

TYPOLOGICAL RARA (AND RARISSIMA) IN KHEVSUR AND TUSH

Khevsur and Tush are endangered highly divergent dialects (perhaps separate languages) of Georgian spoken in eastern Georgia near the border with Chechnya and Ingushetia in the Russian Federation. They are interesting for a number of reasons, not least among which the intimate and not fully understood contact they have long had with Nakh-Daghestanian languages that lie north of the Caucasus Mountains. However, in this talk we will show from a new dialectological corpus being produced that this question of language contact is also connected to a number of highly unusual grammatical features: unusual forms of question formation, ditropic (aka Klavans type five) clitics, degrammaticalization and case-stacking.

In terms of question formation, Standard Georgian [SG] is relatively well-behaved: a dedicated preverbal focus position operates for both single (1a) and multiple (1b) wh-questions. Also unexceptional is the animacy restriction in (1c): animates usually precede inanimates (Harris 1981). It has been claimed (e.g. Chomsky 1973 and many in that tradition) that question formation is subject to a ‘superiority condition’, under which this generalization is a hard and fast rule. Khevsur and Tush texts show this is only a statistical truth even within Kartvelian: as in (2), taken from a corpus, inanimates can indeed precede animates even in triple wh-formations

Much more interesting than statistical rara are true rarissima such as ditropic clitics (Cysouw to appear) which have actually degrammaticalized from their original word internal position as prefixes situated between the preverb and verb root and now can freely suffix to preceding material serving as focal particles, even though they grammatically modify the following material, as in (3). Because we have access to Old Georgian texts, we know exactly what was possible in the ancestral dialect of Khevsur and Tush: as with modern SG, the prefixes could not separate from the verb. What is most interesting is that these clitics show similarities to Udi endoclititics (Harris 2002) and some constructions in Chechen (Good 2003) and Ingush (Peterson 2001). Such constructions have also been claimed not to exist (Marantz 1988) and are certainly cross-linguistically much harder to find. This fact suggests that the local clustering of ditropicity might be an areal feature.

Another construction that shows possible influence from Nakh-Daghestanian languages is the particular kind of case-stacking seen in Khevsur and Tush is as in (4). Although Old (and to a limited extent modern) Georgian did show *Suffixaufnahme* in which genitival nouns must agree with their head noun, such genitives rarely if ever functioned as arguments of verbs. In Khevsur and Tush, on the other hand, *Suffixaufnahme* properly speaking has been lost, but instead semantically recipient arguments may be marked with both genitive and adverbial case. The interest here lies in the fact that Nakh-Daghestanian languages often build oblique cases on particular oblique stems of the form [ROOT]-[OBL]-[CASE] – the ‘obliqueness’ can actually be segmented out, as in Lak. This talk will argue that centuries of bilingualism resulted in rather deep contact of ND languages on Khevsur and Tush using indigenous morphological resources.

- (1)
- | | | | |
|----|----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| a. | ra-s | a-k’et-eb-s | (*ras) |
| | what-DAT | PRV-do-TH-3SG | |
| b. | vin | ra-s | a-k’et-eb-s |
| | who.NOM | what-DAT | PRV-do-TH-3SG |
| | ‘Who is doing what?’ | | |
| c. | *ra-s | vin | a-k’et-eb-s |
| | what-DAT | who.NOM | PRV-do-TH-3SG |
| | ‘Who is doing what?’ | | |

- (2) čem-tan-it ro c'a-xv-av, rom ra-s vin vis
 1SG-with-INST if PVB-roll.up-TH that what-DAT who.NOM who.DAT
- s-tx-ov-d-as=av
 3-ask-TH-IMPF-3SG=QUOT
 'If you will roll it up for me so that whatever anyone asks of anyone...'
- (3) čem-s ga-mdidr-eb-ul-eb-s m-txov-ar-a-eb-s=tana=ǵ
 my-DAT PVB-rich-TH-PART-PL-DAT PART-ask-PART-?-PL-DAT=at=2
- c'a-vid-a=v
 PVB-go.OPT-OPT2=QUOT
 'You should come to those who have asked [to be?] among those made wealthy.'
- (4) peq^h-t ra-s ča-v-i-c-om-d-i=v?" u-tkv-am-is
 foot-DAT.PL what-DAT PVB-1-PRV-fall-TH-IMPF-1/2IMPF=QUOT PRV-say-TH-3SG
- memcxvar-*is-ad*
 shepherd-*GEN-ADV*
 "‘How could I fall flat on my feet?’" he says to the shepherd.'

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