The decay of direct-inverse systems

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- In Algic, direct-inverse is reconstructible to proto-Algonquian, but comparison with Wiyot and Yurok is inconclusive.
- Sino-Tibetan languages offer a tremendous diversity in their hierarchical systems, and allow us to gain important insights from a typological point of view on the origin and evolution of these systems.

What is a direct-inverse system?

Table : Idealized proto-typical inverse

	1	2	3	3’
1		$1 > 2$	$1 > 3$	
2	$2 > 1$		$2 > 3$	
3	$3 > 1$	$3 > 2$		$3 > 3'$
3’			$3' > 3$	
INTR	1	2	3	

Example of a quasi-prototypical system: Zbu Rgyalrong

Table : Zbu Rgyalrong transitive and intransitive paradigms (adapted from **?**)

	1SG	1DU	1PL	2SG	2DU	2PL	3SG	3DU	3PL	3’
1SG				tɐ-Σ_1	tɐ-Σ_1-ndʑə	tɐ-Σ_1-ɲə	Σ_3-ŋ	Σ_3-ŋ-ndʑə	Σ_3-ŋ-ɲə	
1DU							Σ_1-tɕə			
1PL							Σ_1-jə			
2SG	tə-wə-Σ_1-ŋ	tə-wə-Σ_1-tɕə	tə-wə-Σ_1-jə				tə-Σ_3			
2DU	tə-wə-Σ_1-ŋ-ndʑə						tə-Σ_1-ndʑə			
2PL	tə-wə-Σ_1-ŋ-ɲə						tə-Σ_1-ɲə			
3SG	wə-Σ_1-ŋ	wə-Σ_1-tɕə	wə-Σ_1-jə	tə-wə-Σ_1	tə-wə-Σ_1-ndʑə	tə-wə-Σ_1-ɲə				Σ_3
3DU	wə-Σ_1-ŋ-ndʑə									Σ_1-ndʑə
3PL	wə-Σ_1-ŋ-ɲə									Σ_1-ɲə
3’							wə-Σ_1	wə-Σ_1-ndʑə	wə-Σ_1-ɲə	
INTR	Σ_1-ŋ	Σ_1-tɕə	Σ_1-jə	tə-Σ_1	tə-Σ_1-ndʑə	tə-Σ_1-ɲə	Σ_1	Σ_1-ndʑə	Σ_1-ɲə	

Example of an opaque hierarchical system: Bantawa (?, 145-8)

	1SG	1DI	1DE	1PI	1PE	2SG	2DU	2PL	3SG	3DU	3PL
1SG						Σ-na	Σ-naci	Σ-nanin	Σ-uŋ	Σ-uŋcɨŋ	
1DI									Σ-cu	Σ-cuci	
1DE							Σ-ni		Σ-cuʔa	Σ-cuciʔa	
1PI									Σ-um	Σ-umcɨm	
1PE							Σ-ni		Σ-umka	Σ-umcɨmka	
2SG	tɨ-Σ-ŋa								tɨ-Σ-u	tɨ-Σ-uci	
2DU	tɨ-Σ-ŋaŋcɨŋ		tɨ-Σ-ni(n)		tɨ-Σ-ni(n)				tɨ-Σ-cu	tɨ-Σ-cuci	
2PL	tɨ-Σ-ŋaŋnɨŋ								tɨ-Σ-um	tɨ-Σ-umcum	
3SG	ɨ-Σ-ŋa		(n)ɨ-Σ-aciʔa		(n)ɨ-Σ-inka				Σ-u	Σ-uci	
3DU	ɨ-Σ-ŋaŋcɨŋ	nɨ-Σ-ci	nɨ-Σ-aciʔa	mɨ-Σ	nɨ-Σ-inka	nɨ-Σ	nɨ-Σ-ci	nɨ-Σ-in	ɨ-Σ-cu	ɨ-Σ-cuci	
3PL	nɨ-Σ-ŋa								ɨ-Σ	mɨ-Σ-uci	
INTR	Σ-ŋa	Σ-ci	Σ-ca	Σ-in	Σ-inka	tɨ-Σ	tɨ-Σ-ci	tɨ-Σ-in	Σ	Σ-ci	mɨ-Σ

- ɨ– prefix (corresponds to the Zbu wə– prefix, inverse-like but restricted to 3SG,DU→1SG and 3DU→3, 3PL→3SG; absence of proximate/obviative constrast)

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2DU	tɨ-Σ-ŋaŋcɨŋ		tɨ-Σ-ni(n)		tɨ-Σ-ni(n)				tɨ-Σ-cu	tɨ-Σ-cuci	
2PL	tɨ-Σ-ŋaŋnɨŋ								tɨ-Σ-um	tɨ-Σ-umcum	
3SG	ɨ-Σ-ŋa		(n)ɨ-Σ-aciʔa		(n)ɨ-Σ-inka				Σ-u	Σ-uci	
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INTR	Σ-ŋa	Σ-ci	Σ-ca	Σ-in	Σ-inka	tɨ-Σ	tɨ-Σ-ci	tɨ-Σ-in	Σ	Σ-ci	mɨ-Σ

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- mɨ– prefix (3PL.INTR, 3PL→3NS, 3→1PI; plural marker used as a generic?)

Table : Bantawa non-local scenarios

	3SG	3DU	3PL
3SG	Σ-u	Σ-uci	
3DU	ɨ-Σ-cu	ɨ-Σ-cuci	
3PL	ɨ-Σ	mɨ-Σ-uci	

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	3SG	3DU	3PL	3’
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3DU				Σ_1-ndʑə
3PL				Σ_1-ɲə
3’	wə-Σ_1	wə-Σ_1-ndʑə	wə-Σ_1-ɲə	

One step further

?

Table : Rtau transitive and intransitive paradigms

AP	1	2	3
1s		Σ	Σ-w
1p			Σ-ã
2	v-Σ-ã		Σ-j
3		v-Σ	
INTR	Σ-ã	Σ	

- The v– prefix corresponds to the Zbu inverse wə–.

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- The inverse form has been been generalized to all non-local scenarios.
- Nevertheless it cannot be analyzed as an third person agent marker since it occurs in 2 > 1 scenarios.

Conclusion

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- The animacy/saliency hierarchy governing the proximate/obviative contrast can be reanalyzed as a number hierarchy (SG > DU/PL)

References