

## First Results of a Linguistic Fieldwork on Baṅgāṇī\*

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### 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Baṅgāṇī is an Indo-Aryan language of the group of Western Pahārī languages spoken in the so-called Baṅgāṇ area located in the Uttarkāśī district of Uttarākhaṇḍ, in particular in the area between the Pabar and Tons rivers. Esteemed as a critically endangered language by the *UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger*, in the last few decades Baṅgāṇī has been a topic of controversy as regards mainly the question of whether this language contains Indo-European but non-Indo-Aryan vocabulary or not (for a summary see Zoller 1999, but also the personal website of Peter Edwin Hook at <http://www-personal.umich.edu/~pehook/bangani.html>). Even if the majority of scholars related to this controversy concluded their studies claiming that much work on documentation but especially on the linguistic description/analysis of Baṅgāṇī has to be done, not so many of such works, if not at all, appeared till now (two exceptions are Van Driem & Sharmā 1997 and Zoller 2007).

Therefore the main aim of this paper is to present the provisional results of 1) my fieldwork research with Baṅgāṇī mother-tongue informants and 2) my linguistic analysis of the few Baṅgāṇī elicited texts available (cf. Zoller 2007: 113-138 and Zoller 2015).<sup>2</sup> In the following section (§ 1) I advance some general argumentations about Baṅgāṇī. Section 2 is devoted to the description of Baṅgāṇī pronouns and nouns, especially as regards their forms with respect to the well-known phenomenon of ergativity. In section 3 I compare Modern Hindī and Baṅgāṇī focusing my attention on the Different Object Marking. I would like to add that this study, and some others that are in preparation (i.e. Drocco forthcoming a, forthcoming b), is the result of my linguistic field-work with Baṅgāṇī speakers, in some cases in the Baṅgāṇ area.<sup>3</sup>

### 2. The Baṅgāṇī language

Even if the topic of this paper concerns a brief description of some morpho-syntactic features of the Pahārī language known by the name Baṅgāṇī, some general information about this language are in order. As reported in literature related to Indo-Aryan linguistics, Baṅgāṇī is a Indo-Aryan language spoken in the so-called Baṅgāṇ area located in the Uttarkāśī district of Uttarākhaṇḍ, in particular in the area between the Pabar and the Tons rivers. This area is part of the western most region of Gaṛhvāl and its main border are Himachal Pradesh, the tribal area of Jaunsar-Bawar and Tehri-Gaṛhvāl (Zoller 1997; Van Driem & Sharmā 1996: 108-109). Although Baṅgāṇī is spoken in the so-called main region of Gaṛhvāl, it is classified not as a Central Pahārī language, as Gaṛhvālī, but as a Western Pahārī language, exactly as Himācalī languages (Grierson 1916; as regards Himācalī see 1976-86).

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\* My thanks first and foremost to Claus Peter Zoller who helps me to find Baṅgāṇī informants and to understand Baṅgāṇī language. Moreover he made very helpful comments on earlier drafts and presentations. Thanks also to the audiences in Jalandhar (Punjab) on the occasion of the All India Conference on Regional Languages (AICORAL-2015, 10-12 October 2015), where I have presented an earlier version of this work. All errors and inadequacies are my responsibility.

1 The following abbreviations are used in this article: ABL: ablative; ACC: accusative; AOR: aorist; AUX: auxiliary; CAUS: causative; CP: conjunctive participle; DAT: dative; DIR: direct; EMPH: emphatic; ERG: ergative; F: feminine; IA: Indo-Aryan; IMPF: imperfective; INSTR: instrumental; LOC: locative; M: masculine; MIA: Middle Indo-Aryan; NIA: New Indo-Aryan; NOM: nominative; NT: neuter; OBL: oblique; OIA: Old Indo-Aryan; PART: participle; PAST: past; PAST.PART: past participle; PERF: perfect; PRES: present; SG: singular; VOC: vocative.

2 As I will say in this paper Baṅgāṇī is not a written language. As a consequence in all examples I used the transcription system adopted by the few scholars who have analysed this language: in particular I followed the Baṅgāṇī transcription system adopted by Zoller (2007, 2015).

3 I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the following Baṅgāṇī mother-tongue speakers: Gabar Singh Chauhan, Balbirsingh Rawat and Kailash Chauhan.

Zoller (1997) suggests to include Baṅgāṇī as part of what he calls the Satlej-Tons group of languages and dialects. According to the Census of India of 2001 the speakers of Baṅgāṇī are approximately 21.000.

Even if, according to a study of Van Driem (2001), Baṅgāṇī is esteemed by the *UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* as a critically endangered language (see <http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/en/atlasmap/language-id-1606.html>), today's situation seems to be better. In fact it seems that now this language is not only spoken, as their mother-tongue, by elder generations, but also by younger generations and by children at home and with other people of Baṅgāṇ area.

### 3. Baṅgāṇī pronominal forms as regards ergativity

First of all it is important to spend some words about the phenomenon of split-ergativity, an important feature of some IA languages/dialects as, for example, Baṅgāṇī, characterising many aspects of their grammars and, as a consequence, also Baṅgāṇī pronominal and nominal forms.

More in deep, in the majority of present-day IA languages an ergative-absolutive (thereafter ERG-ABS) system of case-marking is attested in perfective clauses: therefore they are characterized by a split-ergative system conditioned by tense/aspect of the main verb (Klaiman 1987; Drocco 2008; Verbeke 2013; Stroński 2011). This means that, in perfective constructions, the Subject-like argument of intransitive constructions<sup>4</sup> is marked and is in agreement with main verb in the same manner as the Object-like argument of transitive constructions; on the contrary the Subject-like argument of transitive constructions is marked in a different manner and generally is not in agreement with main verb (Dixon 1994: 9, 22; Comrie 1978). To understand how this type of case-marking system works in NIA, we propose the following perfective clauses taken from Modern Standard Hindī (thereafter MSH):

1) *sāvitrī kal sārā din mere pās rahī.*

*sāvitrī kal sārā din mere pās rah-ī.*  
Sāvitrī(F) yesterday all day 1SG.GEN-OBL near stay-PERF.F

Yesterday Sāvitrī remained all day at my home. (Caracchi 2002: 119)

2) *gopāl ne cāy chānī.*

*gopāl ne cāy chān-ī.*  
Gopāl(M) ERG tea(F) pour-PERF.F

Gopāl poured tea. (Priyamvadā Uṣā, *Kāgaza ke phūla*)

In 1, an intransitive perfective sentence, the Subject-like argument *Sāvitrī* is not followed by any postposition, exactly in the same way as the Object-like argument *cāy* of 2, a transitive perfective sentence. Moreover both are in concord with main verb: in fact in 1 *Sāvitrī* is feminine and the main verb *rahnā* 'to stay' is also feminine, while in 2 *cāy* 'tea' is feminine (the Subject-like argument *Gopāl* is masculine) and the verb *chānā* 'to pour' is also feminine. As regards the Subject-like argument of 2 it is possible to ascertain that it is followed by the postposition *ne*, the ergative case-marker of MSH that follows the Subject-like arguments of only transitive perfective sentences. Starting from this premise, in the following table MSH & Baṅgāṇī are compared as regards their ergative alignment system of case-marking:

	<b><u>ERG alignment in MSH</u></b>	<b><u>ERG alignment in Baṅgāṇī</u></b>
Found in all perfective constructions	yes	yes
For all subjects' pronouns and nouns:	yes	yes
Ergative case-marker	postposition <i>ne</i>	i) a suppletive form as regards pronouns ii) a suffix as regards nouns

<sup>4</sup> In this article I prefer the terminology 'Subject-like argument of an intransitive construction', 'Subject-like argument of a transitive construction' and 'Object-like argument' for the well notions of 'S', 'A' and 'O' (or 'P') normally used in studies related to alignment typology, as in Dixon 1994 and Comrie 1978. For a recent overview on these notions see Haspelmath 2011.

3.1. *Baṅgāṇī pronominal forms as regards ergativity*

Analysing now pronouns, in the following table the principal Baṅgāṇī pronominal forms are reported, that is the absolutive, the ergative and the oblique one (cf. Zoller 2011b).

**Singular**

	<b>absolutive</b>	<b>ergative</b>	<b>oblique</b>
1SG	<i>aũ</i>	<i>mũĩ</i>	<i>mũ</i>
2SG	<i>tu</i>	<i>taĩ, tãĩ</i>	<i>taũ, taĩ, tã</i>
3SG, M, distal	<i>seu</i>	<i>tiṇi, tiũ</i>	<i>tes, tɔs, tɔthu</i>
3SG, F, distal	<i>se, sɛ</i>	<i>tĩɛ, tĩ</i>	<i>tĩ</i>
3SG, M, proximal	<i>yeu, ieu</i>	<i>iṇi</i>	<i>is</i>
3SG, F, proximal	<i>yɛ, iɛ, e, ɛ</i>	<i>ĩɛ, iaĩ, iãĩ</i>	<i>ĩ</i>

**Plural**

	<b>absolutive</b>	<b>ergative</b>	<b>oblique</b>
1PL	<i>amɛ</i>	<i>amũ, amɛ</i>	<i>amũ</i>
2PL	<i>tumɛ</i>	<i>tumũ, tumɛ</i>	<i>tumũ</i>
3PL, M, distal	<i>se, sɛ</i>	<i>tiũɛ, tiũ</i>	<i>tĩ, tiã, tiũ</i>
3PL, F, distal	<i>se, sɛ</i>	<i>tiũɛ, tiũ</i>	<i>tĩ, tiã, tiũ</i>
3PL, M, proximal	<i>iɛ, yɛ</i>	<i>iũɛ</i>	<i>yũ, yã</i>
3Pl, F, proximal	<i>iɛ, yɛ</i>	<i>iũɛ</i>	<i>yũ, yã</i>

Concerning their use, the absolutive form of Baṅgāṇī pronouns is adopted when the pronouns are not followed by any postposition that is for the majority of intransitive constructions (in perfective and non-perfective tenses) and for transitive non-perfective constructions, in both cases when pronouns are the Subject-like argument of the sentence. See the following sentence where, for example, the 1st singular pronoun is the Subject-like argument of an intransitive construction and, as a consequence, its absolutive form *aũ* occurs:

- 3) *aũ keś-keśɔ ɖe-ũ ɡɔrɛ.*  
*aũ keś-keśɔ ɖe-ũ ɡɔrɛ.*  
 1SG.ABS how-how go-1.SG.PRES home  
 How (can) I go home. (Zoller 2007: 118, sentence n. 85)

The same absolutive form *aũ* is adopted when 1st singular pronoun is the Subject-like argument of a transitive construction, but only in non-perfective tenses:

- 4) [...] *na tɛ tumũ aũ khɔtɔm kɔr-ũ.*  
 [...] *na tɛ tumũ aũ khɔtɔm kɔr-ũ.*  
 not then you.OBL 1SG.ABS finished make-1.SG.PRES  
 [...] otherwise I (will) finish you. (Zoller 2007: 121, sentence n. 123)

As said before, in some IA languages/dialects where a split-ergativity system is attested – as in Hindī and in Gujarātī (see, among others, Drocco 2008: chapter 3) – the ergative form is used when pronouns occur as Subject-like argument of transitive perfective sentences; this is exactly what is found in Baṅgāṇī, as in the constructions below where again the 1st person singular pronoun occurs, but with its ergative form *mũĩ*:

- 5) *ɛbɛ āṇi- ɡo-ɛn mũĩ se bāre.*  
*ɛbɛ āṇi- ɡo-ɛn mũĩ se bāre.*  
 Now bring- go-PERF.M.PL 1SG.ERG they.PL outside.  
 Now I have brought them outside. (Zoller 2007: 117, sentence n. 74)

- 6) *mũĩ riśpɔt khai- ɡo-i*  
*mũĩ riśpɔt khai- ɡo-i*  
 1SG.ERG bribe eat- go-PERF.F.SG  
 I have taken a bribe. (Zoller 2007: 117, sentence n. 63)

Following the text transcribed by Zoller (2007), when the Subject-like argument, in a perfective transitive construction, is a 3rd personal pronouns, Baṅgāṇī speakers adopt surely the ergative form of pronouns, as in example n. 7, but also simply the oblique, as in example n. 8:

- 7) *to tiūε bol-ɔ ki [...]*  
*to tiūε bol-ɔ ki [...]*  
 then 3PL.OBL.ERG say-PERF.M.SG that  
 Then they said [...] (Zoller 2007: 117, sentence n. 69)
- 8) *tiū bol-ɔ ki [...]*  
*tiū bol-ɔ ki [...]*  
 3PL.OBL.ERG say-PERF.M.SG that  
 They said [...] (Zoller 2007: 118, sentence n. 80)

### 3.2. Baṅgāṇī nominal forms as regards ergativity

For nouns the Baṅgāṇī ergative affix is *-ei*; see the following examples:

	absolute	<u>ergative</u>
<i>bāmaṇ</i>	<i>bāmaṇ</i>	<i>bāmaṇ-ei</i>
<i>kɔilu</i>	<i>kɔilu</i>	<i>kɔilu-ei</i>
<i>rākēs</i>	<i>rākēs</i>	<i>rāks-ei</i>
<i>māsu</i>	<i>māsu</i>	<i>māsu-ei</i>
<i>bag</i>	<i>bag</i>	<i>bag-ei</i>

Sometimes the same ergative suffix *-ei* is realized also through nasalization:

<i>bāmaṇ-eĩ</i>	alongside of	<i>bāmaṇ-ei</i>
<i>Rām-eĩ</i>	alongside of	<i>Rām-ei</i>

As in the case of pronouns, the absolute form is adopted, especially, when Baṅgāṇī nouns are not followed by any postposition that is for the majority of intransitive constructions (in perfective and non-perfective tenses) and for transitive non-perfective constructions, in both cases when nouns are the Subject-like argument of the sentence. See example (9) where *bāmaṇ* is the Subject-like argument of an intransitive construction and, as a consequence, its absolute form is used:

- 9) *seu bāmaṇ de-ɔ kuḷu-kāśmīr=khi.*  
*seu bāmaṇ de-ɔ kuḷu-kāśmīr khi.*  
 That Brahmin.ABS go-PERF.M.SG Kulu-Kashmir for.  
 That Brahmin had gone to Kulu-Kashmir. (Zoller 2007: 113, sentence n. 2)

On the contrary, when the same noun occurs as Subject-like argument of a transitive perfective construction the suffix *-ei* is attached, exactly as in the following sentence where the same noun *bāmaṇ* of example n. 9 is reported, but marked by the ergative suffix *-ei* and thus occurring as *bāmaṇ-ei*:

- 10) *tiṇi bāmaṇ-ei rati ugār-ε se bɔḷēd.*  
*tiṇi bāmaṇ-ei rati ugār-ε se bɔḷēd*  
 That.ERG Brahmin-ERG in-the-morning release-PERF.M.PL those oxen  
 That Brahmin released the oxen in the morning. (Zoller 2007: 113, sentence n. 9)

### 4. Differential Object marking in Hindī and Baṅgāṇī

As it is well known in MSH the DAT/ACC postposition *ko* can follow the Object-like argument of a transitive construction irrespective of tense of main verb, especially when that Object is individualized to some extent and thus especially when it refers to human beings, to certain animals and quite frequently to inanimate entities (cf. McGregor 1977: 49; Caracchi 2002: 83-84). This is exemplified with Hindī constructions 11, 12 and 14, 15 contrary to example n. 13 where the Object-like argument is not followed by the Hindī DAT/ACC postposition *ko*:

- 11) *rām āpke bhāiyom ko jāntā hai.*  
*rām āp-k-e bhāi-yom ko jān-t-ā hai.*  
 Rām(M) HON-GEN-M.PL.OBL brother- M.PL.OBL DAT/ACC know-PRES-M.SG be.AUX.PRES.3SG  
 Rām knows Your brothers.<sup>5</sup>
- 12) *rām mujhe jāntā hai.*  
*rām mujh-e jāntā hai.*  
 Rām(M) 1SG.OBL-DAT/ACC know-PRES-M.SG be.AUX.PRES.3SG  
 Rām knows me.
- 13) *rām ne ab cāy pī hai.*  
*rām ne ab cāy p-ī hai.*  
 Rām(M) ERG now tea(F) drink-PERF.F be.AUX.PRES.3SG  
 Rām drank tea.
- 14) *rām ne un laṛkiyom ko dekhā.*  
*rām ne un laṛki-yom ko dekh-ā.*  
 Rām(M) ERG 3PL.OBL girl(F)-OBL.PL DAT/ACC see-PERF.M.SG  
 Rām saw these girls.
- 15) *rām ne mujhe dekhā.*  
*rām ne mujh-e(F) dekh-ā.*  
 Rām(M) ERG 1SG.OBL-DAT/ACC see-PERF.M.SG  
 Rām knows me.

The Hindī situation is similar to the majority of modern Indo-Aryan languages (Klaiman 1987; Masica 1991: 364-369; Drocco 2008: 81-89). However Baṅgāṇī shows a different conduct, because, if the verb is in a perfective tense, the Object-like argument of a transitive sentence is never followed by any case-marker and thus occurs in its absolutive case: this is true for both pronouns and nouns (cf. also Zoller 2007: 99). For example in the following two examples the absolutive form *aũ* of the 1st singular person pronoun is employed for the Subject-like argument of a non-ergative construction (cf. example 16), here an intransitive sentence, and for the Object-like argument of an ergative construction, that is for a transitive perfective construction (cf. example 17):

- 16) *aũ keś-keśo de-ũ gora.*  
*aũ keś-keśo de-ũ gora*  
 1SG how-how go-1.SG.PRES home  
 How (can) I go home. (Zoller 2007: 118, sentence n. 85)
- 17) *aũ te khai- go-o oru-ai.*  
*aũ te hai- go-o oru-ai*  
 1.SG.ABS then eat go-PERF.M.SG others-ERG  
 The others have got me. (Zoller 2007: 120, sentence n. 106)

The same is true for nouns. In fact the form of *Rām* occurring as a Subject-like argument of a non-ergative clause (in 18 a transitive non-perfective construction) or as an Object-like of an ergative clause (in 19 a transitive perfective construction) is, in both cases, the absolutive one, thus simply *Rām* without any case-marker:

- 18) *Rām mū pit-ε.*  
*Rām mū pit-ε.*  
 Rām 1SG.OBL hit-3.S.PRES  
 Rām hit me.
- 19) *taĩ Rām dekh-o ?*  
*taĩ Rām dekh-o ?*  
 2SG(F).ERG Rām see-PERF.M.SG  
 Did you see Rām?

<sup>5</sup> If any reference is given means that the example is taken from a mother-tongue speaker.

As regards transitive perfective sentences (i.e. ergative constructions), we have already seen that the form of a pronoun occurring as the Subject-like argument is the ergative one, different from the oblique one. This is a typical example:

- 20) *mũĩ rišpət khai- go-i*  
*mũĩ rišpət khai- go-i*  
 1SG.ERG bribe eat- go-PERF.F.SG  
 I have taken a bribe. (Zoller 2007: 117, sentence n. 63)

In non-perfective transitive sentences (that is in non-ergative constructions) if a pronoun occurs as a Object-like argument its form is the oblique one, as in example 21 where the 1st singular person pronoun is the Object-like argument of an imperative statement:

- 21) *mũ [...] tu na khā.*  
*mũ [...] tu na khā*  
 1SG.OBL 2.SG.ABS not eat.IMP  
 Please don't eat me. (Zoller 2007: 116, sentence n. 57)

Concerning nouns the situation is different, because if they occur in the role of Object-like argument of a non-perfective construction their form is not the oblique, but the ergative one. See example 22 where *Rām*, as the Object-like argument of a non-ergative clause, is in the same form *Rām-ei*, like when it occurs as the Subject-like argument of an ergative clause (cf. example n. 23).

- 22) *Sītā Rām-ei pit-e.*  
*Sītā Rām-ei pit-e.*  
 Sītā Rām hit-3.S.PRES  
 Sita hit Ram.
- 23) *Rām-ei ek chithi likh-i.*  
*Rām-ei ek chithi likh-i.*  
 Rām-ERG one letter(F) write-PERF.F.SG  
 Ram wrote a letter.

## 5. Conclusion

In conclusion we can say, preliminarily, that the following case marking system, as regards ergative alignment and Differential Object Marking, is attested in Baṅgāṇī for both personal pronouns and nouns:

### ▶▶▶ Personal pronouns

non-ERG constr.	ERG constr.
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S = ABS	S = ERG
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O = OBL	O = ABS
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### ▶▶▶ Nouns

non-ERG constr.	ERG constr.
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S = ABS	S = ERG
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O = ERG	O = ABS
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It is obvious that more research is necessary to understand in deep the complete use of personal pronominal forms in Baṅgāṇī (thereupon see Drocco forthcoming a).

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