language also in the old Kashmir State (Schmidt & Kaul 2008: 236). A number of much smaller Iranian languages of the Pamir group are also spoken in areas north-west and north of the HKIA crescent. Wedged into what might otherwise have been a contiguous HKIA-speaking area, we find the Nuristani languages, spoken mostly in Afghanistan but to a small extent also on Pakistani territory. They are, to borrow the word of Richard Strand, the foremost living expert on Nuristani, “distant cousins of the Indo-Aryan group” (2001: 251), and as far as classification is concerned, they are placed alongside Indo-Aryan and Iranian as a third branch of Indo-Iranian. The isolate Burushaski, spoken at the northern fringes of the HKIA area, adjacent to Khowar (Chitral Group) as well as

Map 1. Hindukush Indo-Aryan ('Dardic') languages

Gilgiti Shina, has withstood various attempts at establishing a clear genetic link with any other language in the world. It might very well be the sole survivor of an ancient group of related languages once spoken in large parts, if not most parts, of this region long before the advent of any Indo-Europeans (Tikkanen 1988: 304–310). The languages bordering Shina and Kashmiri in the east are West Tibetan varieties; in the north, within the Pakistan-administered Gilgit-Baltistan, the language is referred to as Balti, and further south, on the Indian side of the line-of-control, it is mostly referred to as Ladakhi. A few other Indo-Aryan languages, not closely related with the Hindukush Indo-Aryan set, are also spoken either in the south-eastern part of the region, then almost exclusively one or the other variety within a widespread Punjabi continuum (variously referred to as Hindko, Punjabi, Pahari or Pothwari), or in smaller pockets throughout the region, as is the case with Gojri, the language of nomadic or semi-nomadic Gujurs.

Descriptive work has been carried out, or is being carried out, in individual languages of the region, by various researchers and varying in scope, from the pioneering work of the Norwegian linguist Georg Morgenstierne and onward, but there are still relatively few comprehensive grammars available and HKIA at large is considered a lesser-described group of languages. Even fewer areal or typologically oriented studies covering the region have been produced (however, see (Bashir 1988, 1996, 2003: 821–823, 2010; Edelman 1983; Fussman 1972; Tikkanen 1999, 2008; Baart 2003)), in spite of its being pointed out in connection with South Asian areal studies and the like as particularly promising and needing further research (Masica 1991: 43; 2001: 259; Emeneau 1965; Skalmowski 1985). For the present survey, material (mainly in the form of questionnaires, interlinear texts and direct elicitation) was collected in field work and in collaborative research with local scholars and consultants native to the region, supplemented with available published resources or information obtained in personal communication with other field researchers.¹

Since the aim of the present study was to take an inventory of the diversity rather than being quantitative, the sampling procedure has simply been to make sure all the six subgroupings of HKIA have been represented by at least one variety each. The twelve varieties/languages that have been investigated (more than in the passing) are the following:

1. I am especially indebted to the members of the “Linguistic Study Group” who met regularly with me at the Forum for Language Initiatives (first in Peshawar and later in Islamabad) 2009–2010 to share and discuss language data and linguistic issues: Afsar Ali (Khowar), Farid Ahmad Raza (Khowar), Khawaja Rehman (Kashmiri), Muhammad Zaman Sagar (Gawri), and Naseem Haider (Palula). For Gawarbat, I primarily rely on data collected in interviews in Chitral 2005 with Muhammad Salaam and Faiz Muhammad, both originally from Nari in Afghanistan, supplemented by field notes taken when working with Arif Ullah of Arandu in Islamabad, and for Dameli, questionnaire data was filled out, also in 2005, by Muhammad Hayat and Asmat Ullah, both from Aspar, Damel Valley.

Pashai: South-western Pashai

Kunar: Gawarbat, Dameli

Chitral: Khowar, Kalasha

Kohistani: Gawri,² Torwali, Indus Kohistani

Shina: Gilgiti Shina, Kohistani Shina, Palula

Kashmiri³

3. Alignment features

Alignment is here understood as the way in which the two arguments of a two-argument predicate, one more agent-like (A) and the other more patient-like (P), align with the sole argument (S) of a one-argument predicate (Comrie 2013; Siewierska 2013; Manning 1996:3).⁴ According to a now classical definition (Plank 1979:4), there is (nominative-)accusative alignment if S and A are identified as opposed to P (an equivalence set of arguments symbolized as {S, A}), whereas there is ergative(-absolutive) alignment if S and P are identified as opposed to A (an equivalence set symbolized as {S, P}).⁵ Although pointed out already at an early point in the decades-long discussion of alignment and grammatical relations (Comrie 1978), it has become increasingly obvious that it would be both far too simplistic and rather uninteresting to categorize a single language as either ergative or accusative (Croft 2001:134–171). Instead, we will here focus on the diversity of alignment features as manifested language-internally as well as cross-linguistically within HKIA, and in order to arrive at a more precise

2. Also known in the literature as Bashkarik or Kalam Kohistani.

3. For this paper I have only included examples from sub-varieties of standard Kashmiri, i.e. the relatively homogenous language in and around the Kashmir Valley (Koul 2003:898). Two other Kashmiri varieties, Poguli and Kishtawari, show considerable lexical divergence vis-à-vis this standard variety (Schmidt & Kaul 2008:235), whereas at least Poguli shares with standard Kashmiri the central features relevant to the present survey (Verbeke 2011:190).

4. Argument roles are not uniformly identified across different approaches, as some use a combination of syntactic and semantic criteria (Dixon 2010, 1:97–100; Dryer 2007:252), whereas others claim that semantics is sufficient or the only valid basis for cross-linguistic identification (Witzlack-Makarevich 2010:47; Croft 2001:136). The approach taken here is that semantic criteria will have the last say in case of conflicting evidence, while the underlying assumption will be that one-argument predicates typically are encoded as (syntactically) intransitive verbs and two-argument predicates are encoded as (syntactically) transitive verbs (Givón 2001, 1: 109–110).

5. I have adopted Comrie's (2013) terminology with the symbols S, A and P, instead of using Plank's original S_p, S_t and dO (1979), or Dixon's (2010, 1987) S, A and O.

characterization of alignment in a particular language, two separate morphological subsystems have been taken into account, one relating to case assignment (whether by means of morphological case or adpositions), the other relating to verbal person marking (also referred to as agreement rules (Bickel 2010: 410)). Those two main argument selectors are also referred to as dependent marking and head marking, respectively (Witzlack-Makarevich 2010: 73, 159). Within those two subsystems we have for one or more languages noted further differentiations related to, for instance, referential properties (in the present study mainly the differential behaviour of noun phrases with a noun head vs. noun phrases made up from pronouns, as well as the specificity/definiteness of a referent), scenario, lexical predicate class, and tense-aspect-mood (Witzlack-Makarevich 2010). There are other possible manifestations (or classifying properties) of alignment, such as constituent order, diathesis, conjunction reduction, relativization, etc. (Bickel 2010: 417–432), but those are not treated here as the investigation of such features would warrant a good deal more detailed textual studies or careful elicitation than what has been possible with the present data set. Furthermore, there are other argument roles apart from A, S and P, that can be investigated for alignment, such as G ‘the most goal-like’ (alternatively R ‘the recipient-like argument’ (Dryer 2007: 254)) and T ‘the most patient-like’ in ditransitive (or three-argument) constructions (Bickel 2010: 402–404; Croft 2001: 142–146). Albeit worthy of detailed studies, neither will those be covered in the present survey.

Ergativity is a feature of some areal significance, occurring in a ‘belt’ stretching all the way from the Caucasus through much of south-west Asia to the north-eastern part of the Indian subcontinent, thus largely encircling the area of our particular interest. This is not to say that we are dealing with an entirely unitary phenomenon, neither in origin nor in its manifestations (Trask 1979), but it seems quite obvious that this area, or perhaps even macro-area, is characterized by a significant number of languages, belonging to various stocks or genera, with ergative case-marking and/or verbal alignment in one or more of its subsystems, typically in the past or perfective realms (Masica 2001: 248–250; Nichols 1993: 55).

As for ergativity in Indo-Aryan, it is, again, virtually always limited to particular constructions or paradigms (Masica 1991: 341), so that for instance the S argument would show the same zero case-marking as the P argument in the perfective vis-à-vis a differently marked A (i.e. being ergatively aligned), whereas S and A would receive the same zero-case in non-perfective tense-aspect categories with P sometimes having a non-zero case (i.e. being accusatively aligned). This would very often co-occur with a similarly conditioned split relating to verb agreement, so that the verb would display {S, A} agreement in non-perfective categories but {S, P} agreement in the perfective. It is also very common that case distinctions in the pronoun system differ significantly from the ones available for nouns.

Hindi-Urdu,⁶ demographically and sociolinguistically the overall most dominant language in South Asia today, stands in many respects as the role model of split ergativity within the Indo-Aryan world, although, as we shall see, representing only one possible configuration among many. The primary way of differentiating noun phrases for grammatical relations in this language is by means of case clitics or grammatical postpositions (the terminology varies but the exact morphological status is of minor importance for our present purpose). The clitic *nē*, postposed to the head noun, is used exclusively and invariably to mark the A argument in the perfective tense-aspect categories, as in (1), while in the non-perfective, A is zero-marked for case, as in (2).

- (1) *ahmad=nē sārē samōsē khā-ē hai.*
 Ahmad=ERG all samosa.PL eat.(PFV)-MPL are
 Ahmad has eaten all the samosas (a kind of pastry).’ (Schmidt 1999:73)
- (2) *ahmad sārē samōsē khā rah-ā hai.*
 Ahmad all samosa.PL eat CONT-MSG is
 ‘Ahmad is eating all the samosas.’ (own data)

Another clitic, *kō*, is used to mark a P argument that is either animate or specified, as in (3), whereas an unspecified P argument remains zero-marked (just like the S argument or the non-perfective A), as illustrated in (4). This differential marking is applied regardless of tense.⁷ See Table 1 for a summary of Hindi-Urdu core case-marking.

- (3) *pānī=kā nal xarāb hai, nal-vālē=kō bulā-ō*
 water=GEN pipe broken is pipe-person.OBL=OBJ call-IMP.MID
 ‘The water pipe is broken; call *the plumber*.’ (Schmidt 1999:70)
- (4) *pānī=kā nal xarāb hai, fauran nal-vālā bulā-ō*
 water=GEN pipe broken is instantly pipe-person call-IMP.MID
 ‘The water pipe is broken; call *a plumber* at once.’ (Schmidt 1999:71)

6. Although Hindi (along with English the most important of the official languages of India, written in the Devanagari script) and Urdu (the national language in Pakistan, written in Perso-Arabic script) by many of its modern-day speakers are considered separate languages, they are structurally more or less identical, and their respective colloquial varieties are mutually intelligible and in pre-partition times frequently referred to as Hindustani (Rahman 2011:18–54). I have therefore chosen to use “Hindi-Urdu” to refer to this largely unitary language, while the examples themselves are taken from sources where it is referred to as Urdu.

7. The factors governing the use of the “objective” P marking are in fact more complex, involving animacy, definiteness as well as lexical specifications (Verbeke 2011:67–70).

The latter clitic also serves other functions, such as being the marker of recipients, goals, and so-called dative experiencers.⁸

Table 1. Distribution of equivalence sets in Hindi-Urdu nominal case-marking

	Non-perfective		Perfective	
	Definite or animate	Inanimate or indefinite	Definite or animate	Inanimate or indefinite
NOM ($\emptyset$)	{S, A}	{S, A, P}	{S}	{S, P}
ERG (=nē)	–	–	{A}	{A}
OBJ (=kō)	{P}	–	{P}	–

For those nouns which also make a morphological differentiation between a nominative and an oblique case form, the clitic *nē* or *kō* is added to the oblique case, not the nominative (Schmidt 1999:68). In the perfective, verbal agreement is (ergatively) with the P argument, in gender (masculine, feminine) and number (singular, plural), as exemplified in (5) where the P argument ‘story’ is feminine singular, thus reflected in the form of the verb.

- (5) *maī=nē kahānī paṛh-ī*
 1SG=ERG story(F) read.PFV-FSG
 ‘I read a story.’ (Schmidt 1999:125)

Most of the verbal categories are participial-based and show gender and number agreement (see Table 2), with A and S in the non-perfective (pattern II), and with P and S in the perfective (pattern III). A few tense categories, such as future and subjunctive, have person and number agreement (pattern I) with {S, A}, and combinations of pattern I and II occur, too, in periphrastic tenses.

Table 2. Verbal agreement patterns in Hindi-Urdu (simplified)

	Patterns	Features	Arg
Non-perfective	Pattern I	Person/number	{S, A}
	Pattern II	Gender/number	{S, A}
Perfective	Pattern III	Gender/number	{S, P}

This agreement pattern, however, only holds as long as the P argument occurs in zero case. If P is animate or specified (and differentially marked with *kō*, etc.),

8. I follow Verbeke (2011:66–71) in labelling this category “objective”, thus making a distinction, on the one hand between a multifunctional non-nominative “oblique” category, and on the other a more narrowly defined “accusative” case.

agreement is blocked and the verb occurs in a default masculine singular form (regardless of any grammatical features of A or P), as can be seen in Example (6).

- (6) *maĩ=nē us kahānī=kō nahĩ parh-ā*
 1SG=ERG that story(F)= OBJ NEG read.PFV-MSG
 ‘I have not read that story.’ (Schmidt 1999: 125)

Pronominally (Table 3), a tripartite differentiation is upheld (again, only in the perfective) between A, S and P, only with the exception of an infrequent use of the nominative (instead of the objective) for third person P arguments with inanimate reference (Schmidt 1999: 19). First and second person pronouns occur in the nominative case before *nē*, whereas *kō* is preceded by a non-nominative (oblique case) form of the pronoun, alternatively marked by a specific case suffix *-e* or *-(h)ē* (the latter in fact being the more common usage in the spoken language). The honorific or polite pronoun *āp* (with second as well as third person reference) has no available non-nominative case forms.

Table 3. Distribution of equivalence sets in Hindi-Urdu pronominal case-marking (perfective)

	NOM {S}	ERG {A}	OBJ {P}
1SG	<i>maĩ</i>	<i>maĩ=nē</i>	<i>muġhē, muġh=kō</i>
2SG	<i>tū</i>	<i>tū=nē</i>	<i>tujhē, tujh=kō</i>
3SG	<i>vo</i>	<i>us=nē</i>	<i>usē, us=kō</i>
1PL	<i>ham</i>	<i>ham=nē</i>	<i>hamē, ham=kō</i>
2PL	<i>tum</i>	<i>tum=nē</i>	<i>tumhē, tum=kō</i>
3PL	<i>vo</i>	<i>unhō=nē</i>	<i>unhē, un=kō</i>
2/3HON	<i>āp</i>	<i>āp=nē</i>	<i>āp=kō</i>

This is not the place to describe in full the diachronic development of the ergative construction now at work in Hindi-Urdu and many other modern Indo-Aryan languages. Suffice it to say that its origin is to be found in an Old Indo-Aryan (OIA), i.e. Sanskrit, participle construction (see Example (7)) formed by adding a suffix *-ta* to a verb root with an instrumental case coding the agent noun phrase (Pirejko 1979: 481–482, 487; Klaiman 1987: 61–64; Trask 1979: 395–398; Hock 1986). Its characterization at that stage has been met by various interpretations (see (Verbeke & De Cuyper 2009: 11–17) for an overview), but undoubtedly it became the standard expression of past tenses in the main subsequent stage (referred to as Middle Indo-Aryan, MIA) as it was replacing the former past tense verb inflections.

- (7) *nar-eṇa vedāḥ paṭhi-tāḥ*
 man-SG.INST Vedas.PL(NOM.M) recite-ta.MPL
 ‘The man read the Vedas.’ (or: ‘The Vedas were read by the man.’)
 (Klaiman 1987: 64)

The alignment features that evolved as this construction became the norm for past tenses can be summarized thus:

- a. The A argument in past tenses occurs in an instrumental case (with several allomorphs).
- b. The A argument in non-past tenses occurs in the nominative (i.e. a zero-marked) case.
- c. The S and P arguments in all tenses occur in a nominative case (as the result of a former nominative-accusative contrast having collapsed).
- d. The past tense verb (based on an earlier participle) agrees in gender and number with the P argument (with two-argument predicates) or the S argument (with one-argument predicates).

Firmly in place by the end of the MIA period, these features can be seen as the departure point for most of the subsequent development in Indo-Aryan, further shaped by (partly incongruous) language-internal factors, by changes that can be attributed to increasing functionality/transparency as well as by areal (or subareal) pressures.

This historical type of split ergativity is similar, but not identical, to the configuration we find in modern Hindi-Urdu. Two relatively recent developments, for instance, are the rise of the invariant ergative clitic *nē* (replacing a former synthetic A marking) and the introduction of the objective clitic *kō*, as described above (Butt & Ahmed 2010; Stroński 2011: 121–124). However, to what extent all or only some of the modern-day HKIA languages also reflect a development from the same ancestor, or at the least can be derived from a language with similar alignment features, remains a more open question (that we will return to briefly in Section 5).⁹

A few previous studies have also been devoted to a discussion of alignment features (and/or case-marking) in modern Indo-Aryan, although the HKIA languages in many of those have been either marginally represented or only mentioned in the passing. Skalmowski (1974) is a brief survey of alignment patterns in (Iranian) Pamir languages and HKIA, followed by a schematic classification, and although built on rather scarce linguistic information, it does convey the idea of a region characterized by great diversity, itself being the result of the various stages of a gradual ergative “dis-integration” process that the individual languages have reached. Edelman’s (1983) work is unique in the sense that she does focus on describing the characteristic features of the HKIA and Nuristani languages, but the particular description of alignment patterns is rather sketchy and allows for little generalization (1983: 53–58). Klaiman (1987) is a survey of ergativity in South Asia at large where she defines ergative behaviour of 15 (Indo-Aryan and other) languages by means of four morphological devices and makes

9. Zoller (2005: 10–11), for instance, holds that the precursor of the “Dardic” (i.e. HKIA) languages branched off from the rest of Indo-Aryan already at a post-OIA stage, forming a Proto-Dardic MIA language akin to Gandhari.

an attempt at measuring the degree of ergativity along a progressive scale. Kashmiri and (Gilgiti) Shina are the only HKIA languages represented in Klaiman's survey. Masica (1991: 339–369) tackles the problem of subjecthood in Indo-Aryan and describes the observed diversity in split ergativity (or the loss of it) as attempts by individual languages to “make greater sense out of it”, for instance by developing a case-marking for the P argument or by making the verb agree with an ergatively marked A argument, or by developing a double agreement construction as a step towards a purely accusative pattern. A few HKIA languages are mentioned in the discussion, but only rarely are these references accompanied by actual examples. Filimonova (2005) is not dedicated to Indo-Aryan *per se* but deserves to be mentioned here, as her collection and discussion of apparent counterevidence to patterns suggested in earlier noun phrase hierarchy studies to a large extent is drawn from Indo-Iranian languages spoken in the Greater Hindukush, where pronouns in particular display “anomalous” behaviour. Deo and Sharma (2006) present a typology of ergative alignment (primarily case-marking and agreement patterns) based on a survey of such features in five major Indo-Aryan languages, explaining the observed range of variation as the result of markedness reduction, the latter evidenced primarily in the loss of overt A marking and the loss of P agreement. Although of theoretical relevance to the present study, no HKIA languages are included among the languages surveyed and exemplified. Stroński's (2009, 2011) works are of great importance in that they combine the diachronic and synchronic perspectives on ergativity, probably with the single most important finding that while most of the varieties under investigation show a “default” drift towards accusative alignment, a few of them instead seem to display a contact-induced reinforcement of an ergative pattern. Since these studies are almost exclusively focused on the cross-variety diversity within the Central Indo-Aryan “Hindi belt”, the same phenomena would have to be investigated with special reference to the HKIA region. Verbeke (2011) is another recent survey that takes a large number of factors into account when defining in more exact terms the character of ergative vs. accusative alignments in Indo-Aryan; but again, she focuses on those phenomena as displayed in the main languages only, and especially the so-called North-western Indo-Aryan languages (among which HKIA is counted) are referred to in a somewhat oversimplified way.

The present survey zeros in on a geographically more limited region, yet in many ways one that displays an even higher degree of diversity than what has been demonstrated in many of the previous studies. This study also adds a more prominent areal (language contact) perspective, whereas most of the earlier studies focus either on functionally motivated changes or on language-particular developments. In contrast with the strong predictions of Deo and Sharma in terms of markedness reduction (2006: 399–400), it picks up on e.g. Bickel's (2010: 441) remarks on descent and contact as factors sometimes of overriding importance when explaining alignment patterns in individual languages as well as those shared by languages that are clustered together geographically.

4. Typological variation

A detailed investigation taking the above-mentioned factors (see Section 3) into account has generated six identifiable alignment systems in HKIA, without claiming that the languages in each category, or even dialects within the same language, are aligned in an entirely uniform way. The details of the six systems are presented, one after the other, 4.1–4.6, and are subsequently summarized in 4.7.

4.1 Accusative alignment (Khowar, Kalasha)

The two Chitral Group languages Khowar and Kalasha, spoken at the north-western-most periphery of the Indo-Aryan world, are very non-typical New Indo-Aryan (NIA) languages in that they have preserved the ancient preterite tense (Morgenstierne 1947: 8, 23; Turner 1927: 538–541), with the result that all A and S, whether they are noun phrases (Table 4) or pronominal (Table 5), and regardless of tense and aspect, are zero-marked (nominative). In Khowar (Examples (8)–(10)), nouns and pronouns alike have two basic case forms, in the description of Indo-Aryan languages often referred to as nominative and oblique (the latter being a multi-purpose case, in Khowar serving also as a genitive). While a non-specific P argument is in zero case, a specific P argument receives overt (oblique) marking (Bashir 2003: 849).

Table 4. Distribution of equivalence sets in Khowar nominal case-marking

	Non-specific	Specific
NOM (Ø)	{S, A, P}	{S, A}
OBL (-o)	–	{P}

Table 5. Distribution of equivalence sets in Khowar pronominal case-marking

	NOM	OBL
1SG	<i>awa</i> {S, A}	<i>ma</i> {P}
2SG	<i>tu</i> {S, A}	<i>ta</i> {P}
3SG	<i>hase</i> {S, A}	<i>hato</i> {P}
1PL		<i>ispa</i> {S, A, P}
2PL		<i>pisa</i> {S, A, P}
3PL	<i>hatet</i> {S, A}	<i>hatetan</i> {P}

Khowar (Chitral)

- (8) *awa duwaht-o hori-m-an.*
 1SG.NOM window-OBL open-1SG-PRS.SPC
 ‘I’m opening the window.’ (Questionnaire data)
- (9) *awa duwaht-o huri ast-am.*
 1SG.NOM window-OBL open.PFV.PTCP be.PST=1SG
 ‘I had opened the window.’ (Questionnaire data)
- (10) *tu ki ma rah pašet-au,*
 2SG.NOM if 1SG.OBL way show.PST-2SG
awa tat paisa dom.
 1SG.NOM 2SG.DAT money give.PRS.1SG
 ‘If you show me the way, I’ll give you money.’ (Questionnaire data)

Verbal agreement (Table 6) is always with A and S arguments, never with a P argument, the latter regardless of tense or aspect. These two languages are therefore accusatively aligned both as far as case-marking and agreement are concerned.

Table 6. Verbal agreement pattern in Khowar

	Features	Arg
All tenses	Person/number	{S, A}

In Kalasha, the only other close relative of Khowar, case-marking of P is also conditional, although it has been described as a matter of affectedness (Heegård Petersen 2006: 34) rather than of specificity.

4.2 Nominal ergativity with verbal accusativity (Gilgiti, Kohistani Shina)

In Gilgiti Shina (Table 7 and Table 8), the A argument, irrespective of tense or aspect, is marked with an ergative case suffix (or postposition) vis-à-vis zero-marked P and S arguments.

Table 7. Distribution of equivalence sets in Gilgiti Shina nominal case-marking (Radloff & Shakil 1998: 188–189; Degener 2008: 16–17)

ABS (Ø)	{S, P}
ERG (-s/-se)	{A}

Table 8. Distribution of equivalence sets in Gilgiti Shina pronominal case-marking (Radloff & Shakil 1998)

	ABS {S, P}	ERG {A}		ABS {S, P}	ERG {A}
1SG	<i>ma</i>	<i>mas</i>	1PL	<i>be</i>	<i>bes</i>
2SG	<i>tu</i>	<i>tus</i>	2PL	<i>tsho</i>	<i>tshos</i>
3MSG	<i>ro</i>	<i>ros</i>	3PL	<i>ri</i>	<i>ris</i>
3FSG	<i>re</i>	<i>res</i>			

Gilgiti Shina

- (11) *ǰag-se tu neé paáš-an magám tus*
 people-ERG 2SG.NOM not see-FUT.3PL but 2SG.ERG
púur-e paáš-ee.
 all-PL see-FUT.2SG
 ‘People will not see you but you will see everything.’ (Radloff, pc)
- (12) *ris báro ǰaǰángék theé phaṛáko šuúo réser wiíg-e.*
 3PL.ERG big drum do.CV bald son into.it put.PFV-PST.3PL
 ‘They made a big drum and put the bald son into it.’
 (Radloff & Shakil 1998: 84)

As can be seen in (11)–(12), the ergative marker has the form *-se/-s* whether it is pronominal or affixed to a noun, and the P argument is consistently zero-marked for case (Carla Radloff, pc). The verb, however, always agrees in person and number (and in some of the tenses also in gender) with A or S, i.e. accusatively (see Table 9). This variety therefore shows ergative alignment with respect to case-marking, whereas it shows accusative alignment with respect to agreement.

Table 9. Verbal agreement pattern in Gilgiti Shina (Radloff & Shakil 1998: 183–188)

	Features	Arg
All tenses	Person/number(/gender)	{S, A}

The system in closely-related Kohistani Shina looks very much the same, with the important difference that an *s*-element only occurs with the A argument in the imperative categories (see Example (14)), whereas in the perfective (13), a number of other case suffixes (*-e*, *-i*, *-o* and *-ji*) may ergatively mark the A argument NP varying with noun class and number category (Schmidt & Kohistani 2008: 53). Apart from a few pronouns, for which there is an oblique case form distinct from the zero-marked absolutive, the P argument is always zero-marked for case. Even for those latter pronouns,

the oblique form alternates (even in an identical environment) with the absolutive case form (Schmidt & Kohistani 2008: 82), and the presence of P marking must therefore be regarded as a highly marginal feature in the language.

Kohistani Shina

- (13) *dij-ó salám d-éeg-i*
 daughter-ERG greeting give-PFV-3FSG
 ‘(His) daughter greeted (him).’ (Schmidt & Kohistani 2008: 57)
- (14) *judráa-s paár xod-ée núum-i wy-áa-n-i*
 snake-ERG over.there God-GEN name-PL drop-IPFV-PRS-3FSG
 ‘The snake over there is reciting God’s names.’
 (Schmidt & Kohistani 2008: 53)

4.3 Nominal tripartite alignment with verbal accusativity
 (Gawarbati, Dameli)

In Gawarbati (Kunar Group), the A argument is also marked with a non-nominative/non-absolutive case form (as can be seen in (15)–(16)), but here such marking is entirely restricted to the perfective realm (Table 10). All imperfective A arguments or S argument predicates are zero-marked for case. With respect to nouns, the ergative marking *-ee* is invariant, occurring with singular nouns as well as with plural nouns. It is also clearly distinct from the suffix *-aa* that definite or specific P arguments receive (along with a preposed adnominal demonstrative). The conditional use of the latter is similar to that of Urdu *kō*. Also pronouns (with a possible exception for second person plural) display a tripartite case differentiation between A, S and P in the perfective (see Table 11).

Table 10. Distribution of equivalence sets in Gawarbati nominal case-marking

	Non-perfective		Perfective	
	Non-specific	Specific	Non-specific	Specific
NOM (Ø)	{S, A, P}	{S, A}	{S, P}	{S }
ERG (-ee)	–	–	{A}	{A}
OBL (-aa)	–	{P}	–	{P}

Gawarbati (Kunar)

- (15) *maanuş-ee sa maari-tu-s*
 man-ERG her kill-PST-3SG
 ‘The/that man killed her.’ (Questionnaire data)

Table 11. Distribution of equivalence sets in Gawarbatī pronominal case-marking (perfective)

	NOM	OBL	ERG
1SG	<i>aa</i> {S}	<i>muu</i> {P}	<i>mui</i> {A}
2SG	<i>tu</i> {S}	<i>to</i> {P}	<i>tui</i> {A}
3SG	<i>se</i> {S}	<i>sa</i> {P}	<i>teen</i> {A}
1PL	<i>(a)maa</i> {S, P}		<i>(a)mai</i> {A}
2PL	<i>mee</i> {S, A, P}		
3PL	<i>temee</i> {S}	<i>suu</i> {P}	<i>sui</i> {A}

- (16) *mui sa maanuṣ-aa maari-tu-m*
 I.ERG DEM man-OBL kill-PST-1SG
 ‘I killed the/that man.’ (Questionnaire data)

Table 12. Verbal agreement pattern in Gawarbatī

	Features	Arg
All tenses	Person/number	{S, A}

Verb agreement (Table 12) is always, regardless of tense or aspect, with {S, A}, in number and person, never with the P argument.

In Dameli, another Kunar Group language, the agreement pattern is the same as in Gawarbatī, but with respect to case-marking, the tripartite differentiation is limited to pronouns, and even then a few of those use a zero-case form for S while the case-marking of A is identical to the case-marking of P (cf. *too* ‘you’ in Examples (17) and (18)), a situation not unlike what Payne (1980) has described as an unstable and transitory stage in some of the Iranian Pamir languages spoken in the same region. The effect of this seemingly dysfunctional case-marking strategy is however considerably minimized by the presence of the accusatively aligned verbal agreement in person and number and the unmarked constituent order A-P-Predicate.

Dameli (Kunar)

- (17) *too tas doos bin-th-op taa-i*
 you.OBL he.ACC yesterday see-PFV-2SG PST-Q
 ‘Did you see him yesterday?’ (Questionnaire data)
- (18) *tani too doos bin-th-e taa-i*
 he.ERG you.OBL yesterday see-PFV-3SG PST-Q
 ‘Did he see you yesterday?’ (Questionnaire data)

4.4 Nominal tripartite alignment with verbal ergativity (Palula, Gawri)

The combination of (a least partial) tripartite case differentiation and agreement with the P argument in the perfective that can be seen in Palula (Examples (19)–(21)),¹⁰ comes quite close to what was already described for Hindi-Urdu. The main difference between Urdu and Palula is the obligatoriness of distinctive P marking for those pronouns (Table 14) which have an oblique form that is different both from the basic (nominative) form and the case form that is used for A arguments (e.g. *be* 1PL.NOM vs. *asaám* 1PL.OBL vs. *asím* 1PL.ERG). Another difference is that no P argument nouns are never marked differently than S argument nouns.

Table 13. Distribution of equivalence sets in Palula nominal case-marking

		Class I & II		Class III		Class IV
		Non-perfective	Perfective	Non-perfective	Perfective	
SG	NOM ($\emptyset$)	{S, A, P}	{S, P}	{S, A, P}	{S, A, P}	{S, A, P}
	OBL (<i>-a</i> , <i>-i</i>)	–	{A}	–	–	–
PL	NOM (<i>-a</i> , <i>-i</i> , <i>-m</i>)	{S, A, P}	{S, P}	{S, A, P}	{S, P}	{S, A, P}
	OBL (<i>-am</i> , <i>-iim</i>)	–	{A}	–	{A}	–

As can be seen in Table 13, distinctive A marking of nouns is available for nouns belonging to declension classes I–III (covering the majority of all Palula nouns, masculine and feminine alike), while in class III (a minor category with exclusively masculine nouns) such marking is restricted to plural reference, and in class IV (which corresponds to about 15 per cent of all nouns, all of them feminine) there is no case differentiation at all. The other important difference vis-à-vis Hindi-Urdu is that the verb agrees (Table 15), in gender and number, even with a case-marked P in Palula perfective clauses (e.g. *tas* ‘her’ in Example (19) and *tas* ‘him’ in Example (21)) and is therefore not subject to any agreement blocking.

Person agreement inherited from the OIA Present Active paradigm (Masica 1991:260) only survives in Palula non-tense marked categories, more specifically in the Future and Past Imperfective, whereas gender and number agreement is the dominant pattern, applied in the Present as well as in the Simple Past.

10. Palula is a Shina variety that due to migration that took place several centuries ago has come to be spoken far from the main Shina area (Liljegren 2009).

Table 14. Distribution of equivalence sets in Palula pronominal case-marking (perfective)

	NOM	OBL	ERG
1SG		<i>ma</i> {S, P}.	<i>míi</i> {A}
2SG		<i>tu</i> {S, P}	<i>thíi</i> {A}
3SG MASC	<i>so</i> {S}	<i>tas</i> {P}	<i>tíi</i> {A}
3SG FEM	<i>se</i> {S}	<i>tas</i> {P}	<i>tíi</i> {A}
1PL	<i>be</i> {S}	<i>asaám</i> {P}	<i>asím</i> {A}
2PL	<i>tus</i> {S}	<i>tusaám</i> {P}	<i>tusím</i> {A}
3PL	<i>se</i> {S}	<i>tanaám</i> {P}	<i>taním</i> {A}

Table 15. Verbal agreement patterns in Palula

		Features	Arg
Non-perfective	Unmarked for tense	Person/number	{S, A}
	Marked for tense	Gender/number	{S, A}
Perfective		Gender/number	{S, P}

Palula (Shina)

- (19) *míi dóod-a se ínçi yhée-l-i ta*
 1SG.GEN grandfather-OBL DEF she.bear[F] come-PFV-F when
lhaaléemi ghin-i aní şiş-á ĵe ĵít-i ta
 stick take-CV PROX head-OBL on hit.PFV-F when
tas mheer-íl-i.
 3SG.OBL kill-PFV-F

‘When the she-bear came near to my grandfather he hit her with his big stick over the head and killed her.’ (Text corpus data)

- (20) *míi preş-í ma bhuuĵoo-l-u.*
 1SG.GEN mother.in.law[F]-OBL 1SG.NOM/OBL wake.up-PFV-MSG
 ‘My mother-in-law woke me [male person] up.’ (Text corpus data)

- (21) *ḍaaku-aan-óom yha-í bakáara-m sangí*
 robber-PL-OBL come-CV flock-OBL with
tas ghaş-í híř-u de.
 3SG.OBL catch-CV take.away.PFV-MSG PST

‘Some robbers came and caught him and took him away along with his flock.’ (Text corpus data)

While ergative marking of nouns in Palula is highly diverse (depending on noun class and number features), A is marked in Gawri (Kohistani) with a more or less invariable suffix *-ä* as far as nouns are concerned (see (22)–(24)). Just like in Palula, verbal agreement (in gender and number) follows an ergative pattern in the perfective only, and person agreement (with S or A) is restricted to verb forms that Baart (1999: 46–47) treats as “irrealis”.

Gawri (Kohistani)

- (22) *äthē~ dūy-ä i~ män-u äro thä*
 that.F daughter-ERG this say-MSG.PFV QT 2PL.NOM
dī äsä~ päta nä kär-wä~.
 other 3SG.GEN information not do-POT.IPFV.PL
 ‘That daughter said [this], “You [plural] will never discover his secret”’
 (Baart & Sagar 2004: 45)
- (23) *gānār-ä čey pū mākā äro tu kam.*
 old-ERG tea drink.CV to.me QT 2SG who
 ‘The old man drank the tea and said: “Who are you?”’
 (Baart & Sagar 2004: 79)
- (24) *kīk, mā~ pō, tē täy i~ mäsin kā tāli.*
 why my.MSG boy and 2SG.ERG this fish[F] why put.PFV.F
 ‘Why, my son? Why did you throw back the fish?’ (Baart & Sagar 2004: 195)

Although Torwali, another Kohistani language, in general shares the alignment features described for Palula and Gawri, an interesting split occurs in that future tense (25) displays the same ergative alignment as the perfective categories, while present tense (26) is clearly accusative in this respect (a type of split also found in Pahari varieties, Krzysztof Stroński, pers. comm.).

Torwali (Kohistani)

- (25) *i ti zed yæri si kow si košiš konin*
 NEAR.SG.ERG ABST.SG.OBL on love of do.INF of try do.FUT
 ‘She will try to make love with him.’ (Lunsford 2001: 96)
- (26) *æ ti zed yæri si kow si košiš koji*
 NEAR.NOM ABST.SG.OBL on love of do.INF of try do.PRS.FSG
 ‘She tries to make love with him.’ (Lunsford 2001: 96)

A fourth language, Indus Kohistani, also groups with Palula, Gawri and Torwali, with respect to its nominal alignment features. It shows, however, an interesting lack (or neutralization) of verbal agreement that we will touch on in the discussion in Section 5.

4.5 Nominal ergativity with “simultaneous” A and P agreement (Kashmiri)

Like in some of the other systems discussed above (4.2–4.4), Kashmiri marks the A argument with a non-zero case form (Table 16), and like in some of those other systems, this differently marked A is restricted to the past/perfective realm (Koul 2003:919). For many nouns, but even more so with pronouns (Table 17), the form used with the A argument often serves a number of other case functions apart from its ergative use. The P argument with two-argument predicates, however, occurs in perfective clauses as zero-marked for case.

Table 16. Distribution of equivalence sets in Kashmiri nominal case-marking (Koul 2003:908)

	Non-perfective	Perfective ¹²
NOM/ABS (Ø)	{S, A, P}	{S _a , P}
ERG (-an, -i, -av)	–	{A, S _b }

Table 17. Distribution of equivalence sets in Kashmiri pronominal case-marking in the perfective (Koul 2003:911)

	NOM/ABS {S, P}	ERG {A}
1SG	<i>bi</i>	<i>me</i>
2SG	<i>tsi</i>	<i>tse</i>
3MSG	<i>su</i>	<i>tam'</i>
3FSG	<i>so</i>	<i>tami</i>
1PL	<i>as'</i>	<i>asi</i>
2PL	<i>toh</i>	<i>tchi</i>
3MPL	<i>tim</i>	<i>timav</i>
3FPL	<i>timi</i>	<i>timav</i>

Table 18. Verbal agreement patterns in Kashmiri (Koul 2003:917–925; Rehman 2011:222–227)

	Features	Arg	Features	Arg
Non-perfective	Number/gender/person	{S, A}		
Perfective	Number/gender/person	{S, P}	Person/number	{A}

11. S_a refers to the majority of S-arguments, whereas S_b is a closed predicate class (see below).

What singles out Kashmiri vis-à-vis all the above exemplified languages is that it can show simultaneous verbal agreement with the (absolutive) P argument and the (ergatively marked) A argument (Table 18), as exemplified in (27)–(28). This is done by a combination of obligatory P agreement (gender agreement is shown by vowel alternation in the stem, and person agreement by a suffix) and what has been described as a pronominal suffix indexing the A argument.¹² The presence of the latter is either obligatory (for second person A) or optional (for first and third person A; unless P is first person, in which case a suffix indexing a third person plural A is also obligatory).

Kashmiri (Neelam Valley)

- (27) *tim dog-n-aas bi*
 he.ERG beat.PST.M-3SG-1SG I.NOM (Rehman, pc)
 ‘He beat me [male person].’

- (28) *tchy dij-uu-s bi*
 you.ERG beat.PST.F-2PL-1SG I.NOM (Rehman, pc)
 ‘You [plural] beat me [female person].’

A feature of Kashmiri that is somewhat unique among the Indo-Aryan languages of this particular region (although occurring elsewhere in IA) is its ergative marking of some of its S arguments. As can be seen in Example (30), the case-marking of the sole argument of the intransitive verb is identical to that of A in Example (29). This contrasts with the zero marking of S in (31).

- (29) *šəkiil-an məər so*
 Shakil-ERG kill.PST.FSG she.NOM (Rehman, pc)
 ‘Shakil killed her.’

- (30) *šəkiil-an nots*
 Shakil-ERG dance.PST.M (Rehman, pc)
 ‘Shakil danced.’

- (31) *šəkiil aw baazrə pəth*
 Shakil come.PST.3MSG bazaar.ABL on (Rehman, pc)
 ‘Shakil came from the bazaar.’

According to Rehman (2011:224), such ergative marking of S is obligatory with a rather large number of predicates denoting e.g. animal noises, bodily functions and undirected motion. This type of split is clearly different from the contextual case alternation found with certain intransitive verbs in for instance Urdu and Hindko (Rehman 2011:227–231; Schmidt 1999:168). The phenomenon as it is found in Kashmiri has

12. As shown at length by Corbett (2003:164–192), the use of the term “pronominal affix” is problematic and heterogeneous, often reflecting a certain tradition in language description rather than any firm theoretical stance.

been described and referred to in various ways, as split-S or active alignment (Kibrik 1979:284–286), but here I prefer to follow Dryer (2007:261) and Croft (2001:162) in calling it split intransitivity, the split itself being conditioned by lexical predicate class (Bickel 2010:413). Rehman (2011:225) lists 28 verbs that take an S that is marked like an A, and remarks that the split has a semantic basis in that all of the one-argument predicates that use the non-zero case depict controllable and volitional acts, whereas those that refer to a change of state or location have zero case (2011:226–227). Interestingly, the Kashmiri one-argument predicates that take an ergative S, can also apply “double agreement”, for instance when there is a pronominal third person plural S; then (as in Example (32)) agreement with S takes the place of agreement with A (as described above), but as for the “missing” P, a default masculine singular agreement is applied.¹³

- (32) *timɔ nɔts-o-kh*
 they.ERG dance.PST.M-3MSG-3PL
 ‘They danced.’ (Rehman 2011:225)

Another feature that we do not find in any of the other HKIA languages is a pronominal alignment differentiation related to the relative ranking between A and P, at work only in the non-perfective realm. While both A and P here occur in the nominative (or absolutive) case when A is higher than P, as in (33), P is marked with a non-nominative object case (the one invariably used with a recipient in a three-argument predicate) if it is higher on the person hierarchy than A, as can be seen in (34).

- (33) *bi čhu-s-an su parinaavaan*
 I.NOM be.PRS-1SG-3SG he.NOM teaching
 ‘I am teaching him.’ (Koul 2003:932)
- (34) *su čhu me parinaavaan*
 he.NOM be.PRS I.OBJ teaching
 ‘He is teaching me.’ (Koul 2003:933)

4.6 Nominal tripartite alignment with “simultaneous” A and P agreement (Pashai)

At the other geographical extreme from Kashmiri, Pashai, a group of HKIA varieties spoken in north-eastern Afghanistan, also displays simultaneous A and P agreement (Table 21), as further exemplified in (35)–(36).¹⁴

13. Rehman (2011:226) notes an exception for the verb *tsow* ‘quarrel’ that takes (default) feminine singular agreement.

14. A similar system, with pronominal suffixes (in addition to A agreement) indexing the P argument, has been observed in some of the now extinct or nearly extinct Gawarbat-related varieties spoken in the Kunar Valley, Shumashti and Grangali (Bashir 2003:834–839).

Table 19. Distribution of equivalence sets in SW Pashai nominal case-marking (Morgenstierne 1967: 64–69)

	Consonant-ending				Vowel-ending
	Non-perfective		Perfective		
	Indefinite	Definite	Indefinite	Definite	
NOM (Ø)	{S, A, P}	{S, A}	{S, P}	{S}	{S, A, P}
OBL (-a)	–	{P}	{A}	{A, P}	–

Here, however, even P argument pronouns (Table 20) and P argument nouns with definite reference (Table 19) receive non-nominative marking. In fact, the same so-called oblique case serves as marker of A and P alike, thus being “a kind of maid of all work” (Morgenstierne 1967: 69), a pattern similar to what we already observed with some of the pronouns in Dameli.

Table 20. Distribution of equivalence sets in SW Pashai pronominal case-marking in the perfective (Morgenstierne 1967: 83–94)

	NOM	OBL		NOM	OBL
1SG	<i>a:</i> {S}	<i>mam</i> {A, P}	1PL	<i>hama:</i> {S, A, P}	
2SG	<i>tu:</i> {S}	<i>tau</i> {A, P}	2PL	<i>mya:</i> {S, A, P}	
3SG	<i>sə</i> {S, P}	<i>te:</i> {A}	3PL	<i>təmə</i> {S, P}	<i>arte:da:</i> {A}

Southwestern Pashai

- (35) *mam tau dee-wak-am-ii*
 1SG.OBL 2SG.OBL see-PROXPST-1SG-2SG
 ‘I saw you.’ (Morgenstierne 1967: 84)

- (36) *tau mam dee-wak-ii-m*
 2SG.OBL 1SG.OBL see-PROXPST-2SG-1SG
 ‘You did see me.’ (Morgenstierne 1967: 84)

Although pronouns as well as nouns heading the most agent-like noun phrase may be non-nominative, some nominative and oblique forms have fused, and Morgenstierne (1967: 67) also notes apparent exceptions, i.e. where a nominative form is used instead of an oblique form for A of a two-argument predicate in past tense.

4.7 Summary of findings

Summarizing the data from the HKIA sample (Table 21), six main types present themselves by taking into account the presence of overt marking of the core arguments

Table 21. Verbal agreement patterns in SW Pashai (Morgenstierne 1967:99–137; Bashir 2003:828–830)

	Features	Arg	Features	Arg
Non-perfective non-past	Person/number	{S, A}	Person/number	{P}
Non-perfective past	Gender/person/number	{S, A}	Person/number	{P}
Perfective past	Gender/person/number	{S, P}	Person/number	{A}

(A and P) in two-argument predicates in combination with verb agreement with the same arguments (in the past and/or perfective). Type 1 (T1), represented by Khowar and Kalasha, both spoken in the north-western corner of the region, is the only purely accusative one, whereas languages of all the other five types verified display ergativity in at least some parts of their systems. Type 2 is unique among the other five in that its alignment is not conditioned by tense-aspect. An overt A marker is used in the perfective and non-perfective alike (although, as we shall have reason to return to in 5.2.1, the actual form of the marker differs along tense lines in Kohistani Shina), and the verb consistently agrees with the non-zero-marked A argument. Type 3 shows a typical Indo-Aryan perfective/non-perfective split in that overt A markers only occur in the perfective. Verb agreement, on the other hand, is consistently accusatively aligned. Type 4 displays a split similar to the one found in standard Hindi-Urdu, whereby ergative case-marking as well as ergative agreement (in Indus Kohistani null-agreement) is restricted to the perfective, while differential marking of the P argument is conditioned by language-particular referential properties. Languages of type 5 and 6, show ergative case-marking in their past (or perfective) tenses only, but under certain conditions simultaneous agreement with the A and the P arguments is possible (with the outer layer of agreement morphemes sometimes referred to as pronominal suffixes in contrast with “true” agreement suffixes (Verbeke 2011:180–182)).¹⁵

Type 5 (Kashmiri) differs from type 6 (Pashai) in that the latter also can have non-zero-marked P arguments (regardless of tense-aspect), whereas the occurrence of a non-zero-marked P argument in type 5 seems to be restricted to the non-perfective (i.e. in complementary distribution with non-zero-marked A).

Apart from differences related to tense-aspect, referential properties of the core arguments also trigger different marking or agreement patterns within one and the

15. Contrary to what is suggested by Verbeke (2011:204), referring to Emeneau (1980), we cannot conclude from this survey that the presence of pronominal suffixes is a pervasive feature of HKIA as well as of the region at large, rather one occurring almost exclusively at the two extreme ends of the HKIA region, in Pashai in the west and in Kashmiri in the east, but largely missing in most of the other groups and individual language varieties.

Table 22. Correlation of case-marking and agreement patterns (in the perfective) in the sample HKIA languages

		<i>Agreement</i>		
		A	A + P	P
<i>Case</i>	A	T2: <i>Gilgiti, Kohistani Shina</i>	T5: <i>Kashmiri</i>	
	A + P	T3: <i>Gawarbati, Dameli</i>	T6: <i>Pashai</i>	T4: <i>Gawri, Palula, Torwali, (Indus Kohistani)</i>
	P	T1: <i>Khowar, Kalasha</i>		

same language. Although such differentiations do not necessarily line up neatly with the aforementioned types, this dimension seems to play a more important role in the languages that display some sort of tripartite alignment (types 3, 4 and 6) than in most of the languages that either apply ergative or accusative case-marking. The occurrence of differential P marking is often concomitant with specificity or definiteness, and is also more prevalent with pronominal reference, whereas it is sometimes missing altogether with noun phrases headed by nouns in the same language. There is also often a difference in A marking strategies between the nominal and the pronominal subsystems within one and the same language. This takes a number of different shapes, with a great deal of language-particular idiosyncrasies. In Palula, A marking of nouns is by means of a multifunctional case marker (with several allomorphs), also used with a number of postpositions and alone as a locative, whereas A marking of most pronouns is by means of a dedicated ergative (or otherwise much more narrowly applied) case marker or case form. In Gawri, an invariant ergative marker is used with nouns, much like the use of *nē* in Hindi-Urdu, whereas most pronouns functioning as A arguments are formed in a different, and morphologically rather opaque, manner, with the pronominal system at large displaying a fair degree of case syncretism. In Gawarbati, A marking is largely agglutinative, with an allomorph *-ee* suffixed to the nominative of nouns and another allomorph *-i* suffixed to the oblique of most of the pronouns. Pashai (and to some extent Dameli) shows a (functionally) unmotivated alignment in parts of its system, with a general oblique used for A and P arguments alike (while S is always zero-marked), a phenomenon sometimes referred to as “double-oblique” (Payne 1980: 149) or “quasi-neutral” (Arkadiev 2009: 153).

Another conditioning factor, only clearly at work in one of the languages surveyed, namely Kashmiri, as far as we have been able to determine, is scenario. Even here, case assignment that is sensitive to the interaction of the arguments with each other (Bickel 2010: 411) seems to be restricted to the non-perfective realm, in which a P argument that is higher on the person hierarchy is overtly marked, whereas one that is lower remains zero-marked.

A more peripheral phenomenon, as far as most of the languages under investigation are concerned, is semantic alignment. Nevertheless, it is clearly a feature present in one of the languages, again Kashmiri. Here, the marking mainly associated with the most agent-like argument of a two-argument predicate, is extended to some arguments of one-argument predicates. The conditioning factor, however, is lexical predicate class. A small class of particular (intransitive) verbs would always trigger the sole argument to be ergatively marked while other verbs would leave the argument zero-marked regardless of context.¹⁶

5. Alignment changes and the mechanisms behind

Were we to place the alignment system at work in the Indo-Aryan ancestral language (as proposed in Section 3) in the same grid as that of the modern-day HKIA languages (Table 15), it would constitute a type of its own (A case and P agreement), placed in the upper right-hand corner, characterized by a consistent ergative alignment as far as case assignment and verb agreement are concerned, but with a tense-aspect split just like in many of the modern-day HKIA (or Indo-Aryan at large) languages. How should then these changes that have taken place, resulting in the present-day diversity, be rightly understood? In order to answer that question, we will first say something about the status of the ancestral construction, of ergativity at large, and to what extent certain changes can be attributed to universal tendencies; second, we will characterize the observed changes in terms of agenthood strengthening and patienthood strengthening, and relate those processes to three particular areal models that in their respective ways have facilitated and continue to reinforce certain types of change.

5.1 Markedness reduction and universal tendencies

Various scholars have either explicitly or implicitly suggested that the synchronic alignment diversity in Indo-Aryan (or HKIA for that matter) is the result of inherent instability or markedness of an ancestral ergative construction (Masica 1991: 343; Skalmowski 1974: 205; Deo & Sharma 2006: 373–374). Masica's reasoning is relatively open-ended in this regard, leaving the door open for a functional motivation for the rise and maintenance of the Indo-Aryan ergative construction as well as for a more universal tendency for noun phrases already in a "topic position" to gradually acquire

16. Predicate classification whereby experiencer predicates (whether transitive or intransitive) are treated differently from both A arguments and S arguments is commonly occurring world-wide (Bickel 2010: 414) and is particularly frequent in South Asian languages (Verma & Mohanan 1991), but is not discussed here.

more “subject properties” (1991:343, 362–364). Skalmowski (1974:205, 211–212) makes rather strong predictions on the eventual “disintegration” of the ergative construction and a general sequence of changes taking place on its way toward a wholly accusative end station: (a) the acquisition of a distinct P case, (b) the replacement of P agreement with A agreement, and (c) the eventual loss of A case. It remains unclear, however, as to what extent such an order, in his case based on the alignment patterns found in HKIA and Iranian Pamir languages, is meant to be truly universal. Deo and Sharma (2006:373–374, 399) go one step further in describing the MIA construction as universally marked in two important respects: (a) in using a more marked case (i.e. a non-zero A case) for the least marked function (i.e. an assumed universal “subject”), while using an unmarked (i.e. zero) case for the more marked function (i.e. an assumed universal “object”), and (b) in the verb agreeing with the most marked grammatical function, i.e. the “object”, and not with the least marked, i.e. the “subject”; thus explaining the alignment systems found in a sample of modern-day Indo-Aryan languages as the result of two markedness reduction strategies being applied: (i) reduction of markedness in ergative subject marking, and (ii) reduction of markedness in (a partly ergative) agreement pattern.

Although there obviously are tendencies or historical developments here that in important ways reflect more general properties of human language (as we will have reason to return to soon), the above-mentioned studies all fall short of accounting for significant subareal patterns in the HKIA region; even relatively closely-related varieties have come to display radically different configurations. The Optimality Theory approach of the latter study, for instance, falls back on an underlying assumption of markedness universals, in which markedness essentially is a formal notion (although there are indirectly derived functional elements that have to do with conceptual or processing difficulty, as pointed out by Haspelmath (2006:41; 2008:91–92)), and “subject” and “object” are universal syntactic roles. This view would lead one to regard the system in the ancestral language as one particularly non-functional and prone to change or collapse, while in fact a very similar-looking system in a number of the languages covered in this study (as well as in the overall dominant Hindi-Urdu) is not radically different in its present-day alignment features, and has even been subject to grammaticalization processes reinforcing the more important aspects of such a system. Neither do these strong predictions explain an apparent stabilization of the A case cum A agreement features of the system that we referred to above as type 2, nor the survival and maintenance over several generations of “dysfunctional” $A=P \neq S$ configurations in subsystems of quite a few languages, especially those of type 3 and type 6.

Even if ergativity can arise in different ways (Trask 1979), and as a phenomenon can be seen as a “historical accident” (Gildea 2004:49), it is possible to analyse certain features of the resulting constructions and distinctions as functionally motivated. Croft (2001:142), for whom universal syntactic roles of subject and object do not exist,

argues that the overt marking of A arguments in an ergative language is equally motivated with overt P marking in an accusative language. This is because structural coding of A vs. {S, P} in the ergative alignment is equal in relative token frequency to the coding of P vs. {A, S} in the accusative alignment, since the categories with S, in either case including intransitive as well as transitive clauses, must be the numerically dominant one. Even a seemingly accidental and unmotivated tense-aspect split found in many ergative languages (Croft 2001: 169) can be motivated functionally.

However, when it comes to markedness of ergativity in terms of complexity, Nichols (1993: 57), holds that it is indeed structurally more complex than accusativity, and typologists have also pointed to the unequal status of ergativity and accusativity based on the cross-linguistic observation that accusative verb agreement does combine with ergative case-marking in some languages, but never the other way around (Croft 2001: 153; Nichols 1999: 91). This latter observation also suggests that if there is a diachronic shift in alignment from ergativity (both in terms of case and agreement) to increased accusativity, such a shift would have to take place first in the agreement pattern, not the other way around. This and the hierarchical relation between a few other manifestations of ergativity is captured in the so-called Subject Construction Hierarchy (Croft 2001: 155, 159–161):

case > agreement > relivization > purposive > coordination

It is certainly possible to argue for the functionality of a variety of alignment systems, for an expected distribution of them vis-à-vis each other, for the likelihood of one system to develop into a certain other one or to find semantic or functional reasons for the retention of cross-linguistically rare systems. But it has also been noted by typologists working with large samples that “[h]istorical aspects relating to descent and contact appear to be just as relevant” (Bickel 2010: 441) or that “the chances of finding a specific alignment set on a specific pronoun in a specific language may just as well be determined by the fact that the language inherited its pronoun system from its ancestor language or that the case distribution assimilated to neighbouring languages” (Bickel & Witzlack-Makarevich 2008: 18). The latter is also expanded on by Filimonova (2005), who goes at great length showing problems and counter-evidence (from e.g. HKIA languages) to predictions based on well-known referential hierarchies.

Nichols (1993: 58; 2003: 295) further describes ergativity as a geographically recessive feature vis-à-vis accusativity. While all-accusative families as well as all-accusative areas are common world-wide, ergativity is not necessarily present in all languages even where ergativity happens to be an areal feature, and rarely is it preserved in all descendant languages of an ergative ancestor. On the other hand, it is a moderately stable feature within families, and typological studies lend support to the idea that the presence of ergative neighbours favours the retention of it.

5.2 Areal pressures

Relating to how Bickel (2007:239) describes the re-orientation of modern typology from asking “what’s possible?” to increasingly asking “what’s where why?” it is indeed possible and even more interesting to view today’s diversity among the HKIA languages as the result of areal, or rather subareal, pressures, or to use a more well-known term, contact-induced change. Especially if we use a few more general features as diagnostic tools, we are able to discern three important clusters that also to a large extent line up with geographically continuous areas: one characterized by agenthood strengthening and a distinct A case-marking paired with agreement with the A argument, another by patienthood strengthening, distinct P case-marking and strong tendencies toward abandoning P agreement and a distinct A marking, and a third by persistent P agreement in the perfective and the preservation (and in some cases regularization) of A marking.

5.2.1 *North-eastern agenthood*

First, in the North-east, we find Gilgiti Shina, exemplifying a particular drift away from split ergativity that we may call agenthood strengthening. Here, A marking has been extended from the perfective to the imperfective realm, thereby making greater sense of the inherited ergative (Masica 1991:343) as the A-marked noun phrase became consistently associated with a high degree of agentivity or control over the event action. The same semantic correlates of ergative marking characterize also some of the Tibetan linguistic neighbours to the East, from which this Shina variety seems to have borrowed the morpheme used for A marking. In West Tibetan (among which we find Balti, a language geographically overlapping with some of those Shina varieties), A arguments, almost regardless of tense-aspect, alternate between ergative and nominative marking exactly along those lines, and, although it is less common, S arguments can receive ergative marking as well (Zeisler 2004:628–633). The latter might also be related to the “semantic alignment” of A and S that we saw examples of in Kashmiri which also happens to be spoken next door to Ladakhi (another West Tibetan variety). It is probably no mere coincidence that Nepali, which like Shina shows agreement with the A argument even when it is overtly (i.e. ergatively) case-marked (Verbeke 2011:148), also is spoken in an area bordering the Tibeto-Burman world. Here, too, the use of A marking has spread from perfective to imperfective constructions (Verbeke 2011:163), and it seems not too farfetched to suggest either a Tibetan substratum in the region now occupied by Shina or Nepali, or a substratal effect of some other now extinct language or language family. The latter might even be one related to the isolate Burushaski, which along with Gilgiti Shina and some Tibetan varieties in the region exhibits A marking that is more or less independent of tense or aspect (Berger 1998:66). That HKIA in the form of Shina is a relative newcomer in the upper reaches of the Indus River, probably with

a historical homeland somewhere in the south or southeast of its present geographical distribution, or even outside of it, is confirmed by historical as well as linguistic findings (Schmidt 1985; Schmidt & Kohistani 2008: 1–2).

An intermediate stage in the above development regarding case-marking can be seen in closely-related Kohistani Shina. This variety still differentiates between two A markings (one older, fully integrated in the inflectional system, and one younger that is only used in the imperfective). Hook (1996: 149) refers to these two (with reference to Gultari Shina) as “native” vs. “borrowed”, with the “borrowed” being the only one surviving in Gilgiti, thus having spread from a restricted use (with imperfective verb forms only) to becoming a consistent A marker. Already Bailey (1924: 211) suggested that the two markings have different origins, one Indo-Aryan and the other Tibetan, also reflected in the terminology of Hook and Koul (2004: 213–214).

The Gilgiti and Kohistani Shina case-marking of A regardless of tense was also accompanied by the appearance of agreement with the A argument and the subsequent (and probably gradual) disappearance of any remaining P agreement. Kashmiri, with its double (A and P) agreement, can be seen as an intermediary stage (as suggested by Masica 1991: 343) on its way to consistent A agreement. On the other hand we may have to allow for the possibility that P agreement was lost altogether before agreement with the A argument developed in Gilgiti Shina. For instance, in Indus Kohistani (Examples (37) and (38)), we can observe a loss of P agreement (in the perfective), mainly attributable to apocope, without any trace of A agreement yet arising in its stead.

Indus Kohistani

- (37) *gada se~ guzar kir me guzar kir*
 again 3SG.ERG shot do.PST 1SG.ERG shot do.PST
 ‘Then he fired again and I also fired.’ (Rensch, Decker & Hallberg 1992: 228)
- (38) *sople sople mutyo so thu ha~ patyo ma thu*
 slowly slowly ahead 3SG.NOM be.PST and behind 1SG.NOM be.PST
 ‘Slowly (we went), he was ahead and I was behind.’ (Rensch, Decker & Hallberg 1992: 227)

The Gilgiti combination of consistent ergative case assignment and accusative agreement has led some scholars to speak of a “mock ergative” (Berger 1992: 21), but it would be more relevant to regard both developments as instances of agenthood strengthening.

5.2.2 Western patienthood

In the West, we find the areal accumulation of another characteristic development, one mainly tied to the P argument, hence labelled patienthood strengthening. Here we

find a cluster of varieties that have developed overt case-marking of the P argument. This seems to be regardless of whether the language also singles out A with a specific marking or not. Often, what was a more limited goal- or recipient marking device has become a more general object marker, in some cases arising in the imperfective and subsequently spreading to the perfective. For a number of the languages in the region we can reconstruct a scenario by which the previously zero-marked (or absolutely marked) pronoun in a P argument role has developed case-marking identical to that used with a goal or a recipient role. Hindi-Urdu is an example of a language where the “new” P marker *kō* continues to have other functions, such as the marker of recipients and goals (Schmidt 1999: 70–72). In e.g. Palula, however, the oblique pronominal form used with P arguments is historically a dative case, but in the modern-day language, recipients as well as goals normally need to be marked by an additional postposition *the* ‘to’. In many of those languages there are further conditions governing the use of P marking, such as definiteness, specificity or animacy.

Overt P marking is present in the Chitral Group languages as well as in the geographically adjacent Kohistani, Pashai, Kunar Group languages, and in Palula (albeit a Shina language, it is presently spoken in an environment dominated by other HKIA languages). Outside of the HKIA languages in this part of the Hindukush, P marking of definite referents is also reported for the Nuristani languages Prasun and Waigali (Edelman 1983: 47). In a number of the Iranian Pamir languages, also at home in this Western sphere of our focus region, various forms of a postposition *az* ‘from’ has to different degrees grammaticalized into a new P marker, added to oblique case forms. This addition originally served the purpose of differentiating the P argument from an otherwise identically (non-zero-) marked A argument (Payne 1980). The resulting system seems to be particularly prone to rid itself of any remaining ergative alignment and drift towards accusative alignment, and it is probably no coincidence that it is in this particular region we find the only purely accusatively aligned HKIA languages in close proximity (at least historically) to Nuristani Prasun, which also lacks any traces of ergativity (Edelman 1983: 56). There is in fact no firm evidence that HKIA Khovar and Kalasha (representing the first wave of Indo-Aryan northward expansion (Morgenstierne 1932: 51)) would ever have developed the type of split ergativity that was in place already in MIA and that has characterized most other Indo-Aryan languages at some stage ever since. At least it seems that such alignment features would never have become fully system-defining within any of their tenses, a claim supported by i.e. the preservation of the old preterite tense, as already mentioned. This either suggests that the Chitral Group languages branched off from other Indo-Aryan languages as well as from other HKIA languages even before the point when the OIA participial construction became the standard expression of past tenses, or that a common ancestor to both Kalasha and Khovar arose in an ancient language-contact situation as the result of a minor but prestigious Indo-Aryan tongue being learned imperfectly as a

second language by a larger group of speakers of a language with clearly accusative alignment features (Thomason 2001: 74–76).¹⁷

In neighbouring Gawarbatī and Dameli, however, A marking is still in place, reflecting an earlier split ergative stage, but any traces of P agreement seem to be lost. Most likely, Persian has stood as an important, perhaps the most important, subareal model for the languages in this part of the Hindukush, well beyond the borders of Afghanistan. As far as Persian core argument marking is concerned, only P arguments receive non-zero case-marking, never any A arguments, and agreement is invariably with the A argument. P marking is by means of a clitic *rā* that may follow on a pronoun or a noun, and like in many of the HKIA languages already described the use of this P marker is conditional, in the Persian case particularly associated with the identifiability of a referent (Roberts 2009: 186–187).

In some languages this has resulted in a tripartite case-differentiation, but in other languages, the “new” P marker is, or has become, identical with the inherited A marker, thus displaying a {S} vs. {A, P} differentiation. The latter alignment seems dysfunctional (and earlier predicted to be rare or non-existent (Kibrik 1979: 64; Comrie 1978: 334)), but nevertheless it crops up in subsystems of various languages, in Dameli, in Pashai, in a few Pamir languages (Payne 1980), in Gultari Shina (Peter Edwin Hook 1996: 149), and possibly also in Sawi (Buddruss 1967: 33), a Shina offshoot in Afghanistan surrounded by Gawarbatī. However, Arkadiev (2009) has argued for a functionally-based explanation even of such a system. According to him, the semantic/pragmatic properties of the arguments are more crucial for the actual cases being overtly marked and overrides a more generally-defined discriminatory principle. He further adds that the realization is a matter of what language-particular argument marking devices happen to be available. In a number of Iranian languages the only possible contrast is one between zero and a single non-zero marker, which therefore produces a “non-distinctive” A=P vs S system, whereas languages such as Hindi-Urdu have two non-zero markers at its disposal and thus can make an “over-distinctive” tripartite case differentiation (2009: 158).

Two other processes observed in some (but not all) formerly ergative languages that have developed a P marker are the loss of overt A marking and a shift from P agreement to A agreement. The latter we also saw above in connection with agenthood strengthening and could possibly be deemed an entirely separate and more general

17. Another obvious feature setting Khawar and Kalasha apart from most other Indo-Aryan languages is their complete lack of any grammatical gender distinctions. If that loss is indeed a reflection of the same process of shift-induced interference, the substratum in question is highly unlikely to be another Indo-Aryan or even Indo-Iranian language. Bashir (1988: 402–403) has for instance suggested that proto-Kalasha-Khawar was spoken in an area with significant Turkic presence.

shift away from a highly marked agreement pattern. The waning of or an unstable status of A marking, however, is observed in some of the languages of the region that have already developed case-marking of P that sets it apart from zero-marked S. This was pointed out by Morgenstierne about Pashai (see 4.6), and by Lunsford (2001:70) about Torwali nouns. In the latter case, the investigator concedes that there can be grammatical contrasts, not yet sufficiently documented, made suprasegmentally only (not unlike the complex tonal contrasts involved in many morphological processes in neighbouring Gawri (Baart 1999: 13–16)).

In yet other cases, loss of A marking is observed in a subset of nouns. In Palula, A marking is by means of a number of different non-zero case forms, related to referential categories, noun classes and number. It is, however, entirely missing in a declension almost exclusively made up by feminine nouns. In the singular, the former nominative/oblique contrast has been neutralized due to regular phonological development, whereas in the plural, what once was the oblique marker, *-m*, has been reinterpreted as a plural marker for that particular declension (Liljegren 2008: 103). Thus, in Example (39), A is zero-marked (*méemi* FSG), while agreement is with P (*čhoót* MSG) in gender and number. The application of plural-*m* is displayed in Example (40).

Palula

- (39) *kačamuš-íi méemi tas the čhoót*
 Katomosh-GEN grandmother 3SG.OBL to cheese
dít-u hín-u
 give.PFV-MSG be.PRS-MSG
 ‘Katamosh’ grandmother gave him cheese.’ (Text data)
- (40) *har koó páanj angúri-m dhút-a the har-áan-a*
 every any five finger-PL mouth-OBL to take-PRS-MPL
 ‘Everyone moves his five fingers to his mouth.’ (Local proverb)

5.2.3 Southern P-agreement

Finally, in the South or Southeast, we find a persistent verbal agreement with the P argument, while that in various ways has been compromised in other parts of the HKIA region. This feature is in itself not an innovation, instead an important feature associated with the proto-system found in MIA, and its preservation or reinforcement is likely to be the effect of influential areal models rather than any specific historical linguistic process common to this cluster. The clearest examples are found within the Kohistani Group, i.e. languages that for a long time have existed alongside varieties belonging either to the Punjabi cluster, i.e. in a sense more “typical” Indo-Aryan languages, or Iranian Pashto, which although being Iranian exhibits alignment features more akin to mainstream Indo-Aryan than what is found in most other modern Iranian languages. This type of pressure is further reinforced in modern times by the

ever-growing importance of Urdu as the national lingua franca and carrier *par excellence* of media and education. Like in Hindi-Urdu, there is a clear formal differentiation between non-zero marked A and non-zero-marked P in the languages of this subarea. Such a three-way case differentiation is likely to have a stabilizing effect on this particular type of aspect-split system.

The scopes of these three areal models are non-exclusive and there is a great deal of overlap, particularly between the latter two. It should be noted that it is in an extreme south-eastern transitional zone between the subarea characterized by strong agenthood and the subarea characterized by P agreement that we find Kashmiri with its intriguing double agreement, and it is similarly in the southwestern corner of the HKIA region, where the areal models favouring patienthood and P agreement compete for influence, that we find Pashai, exhibiting another double agreement system.

6. Conclusion

The present survey has revealed a great range of variation among the Indo-Aryan languages of the Greater Hindukush region. By investigating overt case-marking and verb agreement in a sample of 12 languages, we observed that the core arguments A, S and P are aligned in six distinct ways, largely excluding a number of language-specific idiosyncrasies and additional alignment conditions. One of those six identified types is purely accusative, whereas the remaining five manifest ergativity in at least some of its subsystems.

In contrast with the single-dimensional conclusions drawn in most previous studies of alignment features in the area or in related languages, a multi-cause model is suggested to account for the present-day diversity as well as historical and future pathways of change. It is acknowledged that we need to take language-particular developments, general tendencies as well as contact-induced areal features into account, recognizing that it is the latter in particular that needs to be given explanatory primacy. Language-particular developments would e.g. account for certain displays of case syncretism that vary to a great deal even between relatively closely related languages, or for the neutralization of verb agreement due to phonological processes. A general tendency is a gradual drift away from ergativity, here in the form of a combination of overt A case and P agreement in the perfective, toward accusativity, often by a change (or regularization) in the agreement pattern followed by changes in the case system. This lines up with large-scale cross-linguistic studies, in which the recessiveness of ergativity vis-à-vis accusativity is evident. However, only by looking at area or subarea specific features and forces are we able to make any greater sense of the significant intragenealogical and regional-internal differences in this “drift”.

Three geographical clusters have been identified, each of them related to areal features that go well beyond the region itself as well as including neighbouring non-HKIA languages. A first cluster is located in the North-east, characterized by the combination of {S, P} case alignment and {S, A} agreement alignment. While the change from a part-ergative verb agreement pattern to an accusative one can be attributed to a more general “accusativity drift”, a spread of A marking from the perfective into the imperfective is more likely an effect of a Tibetan (or possibly Burushaski) substratum, in the (HKIA) Shina varieties of this subregion. A second cluster is located in the West, characterized by overt P marking, arising historically in the imperfective and subsequently spreading to the perfective. This subregion is part of a larger area where Persian (in various regional shapes) is an important superstratum, a language with {S, A} case alignment and {S, A} agreement alignment alike. Many of the Iranian languages within this sphere have gone from split ergative to purely accusative systems, and the Nuristani and Indo-Aryan languages spoken in the vicinity are either entirely accusative (and have perhaps always been so) or seem to be losing their remaining ergativity features. A third cluster is located in the South, characterized by consistent {S, P} verb agreement in the perfective and {S, A} agreement in the imperfective. This is a retention feature, preserving the tense-aspect conditioned ergativity also present in the Indo-Aryan ancestor language, but now co-existing with various other, more recently developing, alignment features, such as a specific P case or an additional layer of A agreement. This particular split ergativity, which in larger cross-linguistic perspective is “recessive” and “prone to loss” (Nichols 2003: 295), is also very often further reinforced by the development of a unique and invariant A marker (contrasting with multi-task A marking and a certain allophonic variation in the ancestor language). This subregion is the northernmost extension of a large area where Hindi-Urdu and languages with similar alignment patterns (including Iranian Pashto) have served as important superstrata.

In a longer-time perspective, the mountainous Greater Hindukush (also referred to with the largely overlapping term Pamir-Himalaya region) was for a very long time a residual zone (Nichols 1999: 21), similar to e.g. the Caucasus, characterized by a higher genetic density than both the Central Asian steppe region to the North or the plains to the South, and with a high structural diversity and no shared lingua franca across the whole region. In more recent times, however, several surrounding spread zones have gradually encroached on this former residual zone, thus gradually reducing its degree of diversity, and making it look more like a transitional zone. This development is likely to continue in the future, and most likely with a gradually increasing domination of what was described as a southern cluster, with Urdu as its primary vehicle by being the most important second language and for most people also their first, and often only, language of literacy.

7. Directions for further research

The survey conducted and the analysis of its findings is to be seen as part of a larger undertaking, namely an areal-typological characterization of the Greater Hindukush region. Following the suggestions put forward by Koptjevskaja-Tamm (2010: 582–584), such a study should ideally encompass a detailed description of particular linguistic domains across languages (the micro-perspective), an evaluation of the former against general typological findings (the macro-perspective), as well as an explanation for the observed similarities. All of these three components are somewhat represented in this study as far as alignment patterns are concerned, perhaps with the addition that we are equally interested in accounting for significant, and in some ways unexpected, differences, too. Naturally, this needs to be supplemented with even more detailed studies in each of the languages for which there is still a lack of adequate and up-to-date language data, taking even additional manifestations of alignment into account (as already mentioned above), and we would also have to give more attention to the same phenomena in the non-HKIA languages of the region. However, in order to arrive at a more complete, non-speculative, typological profile of the Greater Hindukush region, a number of other linguistic features would have to be surveyed in a similar fashion, such as the inventory of retroflex sounds, tonality, the optionality of copula verbs in nominal and adjectival predication, grammaticalization of evidentiality, manifestations of animacy distinctions, the nature of multi-differentiating deictic systems, the prevalence of co-lexicalized intensifiers, and the use and distribution of overt discourse markers, just to mention a few that seem to be of particular relevance.

Abbreviations

A = the agent-like argument of a two-argument predicate, ABL = ablative, ABS = absolutive, ABST = absent, ACC = accusative, CONT = continuous, CV = converb, DAT = dative, DEF = definite, DEM = demonstrative, EMP = emphasis, ERG = ergative, F = feminine, FUT = future, GEN = genitive, IMP = imperative, INF = infinitive, INST = instrumental, IPFV = imperfective, M = masculine, MID = mid-level (politeness), NEAR = near, NOM = nominative, OBJ = objective, OBL = oblique, P = the patient-like argument of a two-argument predicate, PFV = perfective, PL = plural, POT = potential, PROX = proximate, PRS = present, PST = past, PTCP = participle, Q = question, QT = quotative, REM = remote, S = the sole argument of a one-argument predicate, SBJ = subjunctive, SG = singular, SPC = specific, 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person.

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