

PERSON MARKING IN DARGWA: SOME FACTS AND DIACHRONIC CONSIDERATIONS

Dargwa belongs to the few Nakh-Daghestanian languages that show a well developed person agreement. Person agreement markers and person agreement rules in the Dargwa dialects are highly diverse, which is quite understandable, since person in Dargwa is believed to be an innovation. To my knowledge, all Dargwa dialects have two different types of person marker sets used in different TAM-paradigms: those consisting of clitics, which are separated from the verb in argument-focus constructions, and those including inseparable suffixes. Though the distribution of person marker sets varies across the dialects, the tendency is that clitics are mainly used in main clauses of declarative and interrogative utterances, whereas suffixes are characteristic of dependent clauses and main clauses of commands, wishes, etc.

Cross-linguistically, personal endings are usually considered to result from grammaticalization of personal pronouns (cf. Givón 1976: 180, Lehmann 1995: 39–42; 1988; Siewierska 1999; Siewierska and Bakker 1996; 2002, etc.). This is partially true for Dargwa as well. Troubetzkoy, who traced the origin of person endings in some Nakh-Daghestanian languages (1929), found here “pronominal” (originating from personal pronouns) and “non-pronominal” markers.<sup>1</sup> The pronominal origin of a part of Dargwa person markers is also supported by the Proto-North-Caucasian reconstruction by Nikolaev and Starostin (1994). All person markers of pronominal origin are now suffixes.

The origin of person clitics – though synchronically they look less grammaticalized than person suffixes – remains enigmatic<sup>2</sup>. Troubetzkoy did not indicate their source. Magometov (1978) suggested that clitic person markers developed out of verbs, but did not point at these verbs. In many publications (beginning from Magometov 1962) all person markers are claimed to develop out of the first person singular pronouns *du* (> *-da*, *-di*) or *nu* (> *-ra*, *-ri*). This point of view bases on the data of the isolated Mehweb dialect, where only the first person is marked in the declaratives<sup>3</sup>. Mehweb is thus treated as the most archaic dialect – at least with regard to person. However – let alone the semantic oddity of developing second person agreement markers from first person pronouns – this approach fails to explain many facts, e.g. how *-ra* and *-ri* developed from *nu*; why some dialects (e.g. Uraxi) have both *r*- and *d*-forms, etc.

What we know about some other languages of the group makes us think of a different source of person markers. These should be clitics or verbal suffixes that encode elements of information structure. In many languages of the group, certain clitics or verb forms mark predication as known or new for the speaker and/or the hearer, as *thetic*, as a part of the speaker’s background knowledge or unexpected information, etc. The position of the clitics is used to identify the focused constituent. Some of those elements show correlations with person. For example, in the Zakatal and Kusr dialects of Avar (Isakov 1980; Saidova 1980), participles have developed the function of the first person forms. A similar process seems to begin in Tsakhur. The Tsakhur participles tend to head *thetic* sentences. Since the first person pronoun, if present in an utterance, is usually its topic, it can be easily dropped. The sentence is then indivisible into topic and focus, the main verb takes the form of a participle. This results in a frequency correlation between first person arguments and a participle as the head predicate of an independent clause (Kibrik (ed.) 1999; Kalinina, p.c.). In Tsakhur, person also shows correlations with predicative clitics: the clitic *nī*, which shows that the proposition belongs to the speaker’s background knowledge, combines with all persons, but is frequently used with the first person; the clitic *jī*, marking the proposition as new for the speaker, combines with the first person only in very special and rare conditions (Tatevosov, Majsak 1999).

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<sup>1</sup> Troubetzkoy dealt with the data of the Uraxi (*hurqili*) dialect described by Uslar (1892).

<sup>2</sup> According to Troubetzkoy, the Dargwa (Uraxi) pronominal endings include *-s* (first person singular, future), *-ha* (first person plural, future), *-d* (second person singular, “categorical future”), *-di* (second person singular, preterite), and *-dā* (second person plural, “categorical future” and preterite), which results from contamination of *-d* or *-di* with *-ha*. The Dargwa endings of non-pronominal origin include what we call clitic markers (*-ra*, *-ri* or *-da*, *-di*).

<sup>3</sup> The same markers refer to the second person in questions (Magometov 1982).

I think that the most probable source of clitic person markers are predicative clitics of the type that was described in Tsakhur. However, any direct parallels to Tsakhur and the Avar dialects would be inappropriate for Dargwa, since in all its dialects – except Mehweb – the person system is centered around the second person:

- only the second person consistently differentiates singular and plural forms;
- in the TAM paradigms using a suffixal person marking set, the second person plural is marked by a special morpheme (*-a*, *-ā*, or *-ja*);
- in the preterite, some dialects use both person clitics and person suffixes: in this case, the maximum differences are again observed in the second person, cf. Uraxi *-di* – second person subject marker; *-ri* – second person object marker;
- in the dialects where agreement control is based on the personal hierarchy, it either shows preference of the second person (Icari, Kajtag) or equal ranking of first and second person (Akusha and others).

A possible source of the second person singular clitic (*-di* or *-ri*) could be an element marking a sort of old information, known to both speech act participants. Another interesting fact is that this clitic coincides with the relative past marker, which makes us carefully suggest their common origin. The special features of Mehweb may be rather an innovation influenced by language contact (with Lak and/or Avar).

In modern Dargwa, clitic person markers are obligatory elements in many types of independent clauses. Whereas “pronominal” person markers have become suffixes in modern Dargwa, clitic markers retain their status. They cannot merge with the verb – at least as long as Dargwa retains its basic principle of the sentence structure whereby predicative clitics, unlike suffixes, attach not to words of a certain lexical class, but to a functional projection, i.e. to the focused constituent of the sentence.