The path from cliticised to prefixed agreement in proto-Australian
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Many Australian languages have agreement systems indexing at least the two direct arguments of transitive clauses (Dixon 2002: 337 estimates 'slightly more than half'). While most Non-Pama-Nyungan (NPN) languages have prefixal agreement systems, Pama-Nyungan (PN) typically have a clitic system, often in second position. Harvey & Mailhammer (to appear, following Osgarby 2018) propose that the NPN systems developed from an earlier clitic system of the kind found in Warlpiri, where a string of person markers, tense and mood markers is loosely attached to a preceding prosodic head. While this explains many of the current features of NPN prefixing systems (such as differences between languages in the order of the major constituents), nevertheless there are a number of significant differences between synchronic clitic systems and prefixal agreement systems, summarised in *Table 1*.

	Clitics	Prefixes
Portmanteaux	Almost absent	Typical
Indirect objects	Typical	No
More than 2 arguments	Typical	No
Syncretism of person categories	No	Often
Applicatives	No	Yes

Table 1: Features of clitic vs prefixal agreement systems in Australia.

For instance, the existence of portmanteau prefix forms is standard in NPN, while these are almost completely absent from the clitic systems we find in PN. In languages with prefixed pronominal agreement, some parts of the transitive prefix paradigm, at least, are transparently relatable to the intransitive prefixes and commonly also to independent pronouns. However, transitive prefixes where both arguments are either 1st or 2nd person characteristically lack this kind of transparency, as discussed in Heath (1991, 1998); c.f. *Table 2*:

	1sgObj	1ex.plObj	3sgObj
2sgSubj	cun-	jini-	cu-Ø-
2plSubj	jini-	jini-	ŋur-Ø-
1sgSubj			ŋu-Ø-
3sgSubj	ŋun-	jiriŋ-	Ø-

Table 2: Ngalakgan 2nd person subj/1st person object prefixes (Merlan 1983)

The Ngalakgan form indexing 2sgS/1sgO *cun-* cannot be derived in any regular fashion from the 2sgS/3sgO form *cu-* plus the 3sgS/1sgO form *ŋun-*. Similarly, the form *jini-* which syncretises over all other combinations of 2nd person subject and 1st person object involving a non-singular argument has no regular derivation, although it is similar to the 1ex.plObj form *jiriŋ-*. The forms indexing 1st person subject/2nd person object are equally opaque. Portmanteaux like these are found in a majority of prefixing NPN languages where the arguments are linearly adjacent in the string, especially in combinations of 1st and 2nd person. If NPN prefixal systems developed from clitic systems of the Warlpiri type, then we must reconstruct a number of early changes in the agreement system, including the development of portmanteaux, since these are so widely observed among NPN languages. It appears that the Ngalakgan portmanteau prefix, *cun-* (2sg/1sg), is reconstructible to pA, given its discontinuous distribution. We propose that one specific feature of the pA clitic system—the existence of inverse marking morphemes—was instrumental in some of these changes. Both portmanteaux and inverse marking are found in the clitic system of Warumungu (Simpson 1990, 2008), which provides evidence that portmanteaux can develop in bound pronominal systems before affixation.

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