

# Li8 Supervision assignment 5: The Great Daghestanian Stem Hoax?

Due 19 February

## The morphological status of stems

Descriptions of Daghestanian paradigms tend to be organized around inventories of abstract stems that provide bases for subsets of inflected forms in these paradigms. Consider, for example, the regular ‘Series o’ forms from the previous task, this time with the traditional case names restored.

| Case       | Sing    | Plu     | Sing    | Plu     |
|------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Absolutive | was     | wasal   | jas     | jasal   |
| Ergative   | wasas   | wasaz   | jasat   | jasaz   |
| Genitive   | wasasul | wasazul | jasatul | jasazul |
| Dative     | wasase  | wasaze  | jasate  | jasaze  |

Table 1: Grammatical case forms of Avar *was* ‘son’ and *jas* ‘daughter’

The forms that realize the ergative singular and plural of these items recur as initial subsequences in the genitive and dative forms, and again in each of the locative series that we examined previously. As Kibrik (1998) notes below, there are opposing interpretations of these patterns:

Two different opinions can be found in the literature: (a) these markers are markers of the ergative case and all oblique cases are formed from the ergative; (b) these markers are markers of the oblique stem (of the singular or plural) and the ergative has no special marker and coincides with the oblique stem of the appropriate number. The first point of view is unsatisfactory: it does not take account of the semantics of the oblique cases (ergative meaning is not a component here), nor of the data from other Daghestanian languages, where the ergative frequently

has a special morphological marker like other oblique cases ...  
(Kibrik 1998: 257)

The analysis of the Daghestanian language Archi proposed by Chumakina et al. (2007) associates the noun  $ba^{\text{ʃ}}k'$  'ram' with the four stems in Table 2:

|            | Sing                          | Plu                             |
|------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Absolutive | $ba^{\text{ʃ}}k'$ (stem 1)    | $ba^{\text{ʃ}}k'ur$ (stem 3)    |
| Ergative   | $be^{\text{ʃ}}k'iri$ (stem 2) | $ba^{\text{ʃ}}k'určaj$ (stem 4) |

Table 2: Stem inventory of  $ba^{\text{ʃ}}k'$  'ram'

Table 3 illustrates the distribution of these stems in a paradigm.

|              | Sing   | Plu    | Ending             |
|--------------|--------|--------|--------------------|
| Absolutive   | stem 1 | stem 3 | —                  |
| Ergative     | stem 2 | stem 4 | —                  |
| Genitive     | stem 2 | stem 4 | -n                 |
| Dative       | stem 2 | stem 4 | -s                 |
| Comitative   | stem 2 | stem 4 | -t:u               |
| Similative   | stem 2 | stem 4 | -q <sup>ʃ</sup> di |
| Causal       | stem 2 | stem 4 | -š:l               |
| Comparative  | stem 2 | stem 4 | -χur               |
| Partitive    | stem 2 | stem 4 | -q <sup>ʃ</sup> iš |
| Substitutive | stem 2 | stem 4 | -kləna             |

Table 3: Structure of partial noun paradigm in Archi

Table 4 below now instantiates this abstract structure. (Ignore the alternation between *-čaj* in stem 4 and *-če* in case forms based on stem 4.)

|              | Sing                                   | Plu                                     |
|--------------|--|---|
| Absolutive   | ba <sup>s</sup> k'                     | ba <sup>s</sup> k'ur                    |
| Ergative     | be <sup>s</sup> k'iri                  | ba <sup>s</sup> k'určaj                 |
| Genitive     | be <sup>s</sup> k'irin                 | ba <sup>s</sup> k'určen                 |
| Dative       | be <sup>s</sup> k'iris                 | ba <sup>s</sup> k'určes                 |
| Comitative   | be <sup>s</sup> k'iriɫ:u               | ba <sup>s</sup> k'určel:u               |
| Similative   | be <sup>s</sup> k'iriq <sup>s</sup> di | ba <sup>s</sup> k'určeq <sup>s</sup> di |
| Causal       | be <sup>s</sup> k'iriš:l               | ba <sup>s</sup> k'určeš:l               |
| Comparative  | be <sup>s</sup> k'iriχur               | ba <sup>s</sup> k'určeχur               |
| Partitive    | be <sup>s</sup> k'iriq <sup>s</sup> iš | ba <sup>s</sup> k'určeq <sup>s</sup> iš |
| Substitutive | be <sup>s</sup> k'irikɫena             | ba <sup>s</sup> k'určekɫena             |

Table 4: Partial paradigm of BA<sup>s</sup>K' 'ram'

### Task 1

- Write a short essay that addresses the following questions:
  1. Which of two interpretations of stem syncretism discussed by Kibrik provides the best analysis of the patterns in Table 4?
  2. Do the advantages that you identify in the first part of your answer argue for the superiority of that interpretation in general?

### The theoretical status of stems

In other descriptive and theoretical traditions, there is often less of a consensus in favour of stem-based analyses. Some theoretical approaches even dispute the advantages of stem-based analyses over root-based analyses.

### Task 2

- Review the arguments in Embick & Halle (2005) and Aronoff (2012) and then write a short essay that addresses the following questions:
  1. Do roots or stems provide the best analysis of patterns in Table 4?
  2. Do the advantages that you identify in the first part of your answer argue for the superiority of roots or stems in general?

## References

- Aronoff, M. (2012). Morphological stems: What William of Ockham really said. *Word Structure* 5, 28–51.
- Chumakina, M., Brown, D., Quilliam, H. & Corbett, G. G. (2007). *Slovar 'arčinskogo jazyka (arčinsko-russko-anglijskij) [A dictionary of Archi: Archi-Russian-English]*. Makhachkala: Delovoj Mir.
- Embick, D. & Halle, M. (2005). On the status of stems in morphological theory. In Geerts, T., van Ginneken, I. & Jacobs, H. (eds.), *Romance Languages and Linguistic Theory 2003*, Amsterdam: Benjamins.
- Kibrik, A. E. (1998). Archi. In Spencer, A. & Zwicky, A. M. (eds.), *Handbook of Morphology*, Oxford: Blackwell, 455–476.