

OPTIONAL CASE MARKING IN DARMA (TIBETO-BURMAN)*

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Abstract: In this paper I will explore the limitations of using a single methodology in language description and documentation. Specifically, I will argue as others have (Chelliah 2001; Sherzer 1987; Urban 1991), that multiple methods of data collection are necessary in order to adequately describe a language. To illustrate my point I will examine the distribution of ergative case marking in Darma. Described in early sketches as having a split-ergative system, I demonstrate that the pattern of distribution for the ergative morpheme is not obligatory and that it can appear in a variety of contexts that extend beyond the limits described in the split-system. Using data obtained through multiple methodologies, I show that the use of the ergative is not only optional, but its use may serve a pragmatic function that is not yet fully understood.

Keywords: Tibeto-Burman, Darma, optional case marking, ergative marking, contrastive focus, methodology

1. INTRODUCTION

It is well established that some languages of South Asia exhibit morphological ergativity (Emeneau 1980; Klaiman 1987; Masica 2005) and that the pattern of a subset of these languages is described as a split system (e.g. Hindi and Nepali). In these split systems, the agent of a transitive verb is overtly marked only in the simple past. This is shown in examples (1) & (2) below presented using a practical orthography. In example (1), we find a present continuous construction in which the subject of the transitive verb ‘learn’ is not overtly marked for case. In example (2), however, we find that the subject of the transitive verb ‘read’ is overtly marked with an ergative postposition *ne*. In this construction, the verb is in the simple past; thus it is marked with ergative case.

- (1) ham log hindi siikh rahe hain.
we people Hindi learn PROG are
‘We are learning Hindi.’ (Snell & Weightman 1993: 88)

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- (2) raam ne ek kitaab paṛ^hii
 Ram ERG one book read.PST
 ‘Ram read a book.’ (Snell and Weightman 1993: 125)

The robust nature of this feature (i.e. ergative morphology) has been noted in arguments for characterizing South Asia as a linguistic area (Masica 1982; Subbarao 2008). Ergative marking has either been characterized as one of a large set of defining features for the entire linguistic area (Subbarao 2008: 71-72) or as a feature that is characteristic of a substantial subset of South Asian languages, including the Tibeto-Burman languages (Masica 2005: 12)¹. With this in mind, it is not a surprise that we also find descriptions of Tibeto-Burman languages that attend to the patterns of agent marking and call attention to patterns that might be characterized as split-ergative systems. In some Tibeto-Burman languages the ergative is described as always present on the agent of a transitive verb (e.g. Dolakha Newari as described in Genetti (2007: 106)), while in other languages, the ergative marker is found in a split system (e.g. the Kiranti languages as described by Ebert (1994)), or “imposed by the syntax” (e.g. Kham as described by Watters (2002: 64)). There are other patterns for marking the agentive participants in a clause that are described as ‘rhetorical’ (Tournadre 1991), ‘non-systematic’ (LaPolla 1995), or as ‘optional case marking’ (McGregor 2009); frequently in these languages, the overt marking of case is described as having a pragmatic function (e.g. Meithei as described in Chelliah (1997), Mongsen Ao as described in Coupe (2007), Kurtöp as described in Hyslop (2010), Tibetan as described in Tournadre (1991), and languages described in papers included in this volume).

In this paper, I will present data from a Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Indian Himalayas that was initially described as having a split-ergative system like that found in neighbouring Indo Aryan languages (Krishan 2001b). The data presented here (from Willis 2007 and subsequent fieldwork) show that Darma marks case optionally and suggests that the ergative/agentive marker has pragmatic discursive functions that are not yet fully understood.²

For this paper I will present examples that illustrate the patterns of distribution for the ergative marker that I have found in the discourse and in examples obtained through direct elicitation. I will incorporate my findings from a recent fieldwork trip in an attempt to illustrate the pattern of distribution of the ergative morpheme and provide an account that explains the function of this optional case-marker in Darma. The rest of this paper is organized as follows. In Section 2, I will provide some background information on my research and the Darma

¹ Masica characterizes the ergative as a syntactic feature (2005: 189).

² In this paper I will use the term ‘ergative’. I recognize that I could use ‘agentive’ or some other terminology. I use the term ergative here because this is how it has been described in grammatical sketches (cf. Krishan 2001b; Willis 2007). As Ronald Geluykens recently noted, we cannot label something appropriately until we know what its function is (p.c.). I will adopt this spirit and refer to the morpheme in question (*su*) as the ergative knowing full well that its function may be more consistently pragmatic.

language. In Section 3, I will present the pattern of ergative marking as it was described in Krishan (2001b) and provide examples that support his findings. In section 4, I will present some examples that do not support the claim of a split-ergative system in Darma and in section 5, I will discuss my investigation into the possible function(s) of the ergative marker. Finally, in Section 6, I will present my conclusions and suggestions for future exploration.

2. BACKGROUND

In this section, I will present a brief description of the social situation of the area where Darma is spoken, describe my methods of data collection, and provide a brief overview of some aspects of the Darma language³ that are relevant to the current discussion.

2.1. The People

The Darma are one of three Rung tribes that live in the Dharchula subdistrict of the Pithoragarh district in Uttarakhand, India. The Census of 2001 put the number of Rung people in Darma villages at around 2,600 (Office of the Registrar General 2001). Based on my research experience, I estimate that fewer than 2,000 people speak the Darma language.⁴

Historically the Darma and the other Rung people participated in transhumance (Hoon 1996: 91), spending the winter in villages near Dharchula Town and the summer in traditional villages in the upper valleys. Before the Indo-China conflict (i.e. before 1962), the Darma participated in trade at the Tibetan market in Taklakot (Purang). Nowadays, many Darma do not migrate to their traditional villages and few have resumed trade in Tibet after the border reopened. There is a growing diaspora population and the children of those who move away rarely know any Darma beyond basic kinship terminology. Local children are increasingly encouraged to focus on mastering Hindi and English to improve their chances of landing a civil service job or some other prestigious position.

2.2. Methodology

The data included in this paper were collected during four field trips to the Dharchula subdistrict (2002-2005 and 2010). I employed three methods when gathering data: direct elicitation; a discourse-centred approach to data collection (Sherzer 1987; Urban 1991); and participant observation (Duranti 1997). The latter methodology allowed me to gain access to members of the Darma-speaking

³ Darma is sometimes called Darmiya in the literature. It is also sometimes lumped together with its sister languages Byansi and Chaudangsi under the term Rangboli. While only preliminary documentation and comparative work has been done with all three varieties, it is believed that Darma is distinct from Byansi and Chaudangsi (Lewis 2009; Krishan 2001b; Trivedi 1991).

⁴ This is based on the fact that not all Darma people speak the Darma language. A current trend in the area is to not transmit the Rung languages to children; Hindi and English are currently favoured for their prestige.

community who let me record them using Darma in a variety of contexts. By participating in the local community, I was able to record people speaking Darma in conversation, at weddings, funerals and other rite-of-passage ceremonies, during storytelling sessions, and so on and so forth. Recordings were then transcribed and translated during interview sessions with native-speaker consultants. The practice of transcription and translation frequently led to direct elicitation of data. This was usually done to fill in gaps and explore areas that interested me. Whenever possible, I confirmed patterns with multiple consultants. While I emphasize the importance of natural discourse and using examples from the resulting texts, the data presented here draw heavily on examples obtained during direct elicitation sessions. It is important to note that some of this exploration into the distribution of the ergative marker would not have occurred had I not analysed natural discourse. In fact, it is the use of all three methods of data collection, and the interplay between the methods, that has enriched my analysis (this approach was influenced by Chelliah 2001). The issue of methodology will be discussed again below.

2.3. The Language

The Rung languages are categorized as Tibeto-Burman, and while the classification of these three languages is not agreed upon, Darma is generally characterized as a sister language to the other two Rung languages Byangsi⁵ and Chaudangsi (whose autonoms are Byangkho and Bangba, respectively). The three are usually classified as members of the Almora branch of the West(ern) Himalayan/Himalayish, Tibeto-Kinauri languages (Krishan 2001a; Lewis 2009; Thurgood 2003; Trivedi 1991; Willis 2007). Some characteristics of Darma that are relevant to the current discussion are outlined in the following subsections.

2.3.1. Basic Constituent Order

The basic constituent order found in pragmatically neutral declarative clauses is SV/AOV.⁶ To illustrate this, I am relying on elicited examples for a variety of reasons. The primary reason is because elicited examples tend to have all of the participants overtly realized, which is frequently not the case in natural discourse. Additionally, the order of constituents in natural discourse is quite variable (for discursive purposes), which makes it difficult to present examples of the basic constituent order. In example (3)⁷ we find an intransitive construction with the

⁵ Byangsi is also referred to as Byansi in the literature.

⁶ Here I am using SV/AO to represent the core arguments in intransitive and transitive constructions, respectively. These terms will be discussed again in the next sub-section.

⁷ Following the gloss for each example I will include information about the source of the data. Examples that come from direct elicitation are identified as 'Elicited'. Examples that come from natural discourse are labelled with the title of the text or genre of discourse from which they originate. For example, 'Hair-cutting Ceremony' indicates that the source was (a) natural discourse and (b) the theme of the text from which the example originates is the ceremonial

third-person subject preceding the verb ‘come’. In example (4) we see the first-person agent preceding the object; the verb is in final position.

- (3) [ʔo] ra-ni.
3SG come-3.NPT
‘He is coming.’ (Elicited)
- (4) [ʃi su] [rɛ] po-di.
1SG ERG cow tie-1SG.NPT
‘I am tying the cow.’ (Elicited)

The order of objects found in Darma is similar to that found in other languages of South Asia (Subbarao 2008: 55). So we find that when there are two objects, the primary object precedes the secondary object; and that the primary object is overtly marked⁸. This is illustrated in example (5) with the verb ‘give’. In this example, the agent is marked with the ergative morpheme, and the primary object is overtly marked with the dative morpheme. The primary object precedes the secondary object, which is followed by the verb.

- (5) [gɛ su] [ʃi ʃo] [lubuŋ] da-dan.
2SG ERG 1SG DAT book give-2SG.NPT
‘You give the book to me.’ (Elicited)

2.3.2. Verb Classes

Verbs in Darma are divided into two classes, intransitive and transitive, which can be determined through patterns of conjugation in finite constructions. The verbs that belong to the intransitive verb class have one argument (S) and are found with the *h-series* of suffixes in the non-past. The verbs that belong to the transitive verb class have two (or more) arguments (A and O) and are found with the *d-series* of suffixes in the non-past. Ditransitive verbs are members of the transitive verb class. A summary of the morphemes for each verb class is presented in Table 1 below.

<i>Verb Class</i>	<i>1 SG</i>	<i>1PL, 2SG & 2PL</i>	<i>3SG & 3PL</i>
Intransitive	-hi	-hen	-ni
Transitive	-di	-dan	-da

Table 1. Non-past verb morphology

haircut that boys receive. Similarly, ‘Conversation’ indicates that the example comes from a recorded conversation.

⁸ Subbarao (2008) uses the terms indirect object (=primary) and direct object (=secondary) in his discussion of this pattern in the South Asian Languages. I have modified the terms to fit into the current discussion.

2.3.3. Role Markers

In Darma, participants are morphologically marked using particles⁹ and postpositions (see chapters 7 and 14 of Willis 2007 for more detail). Relevant to the discussion here are the core participants found in Darma S, A, O. S is the subject of an intransitive clause; it is not overtly marked. A is the agent of a transitive clause; it is marked with an ergative morpheme. O is the object of a transitive clause; it is not overtly marked. In ditransitive constructions the primary object is overtly marked with the dative morpheme¹⁰, while the secondary object is unmarked. Table 2, below, provides a summary of the morphology associated with each participant. Both the ergative and dative morphemes have more than one form; the alternative pronunciations seem to be in free variation. Sometimes a single speaker will use variant forms within the same text.

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Agent</i>	<i>Primary Object</i>	<i>Secondary Object</i>
∅	su ~ ju	ju ~ jo ~ su	∅

Table 2. Case-Marking Morphology

As we find cross-linguistically and in other Tibeto-Burman languages, the ergative marker in Darma has the same form as the instrumental marker.¹¹ This is illustrated in examples (6)-(8).

- (6) niŋ su p^harsa su nadu pyɛl-n-su.
 1PL ERG axe INSTR DEM.NEUT chop-1PL-PST
 ‘We chopped it with an axe.’ (Elicited)

- (7) gondu su suda ga-dan.
 cow.urine INSTR purification.LN do-1PL.NPT
 ‘We purify it with cow urine’ [Lit: ‘(We) do the purification with cow urine.’] (Ceremony for Cuti Gabla)

⁹ These are described as particles here and in Willis (2007), but may indeed be clitics. I wish to thank Bettina Zeisler for suggesting that these particles may in fact be clitics. While I agree that this may be the case, I have yet to analyse them as such.

¹⁰ The dative particle is also found in ‘have’ constructions and is used to mark experiencer subjects and place of origin.

¹¹ It is interesting to note that while the agentive marker is not a *nV* as we find in other Tibeto-Burman languages (cf. *nə* ‘instigator of action’ as described in Meithei (Chelliah 1997:107), =*na* ‘ergative’ as described in Dolakha Newar (Genetti 2007: 101), and *nu*³³ as described in Yongning Na (Lidz this volume), there is a *na* in Darma that functions as an emphatic marker.

- (8) ʔan su¹² k^ha le-yaŋ?
 DEM.PROX INSTR Q AUX.EX-FUT
 ‘What will become of this?’ [Literally: ‘What will be with this?’] (Story of Kiti Phondar)

3. THE SPLIT ERGATIVE PATTERN

Because the ergative marker in Darma was described by Krishan (2001b) as patterning like neighbouring Indo Aryan languages (e.g. Hindi and Nepali), I anticipated finding such a pattern during fieldwork. That is, I expected to confirm that agents of transitive verbs would always be overtly marked with the ergative morpheme in past constructions. And, in fact, that is what I found in initial elicitation sessions. A typical minimal pair obtained via elicitation is shown in examples (9) and (10) below; these examples support Krishan’s split-ergativity hypothesis. In example (9), we find the agent of a non-past transitive verb ‘give’ without an overt case marker. In example (10), we find that the agent is overtly marked with an ergative postposition when ‘give’ is in the past. Similarly, in (11)-(12) below, we find transitive constructions in the past, along with agents that are overtly marked with an ergative morpheme.

- (9) ʔi gε lubuŋ da-di
 1SG 2SG book give-1SG.NPT
 ‘I give you the book.’ (Elicited)
- (10) ʔi su gε lubuŋ da-yo
 1SG ERG 2SG book give-1SG.PST
 ‘I gave you the book.’ (Elicited)
- (11) ʔu su gε gu lubuŋ ma-k^hwi-su.
 3SG ERG 2SG POSS book NEG-steal-3.PST
 ‘He didn’t steal your book.’ (Elicited)
- (12) ʔu su ʔu ʔako-n ni-ʔu.
 3SG ERG 3SG abuse-NOM AUX.EQ-PST
 ‘He abused him.’ (Elicited)

There is also evidence from natural discourse that supports the split-ergativity hypothesis. This is shown in examples (13)-(16) below. In example (13), we find that ‘people’, the subject of the non-past intransitive clause, is unmarked. And in example (14) we find an ergative morpheme in a construction that has a past

¹² Bettina Zeisler has pointed out that this could be interpreted as an ablative. The postpositions associated with oblique roles are often complex (i.e. disyllabic). Some of these complex postpositions have alternative pronunciations associated with them that are monosyllabic (e.g. the ablative, k^haχcu, sometimes appears as su). While a detailed discussion of postpositions is beyond the scope of this paper, this type of syncretism warrants further exploration, especially with regards to the parallel pattern in Tibetan that Zeisler has pointed out to me.

transitive verb. In Darma verbs are frequently found in nominalised constructions. As we can see in examples (15)-(16) below, we find overtly marked agents in these constructions as well. In each of these constructions, the nominalised form is the semantic verb of the construction, and it is transitive.

(13) t^han da, mi jɛn yu k^harcu ra-ni.
 now CONT person PL down ABL come-3.NPT
 ‘Nowadays, people are coming from downside.’ (Traditional Foods)

(14) ...gɛ su ʔalaŋ kam ga-n-su.
 2SG ERG this.much work do-1PL-PST
 ‘...you did this much work.’ (Story of Kiti Phondar)

(15) hã niŋ su hrunt^ham ga-n ni-n-su.
 then 1PL ERG woolwork do-NOM AUX.EQ-1PL-PST
 ‘Then we did the woolwork.’ (Woolwork)

(16) hã niŋ bujatsime jan su na re lan
 then 1PL women PL ERG EMPH field work
 tso-n ni-n-su.
 finish-NOM AUX.EQ-1PL-PST
 ‘Then we women only finished the fieldwork.’ (Woolwork)

None of this data would be considered surprising within the context of a split-ergative system; it is expected. What would not be expected would be examples of non-past transitive constructions with an overtly marked agent or examples of past transitive constructions in which the agent is not overtly marked. Once I began working more intensely with natural discourse, this is precisely what I found in my data. Examples cropped up in which the case marking did not follow the split-ergative pattern previously described. I began to notice examples such as (17) and (18) below in which an ergative morpheme appeared in non-past constructions with transitive verbs.

(17) hã niŋ sare suŋ su yeja da-da.
 then 1PL whole.LN village ERG guest do-3PL.NPT
 ‘Then our whole village attends to (= does) the guests.’ (Marriage Proposal)

(18) la ru ʔaŋgu^hi bana ru maŋgal ɕya-ta,
 hand LOC finger.LN neck LOC necklace.LN put.on-3.NPT
 byolo su.
 groom ERG
 ‘(He) puts the ring on the hand, the necklace on the neck, the groom (does).’ (Marriage Proposal)

Exploring this further during elicitation sessions, I found that consultants were willing to provide minimal pairs in non-past constructions demonstrating that the ergative marker was not restricted to past constructions. This is illustrated in the minimal pairs (19)-(20), (21)-(22), and (23)-(24) below.

- (19) **ji** **ne** **re** **kuŋ** **ru** **lub-di.**
 1SG DEM.NEUT cow grave LOC bury-1SG.NPT
 ‘I am burying the cow in a grave.’ (Elicited)
- (20) **ji** **su** **ne** **re** **kuŋ** **ru** **lub-di.**
 1SG ERG DEM.NEUT cow grave LOC bury-1SG.NPT
 ‘I am burying the cow in a grave.’ (Elicited)
- (21) **ji** **c^hama** **pyel-di.**
 1SG vegetables cut-1SG.NPT
 ‘I am cutting vegetables.’ (Elicited)
- (22) **ji** **su** **c^hama** **pyel-di.**
 1SG ERG vegetables cut-1SG.NPT
 ‘I am cutting vegetables.’ (Elicited)
- (23) **?u** **çile** **tʃil-da.**
 3SG turban wrap-3SG.NPT
 ‘He is wrapping the turban.’ (Elicited)
- (24) **?u** **su** **çile** **tʃil-da.**
 3SG ERG turban wrap-3SG.NPT
 ‘He is wrapping the turban.’ (Elicited)

Perhaps more surprising is that I also found that consultants were willing to exclude the ergative marker in past constructions. This is shown in example (25).

- (25) **?u** **nimaŋ** **çile** **tʃil-ju.**
 3SG yesterday turban wrap-3SG.NPT
 ‘He wrapped the turban yesterday.’ (Elicited)

During these elicitation sessions, however, I was unable to ascertain how the presence or absence of an ergative marker affected the interpretation. The variety of contexts in which it appears, including an intransitive construction, strongly suggest that it may have pragmatic connotations along the lines of the rhetorical use of the ergative in Tibetan (Tournadre 1991). I will return to this discussion in section 4 below.

So why did Krishan describe the pattern as a split ergative system? There are a couple of possible explanations both of which are rooted in methodology. The first is that the language of contact interfered with the data. While Krishan does not explicate his methodology in great detail, it appears that he relied heavily on direct elicitation and used Hindi as his contact language. During my own research

I found that during direct elicitation sessions where Hindi was the contact language, speakers would consistently provide data that reproduced an Indo-Aryan-type split-ergative system. That is, when consultants were presented with an example in Hindi and asked to translate, they would only mark the ergative in Darma when the Hindi stimulus was in the simple past.

The second possible explanation for Krishan's findings is that because he relied so heavily on direct elicitation, the pragmatic interpretation for his examples remains unclear. That is because the utterances that he obtained were largely devoid of context, we do not know whether they are pragmatically neutral or what pragmatic factors might be relevant¹³. This explanation is of course intrinsically tied to the first: If one uses direct elicitation, the contact language will influence one's data. If the ergative marker in Darma has a pragmatic function, we would expect context to be relevant to its use. Since elicited examples are frequently devoid of context, one would expect that in these examples the pattern of distribution of the ergative morpheme would not be consistent with usage patterns.

4. FURTHER EVIDENCE AGAINST A SPLIT-ERGATIVE SYSTEM

Before I suggest a possible reanalysis of the pattern found in Darma, I want to outline some additional peculiarities in the distribution of the ergative marker in Darma. Some of these so-called peculiarities may not be at all strange since we find similar patterns in other Tibeto-Burman languages (some of which are discussed in this volume). In this section I will present examples of the ergative in a variety of non-past constructions, including the future¹⁴. I will also illustrate that the ergative appears in other contexts such as the permissive, conditional, and auxiliary constructions. Finally, I will provide examples in which participants are unmarked and omitted entirely. All of these examples are intended to illustrate that a revision of the split-ergative hypothesis is necessary if we are to account for the data.

4.1. Ergative marking in non-past

In contrast to the pattern of the ergative appearing exclusively in past constructions with a transitive verb, we have looked at examples from natural discourse (cf. examples (17) and (18) above) in which the ergative morpheme is

¹³ I do not want the reader to come away with the impression that I perceive Krishan's work to be without merit. On the contrary, his sketch is concise and contains a wealth of information that I found invaluable during my own research. I must also add here that Krishan makes it very clear in the introduction of his sketch that he viewed his description as a preliminary outline of the Darma language. He makes no claims that his analysis is in any way definitive; in fact, he urged that further work needed to be done before the language is lost forever. It is in that spirit that I undertook my description and documentation project.

¹⁴ Thank you to Bettina Zeisler for pointing out a similar pattern in Lhasa Tibetan (see Zeisler 2004: 514-517).

present in non-past transitive constructions. A few more examples are provided in (26)-(28) below.

(26) ...**yɛhar** **ʃɛn** **su** gabla, jo hɛ, tʰo-dan
 clan.name PL ERG deity.name HM.LN toss.ritually-1PL.NPT

or **pɛhar** **ʃɛn** **su** cuti sɛ su
 and.LN clan.name PL ERG deity.name deity INSTR

cu sɛ tʰo-da.

thorn deity toss.ritually-3PL.NPT

‘...(we) Clan X toss ritually for Gabla, and Clan Y tosses ritually for the deity Cuti, the thorn deity.’ (Ceremony for Cuti Gabla)

(27) hã ʔidu su, sɛ ki-laŋ bakte, jo he, ʔa, tʰan,
 then after.that deity worship-CVB time HM.LN HM now

ʔaap^hahinu mi su baŋan gu suruwat ga-da.
 shaman person ERG hymn.LN POSS beginning.LN do-3.NPT

‘Then, after that, during worshipping time, that is, um, now, the shaman does the beginning of our hymns.’ (Ceremony for Cuti Gabla)

(28) sɛ gu ʃakti ra-mu bad, **ʔidu** **mi**
 deity POSS power.LN come-INF after.LN DEM.NONVIS person

su p^huŋlo ʔaŋ-da.

ERG rock lift-3.NPT

‘After the god’s power comes, that man lifts the rock.’ (Ceremony for Cuti Gabla)

Another type of non-past construction found in Darma is the future, which is indicated with a distinct morpheme, *-yaŋ* ~ *-aŋ*, that is followed by the non-past morpheme from either the *d-series* or the *h-series* depending on the transitivity of the verb. We find overtly marked agents in future constructions as shown in examples (29)-(31) below. It is important to note that there are a few verbs that have a distinct form in the future, for example, ‘give’ in example (29) below is *daŋ-* not *da-yaŋ-*. Also, the future can be used to indicate an inferred statement, which is shown in example (31) below. In this example, we find that the transitive verb ‘steal’ is nominalised and followed by an auxiliary with the future morpheme.

(29) ...**ʃi** **su** ʔagar nɛ gaʔ^ho me pu daŋ-di...
 1SG ERG if.LN DEM.NEUT mill fire light give.FUT-1SG.NPT

‘...if I were to set this mill on fire...’ (Story of Kiti Phondar)

(30) **wi** **su** nadu p^harsa su pyɛl-aŋ-da.
 3PL ERG DEM.NEUT axe INSTR chop-FUT-3.NPT

‘They will chop it with an axe.’ (Elicited)

- (31) ʔu su gɛ gu $\text{lup}^{\text{h}}\text{uŋ}$ $\text{ka-k}^{\text{h}}\text{wi-n}$ ni-yaŋ .
 3SG ERG 2 PL POSS book COMPL-steal-NOM AUX.EQ-FUT
 ‘He must have stolen your book.’ (Elicited)

Looking further, we find agents overtly marked in a variety of other non-past constructions. In example (32) below, we find a permissive construction with a transitive verb in which the subject argument is marked with the ergative morpheme. In example (33), we find that conditional expressions that contain a transitive verb can have an overtly marked agent.

- (32) niŋ su $\text{k}^{\text{h}}\text{a}$ $\text{ga-mu}?$
 1PL ERG Q do-PERM
 ‘What should we do?’ (Election)
- (33) ji su nɛ kam $\text{ga-y-}^{\text{h}}\text{ɛ}$, ji ga-y-le .
 1SG ERG DEM.NEUT work.LN do-ANT-COND 1SG do-ANT-INFER
 ‘If I should have done this work then I’d have done it.’ (Woolwork)

As mentioned in section 3 above, nominalised constructions are common in Darma. We saw examples of transitive nominalised constructions in the past with an overtly marked agent (see examples (15)-(16) above). In examples (35) and (36) below, we find overtly marked agents in non-past nominalised constructions. In (34) we find a finite construction in which there is an auxiliary with a non-past marker. And in (35) we find a nominalised verb that is modifying a noun ‘hospice’ in a relative-like construction. In both cases, the nominalised verb (the semantic verb) is transitive, and the agent participant associated with each verb is overtly case marked.

- (34) bir ki-ga-y-n ni-ni , ʔu su .
 all COMPL-do-ANT-NOM AUX.EQ-3.NPT 3SG ERG
 ‘She has done it all.’ (Conversation)
- (35) ... ʔu su ga-y-nu daramsala ...
 3SG ERG make-ANT-NOM hospice.LN
 ‘...the hospices that she had founded...’ [LIT: ‘the hospices she had made’] (Story Jaisuli Burrhi)

The examples in this section indicate that the ergative morpheme is not restricted to past constructions.

4.2. Variable case-marking, omission of arguments

There is evidence in the corpus that arguments need not be marked for case. While the focus of this paper is on the ergative marker, this observation holds for both the ergative and the dative. As we saw in example (5) above, it is possible to have both the agent and the primary object overtly marked in a transitive construction. We find that all combinations are possible in terms of which

argument is overtly marked for case. So in example (36) below, we find that the agent is overtly marked, but the primary object is not. In example (37), we find that agent is not overtly marked while the primary object is overtly marked. And in example (38), we find that neither the agent nor the primary object is overtly marked for case.

(36) **gε** **su** **ji** **lubuŋ** **da-dan.**
 2SG ERG 1SG book give-2SG.NPT
 ‘You give me the book.’ (Elicited)

(37) **gε** **ji** **jo** **lubuŋ** **da-dan.**
 2SG 1SG DAT book give-2SG.NPT
 ‘You give me the book.’ (Elicited)

(38) **gε** **ji** **lubuŋ** **da-dan.**
 2SG 1SG book give-2SG.NPT
 ‘You give me the book.’ (Elicited)

A couple of observations are required at this juncture. First, it is not imperative that participants be overtly expressed. Thus, we find examples where the agent is omitted (as shown in (39) below), and instances where the object is omitted (as shown in (40) and (41) below). Beyond relying on context, the hearer can glean information about the missing subject from the verb because subjects are cross-referenced on the verb in Darma. Specifically, we find that first person plural and second person subjects are cross-referenced with *-n* on the verb in past constructions¹⁵. This cross-reference morpheme precedes the marker for the past. First person singular and third person morphology are distinct in the past.

(39) **niŋ** **ɟyala** **da-da.**
 1PL date give-3.NPT
 ‘(They) give us the date.’ (Marriage Proposal)

(40) **niŋ** **pit^he-n-su.**
 1PL see.off-1PL-PST
 ‘We saw (someone) off.’ (Elicited)

(41) **niŋ** **su** **pit^he-n-su.**
 1PL ERG see.off-1PL-PST
 ‘We saw (someone) off.’ (Elicited)

The second observation is that the pattern for marking the ergative does not appear to be systematic. As such, I will not characterize Darma as having a split-

¹⁵ Finite morphology in the non-past may also include the morpheme that cross-references the subject. In non-past forms, the *-n* appears after the non-past marker (e.g. [-da-n] ‘npt-1pl’), while in past forms it appears before the past morpheme (e.g. [-n-su] ‘1PL-PST’). Discussion of this is beyond the scope of this paper, but this issue is tangentially discussed in Willis (2007).

ergative case-marking system nor will I characterize Darma as having an obligatory case marking system. Evidence that the ergative pattern is not systematic has been provided in examples such as (19)-(25) above and is further illustrated with example (42) below, in which two transitive clauses in the past appear with overt agents that are unmarked.

- (42) **k^hami** ts^ham pan-su, **k^hami** hruŋ ran-su.
 someone wool spin-3.PST someone woolwork weave-3.PST
 ‘Some spun the wool, some wove the woolwork/rugs.’ (Narrative about Woolwork)

5. OPTIONAL CASE-MARKING

Taking the evidence into consideration, we must question the precise role of the ergative marker when it is present. As we have seen up to this point, we find plenty of examples in elicited and natural discourse where the agent of a transitive clause is overtly case marked in non-past and past constructions. But we also find examples in which the overt argument in an intransitive construction is marked with the ergative. It is these examples that force us to examine the distribution of this morpheme more closely.

For example, in (43) below, we find that the third person singular pronoun, which is the subject of an intransitive verb ‘to sit/live’, is overtly marked with the ergative morpheme.

- (43) ...cet ru, ʔu su, ʃo nini, ki raʃa,
 place.name LOC 3SG ERG HM that.LN king.LN
 ʃo nini, ʔu da, raʃa da andergrawnd
 HM 3SG CONT king.LN CONT underground.LN
 ru ʃyuŋ-ʃyε-n le-ʃu.
 LOC live-MID-NOM AUX.EX-PST
 ‘...in Cet, he, that is, that the king, um *he*, *the king* was living underground.’ (Story of Kiti Phondar)

It is the context of this example that provides a clue for us to understand the meaning that an overt ergative marker imparts. In this text the hero, Kiti Phondar, is looking for the local king and cannot find him. It turns out that the king has gone into hiding because he has been threatened. The utterance in (43) comes at the point in the story of Kiti Phondar when we discover the whereabouts of the king. That the local king is in hiding rather than at home in his palace can be interpreted as an unexpected turn of events. In this case the use of the ergative marker appears to indicate, or highlight, that the situation is unusual. This type of pattern was also noted in the Kinnauri texts discussed in Saxena (2007). What is also interesting in example (43) is the presence of the contrastive particle *da*. The contrastive particle is used to contrast one referent with another and is found throughout the corpus. In example (44) below, we find a transitive construction in

In this example, the verb in the first clause is intransitive and the verb in the second clause is transitive. What I would like to highlight is that my consultant noted that first person singular pronoun is acceptable with or without the ergative marker. The context that he provided for an utterance like this is as follows. The speaker's child has been beaten up by someone and the speaker is going to wait for the thug and catch him. If we think of the ergative as having a contrastive or focus function in some instances, then example (47) with the ergative morpheme would be highlighting the first person singular as the one who will wait (as opposed to someone else)¹⁸.

The variability of ergative marking is especially salient in texts. There are examples in the discourse where a single speaker uses an ergative marker in one utterance and leaves it off in another. Examples (48) and (49) below, illustrate this. These two examples come from a recording where the narrator is describing an event that is happening at the time of utterance, so the verbs are in the non-past. The utterances in (48) and (49) occurred consecutively in the narrative. In the first utterance, we find that the agent of 'do' is not case marked, while in the second utterance, the agent of 'give' is overtly marked.

- (48) hã **niŋ** bera ga-dɛn, baʃi ga-dɛn,
 then 1PL song do-1PL.NPT performance do-1PL.NPT
 tʰuŋ-ɕy-ɛn, ʃa-ɕy-ɛn. (-ɕy-ɛn < -ɕi-hɛn)
 dance-MID-1PL.NPT eat-MID-1PL.NPT
 'Then we do songs, (we) do performances, (we) dance, (we) eat.' (Hair-cutting Ceremony)

- (49) hã ʔidu bakte, ʃo nini, **bir mi** **su**
 then DEM.NONVIS time, HM, all person ERG
 ɕyaɕi ʃɛn, ʃamma, kaɬʰo da-dan.
 relative.MAT PL all cloth give-1PL.NPT
 'Then at that time, um, all of us give the relatives, everyone cloth.' (Hair-cutting Ceremony)

Considering that optional ergative marking has been found in other Tibeto-Burman languages, it is not surprising to find such a pattern in Darma. On a recent fieldtrip to Dharchula and the Darma Valley, I ran a pilot test of the hypothesis that the ergative marker has a pragmatic function related to the functions discussed in Tibetan (Tournadre 1991), Kinnauri (Saxena 2007), and Kurtöp (Hyslop 2010). Specifically, I compared the ergative marker with the contrastive particle. As mentioned above, the contrastive particle *da* is used to

¹⁸ I hesitate to define the term 'focus' at this juncture. In this paper, my view of focus with regards to the ergative morpheme in Darma is similar to Saxena's (2007) discussion of the pragmatic functions of the ergative in Kinnauri, Tournadre's (1991) discussion of the pragmatic functions of the ergative in Tibetan, and the discussion of other Tibeto-Burman languages in this volume.

highlight one argument in contrast to another. Examples with the contrastive particle are provided in (50)-(52) below.

(50) **niŋ da** jo he abi kala t^hε-n-ya.
 1SG CONT HM ones.own performance show-1PL-HORT
 ‘Let *us* um give our own performance.’ (Cuti Gabla Ceremony)

(51) **?u da** tsuŋ [...] ga-da.
 3SG CONT lot do-3SG.NPT
 ‘*He* is doing a lot of [inaudible].’ (Conversation)

(52) **wi da** wude wude na de-ju **wi da** bircen
 3PL CONT where where EMPH go-3.PST 3PL CONT everything
 rakord ki-ga-y-n ni-ni.
 record.LN COMPL-make-ANT-NOM AUX.EQ-3.NPT
 ‘*They* went everywhere. *They* have recorded everything.’ (Conversation)

In an effort to figure out how the ergative morpheme might pattern in relation to the contrastive particle, I presented a native-speaker with sentences with and without the ergative marker and sentences with and without a contrastive particle. A few examples from this line of inquiry are provided in (53)-(56) below. All of these examples can be translated as ‘I am washing the house’.

(53) **ji cim** lub-di.
 1SG house wash-1SG.NPT

(54) **ji su cim** lub-di
 1SG ERG house wash-1SG.NPT

(55) **ji da cim** lub-di.
 1SG CONT house wash-1SG.NPT

(56) **ji su da cim** lub-di.
 1SG ERG CONT house wash-1SG.NPT
 ‘I am washing the house.’

All of these examples were judged to be acceptable and were given the same gloss, but my consultant offered contextual information to differentiate the examples. Example (53) was described by my consultant to be appropriate for a person to utter while washing a house. This example was deemed to have no special contrastive or focus meaning associated with it. Both (54) and (55) were judged to be similar in meaning. The appropriate context for each example would be if there were multiple people who could be credited with washing the house, a speaker would utter either (54) or (55) to clarify that he or she was in fact the one who washed the house. The context provided for (56) was: The interlocutor doesn’t know who washed the house (perhaps he or she was off doing something else) and the speaker says this to indicate that he or she was in fact the one who washed the house.

Taking these examples into consideration and looking back at texts where the use of ergative case marking varies, it appears that not only is the use of the ergative case marker optional, but one of its uses is to impart some sort of pragmatic function in which the marked participant is highlighted or contrasted in relationship to something else. In this vein, let us consider examples (57)-(58) below, which come from a narrative of a hair-cutting ceremony as it is happening. The majority of the narrative is from a single speaker, but in (58) we find an interjection made by a woman who was listening to the narrator; the woman interjects a modification to the narrator's explanation of events. The narrator is saying that 'we' adorn the guests with garlands, but the woman interrupts to assert that it is in fact the girls who adorn others with the garland. Her use of the ergative here, while it is supported by the transitivity of the verb 'put on', could be interpreted as her emphatic interjection that it is the girls and only the girls who go around adorning the guests—men don't do this.

- (57) hã mala çya-lan ju, jo nini, ?a dulaŋ
 then garland put.on-CVB after HM HM cake
 t^ho-dan
 toss.ritually-1PL.NPT
 'Then after putting on the garland, um, (we) ritually toss the cake.' (Hair-cutting Ceremony)

- (58) tsemme su!
 girl ERG
 'The girls (do it)!' (Hair-cutting Ceremony)

Another example that might be interpreted differently if the ergative has a pragmatic function is found in (59) below. I recorded the conversation in which example (59) appears in the summer of 2003. The conversation took place in Sipu, which is the highest village in the Darma Valley. I was sitting with a family that was picking burrs from wool and brushing it to prepare it for spinning into yarn and asking questions and trying to get a conversation going. Rather than sit idly by, I picked up some wool and joined in the activities by brushing the wool smooth. One of the young women present was keen to chat with me and I was attempting to speak to her in Darma (although I was struggling). In example (59) below, she is responding to my query about what she is doing by telling me to say 'I am brushing wool'. The agent is overtly marked in the utterance she provides.

- (59) "ji su ts^ham ts^ham tso-di", lya!
 1SG ERG wool wool brush-1SG.NPT, say.IMPER
 'Say "I am brushing wool"!' (Conversation)

Now let us consider the utterances that preceded (59) in the discourse. These are shown in (60) and (61) below. These utterances were in response to my (flustered) line of questioning about what the speaker was doing at the time,

which was picking burrs from wool. After I asked her what she was doing, she responded with (60) and (61), shown below, and then she said the utterance in (59) above.

(60) *ji ts^ham, k^ha la, p^hante-di.*
 1SG wool, Q say.3SG.NPT clean-1SG.NPT
 ‘I am, how do you say it, cleaning wool.’ (Conversation)

(61) *ts^ham p^hante-di.*
 wool clean-1SG.NPT
 ‘(I) am cleaning wool.’ (Conversation)

In example (60), we find an overt pronoun that is not marked with an ergative morpheme. In example (61) we find no overt agent pronoun, which we have already seen is not unusual in natural discourse. We know that the speaker is talking about her own actions because the verb is in the first person singular. If we consider these examples in light of a new analysis, whereby the ergative morpheme is optional and one interpretation of its meaning is that it indicates emphasis on an unusual situation, then we find an added layer of meaning in the text¹⁹. Under this new analysis, the example in (59) means something like ‘look here, I am brushing wool’, which emphasizes the fact that this is an unusual situation. It is not every day that a foreign woman sits in a small Himalayan village brushing wool to prepare it to be spun into yarn. By marking the first person singular with the ergative morpheme the fact that this is an extraordinary situation is highlighted. The fact that my interlocutor was plucking burrs from wool before it is brushed is not unusual, villagers work on wool each and every day, so her utterances about what she was doing do not have the agent overtly marked with the ergative morpheme.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

At first blush, some instances of the ergative marker appear to be fairly straightforward and many may in fact simply be agents of transitive verbs that are marked for case. Considering the data presented here, however, we must reject an analysis of split-ergativity for Darma. Revising the analysis, we must minimally assert that Darma does not obligatorily mark ergative case (presented here as ‘optional case marking’). Based on the data, it appears that the ergative case marker can be used in a pragmatic or rhetorical sense in a variety of ways (e.g. similar to Mongsen Ao as noted in Coupe’s description (2007) where the ergative is used to highlight an agent who is doing something unexpected or extraordinary). The fact that this pattern of optional case marking is found in

¹⁹ Another possible interpretation for (59) is that the function of the ergative is to highlight the first person singular as the agent of a **different** activity. So, the woman says, ‘I am cleaning wool’ and then instructs me to say, ‘(Well), I am **brushing** wool.’

Darma strengthens the claim that this is a phenomenon that we should expect to find in languages spoken across the Himalayas.

I have also demonstrated that methodology can play an important role in language description and documentation and that part of methodology is being attentive to the possible effects of the contact language on elicited data. I have argued that we must combine multiple approaches to data collection with an emphasis on natural discourse so that we can get a full picture of how individual features of a language pattern. The analysis presented here has relied on examples from elicitation and multiple genres of natural discourse, including conversation. That all of these diverse data are required for us to even begin to understand the pattern of optional case marking in Darma, and the possible functions it may serve, supports the suggestion made in McGregor (2009) that we use “larger and more diversified corpora including more representative samples of discourse genres, not just narratives” (497). In order to better understand how the ergative marker is used in Darma and interpret its functions, more data must be analysed. Specifically, a wider variety of spontaneously produced discourse such as conversations must be analysed (e.g., more examples of the use of the ergative with intransitive constructions are needed). Finally, as more and more examples of languages with some form of ‘optional case-marking’ are described, we will be able to revise our current analysis of ergativity, which is framed as ergative or agent case-marking. The new analysis might focus instead on framing these morphemes in terms of their functions. Then these languages will not be just exceptions to the rule, rather, they will constitute a legitimate category.

ABBREVIATIONS

1, 2, 3	person markers	IMP	imperative
ABL	ablative	INF	infinitive
ANT	anterior	INFER	inferential
AUX.EQ	equational auxiliary	INSTR	instrumental
AUX.EX	existential auxiliary	LN	loan word
BEN	benefactive	LOC	locative
COMPL	completive aspect	LOC.NONVIS	locative nonvisible
CONT	contrastive	MAT	maternal
CVB	converb	MID	middle
DAT	dative	NEG	negative
DEM.DIST	demonstrative distal	NOM	nominalise
DEM.NEUT	demonstrative neutral distance	NPT	non-past
DEM.NONVIS	demonstrative non-visible	PAT	paternal
DEM.PROX	demonstrative proximate	PERM	permissive
ECHO	echo	PL	plural
EMPH	emphatic	POSS	possessive
ERG	ergative	PROG	progressive
FUT	future	PST	past
HM	hesitation/pause marker	Q	question
HORT	hortative	SG	singular

APPENDIX: TEXT

The following text was recorded in the winter village of Gothi, which is six kilometres from Dharchula. The narrator was called to tell this story for me to record. Sometimes he is difficult to understand, due in part to a few missing teeth. During this recording session, everyone was drinking the local brew, *cyekti*, including the narrator. The effects of alcohol may have made his speech even more rapid—whatever the reason some parts of this recording cannot be made out.

The Marriage Proposal

[NARRATOR]:

hã niŋ ʔidu su²⁰ tʰo-lan tʰaŋ-lan,
 then 1PL DEM.NONVIS after throw.ritually-CVB ECHO-CVB
 Then we, after that [unintelligible] ritually throwing (the rice) and all,

mane, bindi ʃo nini, niŋ gu tʰoʃ de-lan,
 meaning.LN ceremony HM 1PL POSS proposal go-CVB
 meaning, the ceremony, that is going for our proposal,

tʰo-lan tʰaŋ-lan ga-lan ʃu--
 throw.ritually-CVB ECHO-CVB do-CVB after
 throwing ritually and all, after doing the ceremony--

hã tʰo-lan ga-lan ʃaŋ
 then throw.ritually-CVB do-CVB after
 then after doing the throwing,

hã ta ʃya niŋ, ʔidu su,
 then one day 1PL DEM.NONVIS after
 then one day we after that,

hã niŋ ŋay ʃugu pe kur-lan ʃaŋ
 then 1PL five six brother take.away-CVB after
 then after we take away five or six men,

niŋ ʃyala tʰoʃe de-çy-ɛn. ʃyala tʰoʃe-lan ʃaŋ
 1PL date ask.for go- MID-1PL.NPT date ask.for-CVB after
 we go ask for the date. After asking for the (proposal) date,

²⁰ Note that [su] meaning ‘after’ alternates with [saŋ], [ʃu], and [ʃaŋ]. A similar pattern is found with the morpheme indicating the past. The alternation appears to be in free variation and is widespread among speakers. While this has not been confirmed, it appears that the difference in pronunciation may be related to emphasis (i.e. [saŋ] and [ʃaŋ] may be emphasized).

hã ʔidu su, toro, pe suŋ
 then DEM.NONVIS after there relative.PAT village
 t^hum-lan jaŋ, çyaçi t^hum-lan jaŋ,
 get.together-CVB after relative.MAT get.together-CVB after
 then after that, there, after the (paternal) relatives get together, and after
 the (maternal) relatives get together,

hã niŋ jyala da-da. ki-dan.
 then 1PL date give-3.NPT worship-1PL.NPT
 then (they) give us the/our date. (We) pray.

“ne jya ru yo-ni, budu
 DEM.NEUT day LOC come.IMP-2PL.IMP Tuesday.LN
 yo-ni. ya ʔeta ru baro yo-ni.”
 come.IMP-2PL.IMP or.LN Sunday.LN LOC times come.IMP-2PL.IMP
 “(You) should come on this day, (you) should come on Tuesday. Or on
 Sunday (you) should come.”

lanju, niŋ gu jyala da-da.
 after.saying 1PL POSS date give-3.NPT
 after saying (this, they) give our wedding date.

hã ʔidu ra-lan jaŋ, do ru ya,
 then DEM.NONVIS come-CVB after here LOC or.LN
 hã do ra-lan jaŋ,
 then here come-CVB after
 Then after he comes, here or, then after coming here,

hã niŋ gu jo he sare suŋ t^hum-t^hε
 then 1PL POSS HM.LN all.LN village get.together-CVB
 t^haŋ-t^hε, ʔidu baksa de-mu yaŋ-çy-εn²¹.
 ECHO-CVB DEM.NONVIS wedding go-INF ready-MID-1PL.NPT
 then our, um, entire village getting together and everything, (we) get
 ourselves ready to go to that wedding.

baksa de-mu yaŋ-çy-εn²², ʔidu dεmε hεmε
 wedding go-INF ready-1PL.NPT DEM.NONVIS drum(s) ECHO
 niŋ gu maŋne-dan.
 1PL POSS ask.for.LN-1PL.NPT
 (We) get ourselves ready to go to the wedding, we ask for the drummers.

²¹ < yaŋ-çi-hen

²² < yaŋ-çi-hen

niŋ suŋ pe ra-ni da raŋga
 1PL village relative.PAT come-3.NPT CONT clothes.male
 ke-çy-ən²³.
 cover-MID-1PL.NPT

Our village (paternal) relatives come, then (we) wear the rangga (traditional male outfit).

ʔidu su, tiçya ʃen, ʃo nini, banigut'al [...],
 DEM.NONVIS after bridesmaids PL HM cape

cunbala cok^h-i-ni²⁴, boktsu cok^h-i-ni.
 clothes.female put.on-MID-3.NPT boots put.on-MID-3.NPT

After that, the bridesmaids, um, the cape [inaudible], (they) put on the *cung bala* and (they) put on the boots.

hã ʔidu saŋ, demε to-lan ʃaŋ, hã
 then DEM.NONVIS after drum(s) play-CVB after then

ʔidu saŋ ceʃaŋ ga-dan.
 DEM.NONVIS after ceremonial.items make-1PL.NPT

Then, after that, after playing the drums, then after that (we) set up the *certang* (ceremonial items).

niŋ ʃu²⁵ ceʃaŋ ga-lan ʃaŋ, baŋru
 1PL ERG ceremonial.items make-CVB after outside

ra-hen. baŋru ra-hen.
 come-1PL.NPT outside come-1PL.NPT

After we set up the *certang* (ceremonial table), (we) come outside. (We) come outside.

baŋ ra-lan hã ʔidu saŋ, hã,
 outside come-CVB then DEM.NONVIS after then

bir baksa de-çy-ən²⁶. hã ʔidu ʃu,
 all wedding go-MID-1PL.NPT then DEM.NONVIS after

ʃ^huŋ-lan de-çy-ən²⁷.
 dance-CVB go-MID-1PL.NPT

Coming outside, then after that, then, (we) all go to the wedding. Then after that, we go while dancing.

²³ < ke-çi-hen

²⁴ < -çi alternates with -hi and -i

²⁵ Similar to the pattern of the [su] meaning 'after', for the ergative morpheme we find that [su] and [ʃu] are in alternation. This alternation is not found frequently in the texts.

²⁶ < de-çi-hen

²⁷ < de-çi-hen

hã ʈiçya ʃen ʃama noŋdi de-su ra-ni.
 then bridesmaids PL everyone behind go-3.PST come-3.NPT
 Then the bridesmaids went behind everyone, (they) come.

bir, banigut'al, ge-t^hε ʃu ʃama ri--
 all cape cover-CVB after everyone EMPH
 All (of us), after covering with the cape, absolutely everyone--.

hã baksa ʈ^huŋ-lan ʈ^haŋ-lan de-çy-en²⁸,
 then wedding dance-CVB ECHO-CVB go-MID-1PL.NPT

ʔidu su.
 DEM.NONVIS after
 Then, to the wedding dancing and everything (we) go, after that.

hã baksa de-lan ʃaŋ, ʔidu su,
 then wedding go-CVB after DEM.NONVIS after

ta çyahi le-ni.
 one relative.MAT AUX.EX-3.NPT
 Then after going to the wedding, after that, there is one relative.

niŋ gu çyahi do ru niŋ gu ceʃaŋ
 1PL POSS relative.MAT here LOC PL POSS ceremonial.items
 ga-da.
 make-3.NPT

Our (maternal) relatives here do our *certang*.

hã ʔiduŋ kuŋ ʃo nini, saa-, ʔã ra
 then LOC.NONVIS place HM HM one.hundred

ʈo ɳasa ripyā ʈo ɳasa ta-dan. sokunu
 six twenty Rupees six twenty leave-1PL.NPT kitty.LN

ta-dan. hã de-hen.
 put-1PL.NPT then go-1PL.NPT
 Then from here, um, um one hundred to one hundred and twenty Rupees,
 (we) leave one hundred and twenty rupees. (We) put (it in) the kitty.²⁹
 Then (we) go.

²⁸ < de-çi-hen

²⁹ Meaning the groom leaves money on the ritual plates of the families who come to meet him along the way for his wedding--they come out and give the wedding party drinks and apply tikkas and throw ritual rice from the ritual plates. The groom gives money for this; he puts the money on the plate with the tikka paste and ceremonial rice.

ʔidu yu ru, hã ʔidu, byoli gu,
 DEM.NONVIS down LOC then DEM.NONVIS bride.LN POSS
 namçya gu daramp^ha wan de-çy-ən³⁰.
 daughter-in-law POSS door reach go-1PL.NPT
 There, below (lit: at the downside), then, that (place), (we) reach the
 bride's, the daughter-in-law's door.

hã namçya daramp^ha wan de-lan ʃaŋ, hã yu
 then daughter-in-law door reach go-CVB after then down
 t^hum-t^hε ʃu, hã ʔidu su niŋ
 get.together-CVB after then DEM.NONVIS after 1PL
 namçya ʃo nini, hã ʔidu su te re,
 daughter-in-law HM then DEM.NONVIS after DEM.DIST EMPH
 çiri, namçya, myã, tsemme, ʃo nini, hã
 boy daughter-in-law son-in-law daughter HM then
 k^haʦo ge-, k^haʦo ge-da.
 cloth.white cover cloth.white cover-3.NPT

Then, after reaching the daughter-in-law's door, then below (lit: downside)
 after getting together, then after that our daughter-in-law, um, then after
 that over there, the boy, the daughter-in-law, the son-in-law, the daughter,
 that is, then the white cloth is put, (they) cover (her) with the white cloth.

çile ʃil-da. sab kuc k^hare ga-da.
 turban wrap-3.NPT all.LN thing.LN that do-3.NPT
 (They) wrap the turban (on him). (They) do all of that.

hã p^hiri budəru k^haχcu ra-lan ʃaŋ, hã niŋ
 then then.LN inside ABL come-CVB after then 1PL
 sare suŋ su yeʃya ga-da.
 all.LN village ERG guest do-3.NPT

Then, after coming from inside, then our entire village attends to (= does)
 the guests.

k^hu k^huru yeʃya ga-lan ʃyuŋ ra-çy-ən.
 family.by.family guest do-CVB after come-1PL.NPT
 After doing the guests family by family, (we) come.

hã ʔidu ka-l-ʃu, bilkul [...].
 then DEM.NONVIS COMPL-AUX.EX-PST solely.LN
 Then this is completely finished [unintelligible].

³⁰ < de-çi-hen

hã niŋ gu daramp^ha wan ra-hen, ʔidu su.
 then 1PL POSS door reach come-1PL.NPT DEM.NONVIS after
 Then (we) reach our door, after that.

hã daramp^ha wan ra-mu ʔidu su, niŋ
 then door reach come-INF DEM.NONVIS after 1PL
 çiya, sar suŋ, suŋ pe ʃen ʃo nini,
 relatives.MAT all.LN village village relative PL HM
 hã byolo çile ʃil-da.
 then bridegroom.LN turban wrap-3.NPT
 Then reaching the door, after that our (maternal side) relatives [sic], the
 entire village, the (paternal) relatives, that is, then (they) wrap the
 bridegroom's turban.

çiri çile ʃil-lan, nameçya k^haço ge-lan
 boy turban wrap-CVB daughter-in-law cloth.white cover-CVB
 ga-da.
 do-3.NPT
 Tying the boy's turban, (they) do the daughter in-law's covering.

hã ʃama--. hã ʃama, bana ru sale çyak-da.
 then everyone then everyone neck LOC necklace adorn-3.NPT
 Then everyone--. Then everyone puts the garland around (her) neck.

la ru sale çyak-da. hado [...] ga-da.
 hand LOC necklace adorn-3.NPT DEM.NEUT do-3.NPT
 (They) put the garlands on (her) hands. (They) do this [unintelligible].

[A WOMAN INTERJECTS]:

ʔaŋu^hi.
 ring.LN
 The ring.

[THE NARRATOR ASKS]:

hã?
 huh?
 Huh?

[THE WOMAN SAYS]:

la ru ʔaŋu^hi, bana ru maŋgal çyak-da
 hand LOC ring.LN neck LOC necklace adorn-3.NPT

byolo su.
 bridegroom.LN ERG
 (He) puts the ring on her hand and the necklace on her neck, the
 bridegroom.

[THE NARRATOR RESPONDS]:

ʔõ maŋgal su³¹ [...] taku na sale [...]
 yes necklace INSTR one EMPH necklace
 taku na ly-a.
 one EMPH say-2SG.IMP
 Yes, with the necklace, [unintelligible] just one necklace [unintelligible]
 say just one.

[ANOTHER PERSON SAYS SOMETHING THAT CANNOT BE HEARD. THE
 NARRATOR AGREES, SAYING]:

ʔõ.
 yes
 Yes.

hã niŋ gu ga-lan ʃaŋ, hã niŋ gu, ʃo nini, bir
 then 1PL POSS do-CVB after then 1PL POSS HM all
 ɖaŋ-nu saŋ-nu, bariya le-ni ʔidu su.
 good-NOM ECHO-NOM good.LN AUX.EX-3.NPT DEM.NONVIS after
 Then our having done this, then our, that is all is very well.

hã bir, t^hum-t^hε t^haŋ-t^hε ga-lan na
 then all get.together-CVB ECHO-CVB do-CVB EMPH
 budəru su, ho t^han la ɕil-ni, la ɕil-ni,
 inside ABL oh now hand wash-2PL.IMP hand wash-2PL.IMP
 la hado, la ɕil le-n-ya, ra
 hand DEM.NEUT hand wash AUX.EX-1PL-HORT come
 le-n-ya budru ʔidu su, hã ʃa--
 AUX.EX-1PL-HORT inside DEM.NONVIS after then eat
 niŋ ʃa-ɕy-εn³².
 1PL eat-MID-1PL.NPT

Then everyone, just getting together and all that from inside, oh, now you
 all should wash your hands, you all should wash your hands, hands that
 one, let us wash hands, let us come, inside after that, then eat--, we eat.

³¹ Thank you to Shobhana Chelliah for suggesting that this is in fact ‘mangalsutra’, which is a necklace signifying a woman’s married status. This analysis must be confirmed with a native speaker.

³² < ʃa-ɕi-hen

hã ja le-n-ya.
 then eat AUX.EX-1PL-HORT
 Then let us eat.

sar suŋ, pe suŋ, çyaçi, jama
 all.LN village relative.PAT village relative.MAT everyone
 t^hum-t^hε t^haŋ-t^hε ra-ni.
 get.together-CVB ECHO-CVB come-3.NPT
 The whole village, the paternal relatives and maternal relatives, everyone
 getting together and everything comes.

hã budəru, jo nini, niŋ su, jo nini, sare::: çyahi
 then inside HM 1PL ERG HM all.LN relative.MAT
 jen jama, ?ido su, k^haço ge-dan.
 PL everyone DEM.NONVIS after cloth.white cover-1PL.NPT
 Then, inside that is, we, um, all of the female relatives everyone, after
 that, (we) cover (them with) the white cloth.

jam jama. hã k^hami t^huŋ-ni, k^hami tsa-ni.
 everyone everyone then someone dance-3.NPT someone sing-3.NPT
 Every everyone. Then some people dance and some people sing.

bilkul k^halna barriya [...] ga-da ?idu su.
 absolutely.LN very good.LN do-3.NPT DEM.NONVIS after
 (They) do absolutely great, after that.

hã, namts^haŋ wasu, ni ri wasu na, bera
 then be.early until sun set until EMPH song
 baju ga-dan niŋ su.
 performance.LN do-1PL.NPT 1PL ERG
 Then, until it gets early, until the sun sets, we do songs and performances
 we do.

[WOMAN INTERRUPTS]:

cekti tuŋ-lan ly-a.
 liquor drink-CVB say-2SG.IMP
 Say, drinking ceki.

[THE NARRATOR CONTINUES]:

hã ceki tuŋ-lan, bera baçi ga-dan
 then liquor drink-CVB song performance.LN do-1PL.NPT
 na ?ida.
 EMPH now
 Then, drinking ceki, (we) do the song and performance only now.

hã niŋɣya tsa-n lanɣu ɕyaçi jen
 then day.after.tomorrow sing-NOM after.doing relative.MAT PL
 tak tsandu de-ni.
 one side go-3.NPT

Then, the day after tomorrow after doing singing the female relatives go to one side.

niŋ tak tsandu ɕyuy-ɕy-ɛn.³³
 1PL one side sit-MID-1PL.NPT

We sit on one side.

ʔidu su, niŋ ki-ɖaŋ-ɣu, ki-saŋ-ɣu
 DEM.NONVIS after 1PL COMPL-be.good-PST COMPL-ECHO-PST
 lanɣu, hã niŋ ɖo-ɕy-ɛn³⁴ tar-ɕy-ɛn³⁵.
 after.doing then 1PL be.happy-MID-1PL.NPT able-MID-1PL.NPT

ka-l-ɣu.

COMPL-AUX.EX-PST

After that, after we have become well and all that, after doing this, then we are happy, (we) are able. Finished!

[EVERYONE LAUGHS]

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³³ < ɕyuy-ɕi-hen

³⁴ < ɖo-ɕi-hen

³⁵ < tar-ɕi-hen

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