

Pharyngeal and laryngeal consonants in Batsbi

Yasuhiro Kojima (Tokyo University of Foreign Studies)

ya.kojima@gmail.com

In the literature on Batsbi, there have been two different views with regard to its pharyngeal consonants. Some distinguish the “voiced pharyngeal plosive”, which occurs only in the word-initial position, as a separate consonant (Dešeriev 1967; Chrelashvili 1975; 1999; 2002; Gagua 1983; Kadagidze and Kadagidze 1984), while others do not (Dešeriev 1953; Holisky and Gagua 1994). The tables (a) and (b) below show these views, respectively. It is also presented how the word “morning” is phonemically analyzed in each view. “@” stands for the voiced pharyngeal plosive. In the IPA chart, the voiced pharyngeal plosive is deemed as unpronounceable; the distinction of “@” is hence problematic. According to the second view, “@” is an allophonic variant of the pharyngeal fricative /ʕ/. Holisky and Gagua (1994: 151) assume that a *non-phonemic* glottal stop appears before /ʕ/ when it is in word-initial position (e.g. /ʕurdna/ [ʔʕurdna] “morning”).

(a)			(b)			(c)		
	phar.	lar.	phar.	lar.		phar.	lar.	
plosive	@	ʔ		ʔ			ʔ	
fricative	ħ ʕ	h	ħ ʕ	h		ħ	h	
“morning”	@urdna		ʕurdna			ʔhurdna		

However, I consider that the initial ʔ is phonemic in those words such as ʔʕurdna “morning”. If this is justified, ʕ never occurs word-initially. The voiced and voiceless pharyngeal fricatives, ħ and ʕ, which every researcher distinguishes as separate consonants, then come into complementary distribution and ʕ can be treated as an allophonic variant of /ħ/. As a result, the table (c) is obtained and “@” is analyzed as the consonant cluster /ʔħ/.

Virtually no researchers have considered the glottal stop in the word-initial position as phonemic, though it is undoubtedly phonemic in word-medial and word-final positions (e.g. **xeʔar** “to know”, **gagaʔ** “belly”). As far as I have confirmed, there are attested a few words that begin with a vowel without a preceding glottal stop (e.g. **e** “and” (vs. **ʔe** “this”), **ux** “what”, **uʌ** “why”). Batsbi speakers thus phonemically distinguish the existence/non-existence of the word-initial glottal stop. (Such distinction is presumably a recent phenomenon triggered by some syntactic change and influence of Georgian. For example, **e** “and” is basically an enclitic, but it is often used independently as well in the present-day Batsbi, at least. **ux** “what” has been described in the literature as **vux**, but the latter form was rejected by my consultants. It is supposed that the initial **v** disappeared under the influence of Georgian, in which **v** often drops out before the vowel **u**.)

If “@” is analyzed as the consonant cluster ʔʕ, it turns out that ʕ occurs only in the final

position of the word-initial consonant cluster. For example:

bʁarkʼ	“eye”	mʁaʔð	“nail”	kʼʁakʼ	“heel”
dʁeʔ	“liver”	nʁan	“worm”	cʼʁirkoⁿ	“suddenly”
vʁivʔ	“four (male)”	pʼʁaⁿ	“wing”	čʼʁağoⁿ	“strong, hard”
jʁivʔ	“four (female)”	tʼʁi:r	“star”	ʔʁurdna	“morning”

The consonant preceding **ʁ** is voiced (**b**, **d**, **v**, **j**, **m**, **n**), ejective (**pʼ**, **tʼ**, **kʼ**, **qʼ**, **cʼ**, **čʼ**) or the glottal stop **ʔ**. On the other hand, the voiceless counterpart **h** appears in various positions. It can take the word-initial position as well.

hakʼ	“forehead”	doha	“spring (season)”	joh	“girl”
-------------	------------	-------------	-------------------	------------	--------

h also occurs in the final position of the word-initial consonant cluster; however, it may follow only non-ejective voiceless plosives (**p**, **t**, **k**, **c**, **č**), which are never followed by **ʁ**.

phe	“village”	khekiⁿ	“ready”	čhog	(a sort of cheese)
thak	“footprint”	cha	“one”		

ʁ and **h** are thus in complementary distribution. /**h**/ is assumed to become voiced when the articulation of the preceding consonant involves glottis.

References

- Chrelašvili, Konstantine. 1975. *Nakhuri enebis Tanxmovanta Sist'ema* [Consonant system of the Nakh languages]. Tbilisi.
- Chrelašvili, Konstantine. 1999. Batsbijskij jazyk. In Alekseev M. E. et al (eds.), *Jazyki Mira: Kavkazskie jazyki*, 196-203. Moscow: Academia.
- Chrelašvili, Konstantine. 2002. *Ts'ova-Tušuri Ena* [The Tsova-Tush language]. Tbilisi: Tbilisi University Press.
- Dešeriev, Ju. D. 1953. *Batsbijskij Jazyk* [The Batsbi language]. Moscow: Nauka.
- Dešeriev, Ju. D. 1967. Batsbijskij jazyk [The Batsbi language]. In *Jazyki Narodov SSSR*, IV: *Iberijsko-Kavkazskie jazyki*, 228-254. Nauka: Moscow.
- Gagua, Rusudan. 1983. Osnovnye voprosy fonetiki i morfologii batsbijskogo imeni [Basic problems of phonetics and morphology of Batsbi nouns]. *Annals of Ibero-Caucasian Linguistics* X: 173-262.
- Holisky, Dee Ann and Rusudan Gagua. 1994. Tsova-Tush (Batsbi). In Riexs Smeets (ed.), *The Indigenous Languages of the Caucasus*, volume 4: *The North East Caucasian Languages*, part 2, 147-212. Delmar, New York: Caravan Books.
- Kadagidze, Davit and Niko Kadagidze. 1984. *Tsova-Tušur-Kartul-Rusuli Leksik'oni* [Tsova-Tush-Georgian-Russian Dictionary]. Tbilisi: Metsniereba.