

Head class marking in Nakh and Nakh-Daghestanian

In most Nakh-Daghestanian (ND) languages, a number of nouns have initial consonants that are identical to the gender-marking prefix of the gender they belong to: Chechen *butt*, Akhvakh *bocc'o*, Hunzib *boco*, Lak *barz*, Dargi (Chirag) *bacc*, Archi *bac'*, Xinalug *vac* 'moon' (B or 3 gender in all languages, marker *b-). Other initials more loosely resemble gender markers in place of articulation: see 'barley' below.

Many scholars have been tempted to see these initials as "fossilized" agreement markers (*okamenelye klassnye pokazateli*), but Alekseev 1985:60-62, 2003:204-215 shows that positing frozen agreement is a weak analysis: only an identifiable few such nouns are likely deverbals whose initials might indeed be lexicalized agreement markers; initials of the same place of articulation as gender prefixes but not identical to them cannot be blithely equated to gender prefixes unless independently required sound changes can be shown to have operated; gender-echoing initials are not demonstrably morphemes and do not change, when gender does, in the plural; reanalysis where gender is adjusted to inert root consonantism is not uncommon in ND and a more parsimonious assumption than agreement.

Now, however, a fuller synchronic analysis of the Nakh gender-echoing initials is available (Nichols in press, 2004, 2003, Nichols & Vagapov 2004), bipartite stems are better understood, in ND and in general (Nichols 2003, Delancey 1999, 1996), and a theoretical understanding of non-agreement lexical noun class has been developed (Evans 1997, Evans et al. 2002), so it is timely to reassess the question of gender initials in ND nouns. I argue that gender-echoing initials are HEAD CLASS marking (term from Evans 1997; Evans et al. 2002 use "morphological class", but this phrase is needed for more general use): non-inflectional gender or gender-like classes marked on the noun itself. Head class is often a partial category (affecting some but not all nouns); the head class of a noun is not always the same as its agreement gender; head class markers sometimes have allomorphic differences from the corresponding gender agreement markers; head class is lexical, not inflectional. ND head class has these properties but is interestingly extreme along some of the parameters compared to other families that have been studied (chiefly Bantu and Gunwinjguan).

Synchronically, in Nakh, there is a statistically highly significant association of place of articulation of the initial consonant with the gender: nouns with initial labials tend to belong to B gender (e.g. Ingush *butt* 'moon', *bolx* 'work', *mox* 'wind'), those with initial dentals to D gender, those with initial palatals to J gender (Nichols in press:1170). A very few noun roots are lexicalized with two or more head classes (and genders) (e.g. Ing. *buq'* (B) 'back', *juq'* (J) 'interval, waist', *duq'* (D) 'yoke, ridge'), but basically head class is fixed for the noun and not variable. If the agreement gender changes in the plural, head class does not: *butt* B, pl. *bettaazh* D 'moon, month'. In most nouns the head class marker is present in all cases (e.g. abs. *butt*, gen. *betta*, etc. 'moon'), but some nouns have split head class, with head class marked only in the absolutive singular (*jexk*, gen. *axkara*, pl. *axkarazh* J 'comb'). One pronoun has head class and it is split: *txo*, erg. *oaxa* (D) 'we.EXCL'. Head class differs from agreement gender in a non-negligible minority of nouns: Ch. *jiatt*, obl. *aattan* 'cow' (B gender, J split head class).

In a survey of all nouns in my PND lexical database, Nakh nouns often have head class when some Daghestanian cognates lack it: e.g. 'barley' (gender 3 or B in nearly every language): Ing. *muq*, Tsez *maqa*, Aghul *mux*, Xinalug *maqa*; but Avar (Chada kolob) *oq*, Lak *qa*. In Nakh and Xinalug, head class

markers form stop + fricative clusters of a type foreign to PND (Ing. *pxo* (B) 'bullet', *txir* (D) 'dew', Batsbi *pst'u* (B) 'bull', etc.). Some languages have head class in many nouns (e.g. core Lezgian), some in very few (e.g. Lak); Nakh is intermediate. Where agreement gender and head class differ, it appears that the head class is usually archaic and/or the agreement gender innovative. Nakh split head class is unique in ND. It pits absolutive vs. oblique in nouns, but ergative vs. others in pronouns, following the usual paradigm shapes. The fact that it is case-based points strongly to an ultimate syntactic origin (and to animacy-based split ergativity) and argues against the analysis whereby gender-echoing initials are due to reanalysis of (ordinary inert) initials as gender markers.

Head gender reconstructs for PND, as a partial category and in individual words, and is part of the family's morphological signature. It outlives agreement gender in the Lezgian languages that have lost gender. It often reconstructs more securely than does the agreement gender of nouns. Unlike agreement gender, which increases in transparency while the number of agreeing verbs decreases from east to west over modern ND geography, suggesting a post-PND wavelike spread, head class displays no coherent modern geographical cline but is indicative of very early ND-internal areality.

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