Abstract Title: The Alignment System Changes in Tāti Language Group

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The morphosyntax associated with past transitive verbs in most Iranian languages differs from that associated with others. Iranian languages weren't always like this. The Old Iranian period, spoken around three thousand years ago, had a unified accusative alignment in all tenses; however, all the languages attested from the Middle Iranian period (4-3 century BC. to 8-9 century AD.) onwards are characterized by tense-sensitive alignment. The historical evidence shows that all modern Iranian languages must have passed through the tense-sensitive alignment in which the verbal agreement was with an O-past and the case system was an ergative one, while it was nominative-accusative in all other environments. The ergative alignment in Middle Iranian has been preserved in modern Tāti, one of the Iranian languages spoken in north-west of Iran. The different alignments in Tāti dialects are defined using two parameters: 1) The case marking of core arguments, 2) The formal means of cross-referencing core arguments outside of the NPs. Agreement with core arguments in some Tāti dialects is via clitics on other constituents. The alignment in Tāti is tense-sensitive. In present stem verb sentences, all Tāti dialects follow the nominative-accusative case marking which marks the subject of intransitive and transitive verbs with a direct case marker (the morphologically unmarked case), and both determine agreement on the verb; in present tense, object of transitive verbs is marked with an oblique case marker,-e, and plays no role in person agreement with the verb. e.g.

    1. Ahmad hasan-e   mivine. (Tâkestâni dialect of Tâti)

       P.N.   P.N.-Acc. see.Pres:3sg

       'Ahmad sees Hasan.'

In clauses headed by verb forms built with the past stem of transitive verbs, the situation differs in that some Tāti dialects have retained the ergative-absolutive alignment system of the Middle Iranian. In these dialects, subject of transitive verb is marked with the distinct oblique marker,-e, while the object and subject of intransitive verbs are marked with the direct case marker, and both determine agreement on the verb, e.g.

    2. Ahmad-e Hasan buind. (Eshtehârdi dialect of Tâti)

       P.N.-ERG. P.N.   see.Pst:3sg

       'Ahmad saw Hasan.'

The aim of this paper is to show changes in alignment system of past-stem transitive sentences in the other Tāti dialects, e.g.

    3. Ahmad Hasan-eš   bəkəšt. (Tâkestâni dialect of Tâti)

       P.N.   P.N.-Clt:3sg kill.Pst

       'Ahmad killed Hasan.'

In past-stem transitive sentences of these dialects, both subject and direct object are in direct case but there is a clitic attached to the object which cross-references to subject. The loss of ergative marker on the subject can be explained by economic motivation. Since the clitic shows the role of subject, there is no need for the overt ergative marker. This loss can also be attributed to contact with dominant Persian language which follows nominative-accusative in all tenses. The other important change is in the verb which remains the same with all persons and shows agreement with neither the subject nor the object.