Contact-induced morphological change in Agul dialects

Dmitry Ganenkov, Timur Maisak
(Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow)

1. Agul and its dialects: background
Agul (also spelled Aghul) belongs to the Lezgic branch of the East Caucasian family spoken by about 20000 speakers. Most of the speakers live in the Agul and the Kurah districts of Daghestan, Russia (in 20 mountain villages plus those resettled on the lowlands). They are almost exclusively first-language speakers; the overwhelming majority of Aguls speaks Russian.

Agul divides into seven dialects, viz.
(i) CENTRAL AGUL,
(ii) CIRXE,
(iii) FITE,
(iv) GEQUN,
(v) HUPPUQ,
(vi) KEREN,
(vii) QUSHAN.

The three major dialects are spoken in eight (CENTRAL), six (KEREN) and three (QUSHAN) villages respectively, each of other four dialects is spoken in only one village.

All the dialects of Agul display considerable phonological, morphological and lexical differences, so that the speech differs quite significantly.

However, these differences generally do not impede mutual intelligibility. This is not the case only with the QUSHAN dialect which is hardly understandable by speakers of other varieties (QUSHAN speakers themselves usually have some knowledge of CENTRAL AGUL).

Given the existence of contacts between the ‘peripheral’ dialects with other East Caucasian languages\(^1\), it seems plausible to suggest that at least some of the dialectal differences are contact-induced.

---

1. This work was supported by the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology.
2. Like most other East Caucasian languages, Agul throughout its history has been exposed to Arabic, Iranian, Turkic and Russian influence. We do not treat these influences here as their impact on the dialectal divergence has been minimal, if any.
2. Neighboring languages and the nature of contacts

Genealogical tree of the relevant languages

- **Contacts with Dargwa**
  - **CIRXE** had close contacts with two Dargwa-speaking villages, viz. Amuq and Ashty. Intermarriages with women from these two villages were very widespread. Almost all people had a good command of Dargwa. Less important contacts with other Dargwa villages: Xuduc, Icari, Shari.
  - **BURSHAG (< QUSHAN)** had contacts with Shari and Icari and, to a less extent, with other villages, though extensive intermarriages are not attested.
  - **Both villages** had some contact with Qaitag-speaking villages (< Dargwa), since the road to the lowlands from these two villages went via the Qaitag area.

- **Contacts with Tabasaran**
  - **QUSHAN** villages (i.e. BURSHAG, ARSUG, XUDIG) and **FITE** are on the border with the Tabasaran-speaking area. However, no close contacts are attested.

- **Contacts with Rutul**
  - **KEREN** villages (i.e. USSUH, KWARDAL, UKUZ, HARAZHW, BEDUQ) may have had contacts with Rutuls. Sporadic intermarriages with Rutul women are attested at least in BEDUQ.

- **Contacts with Lezgian**
  - **KEREN** villages (USSUH, KWARDAL, HARAZHW) and **HUPPUQ** were and still are in a very tight contact with neighboring Lezgian-speaking villages: Gelxen (KEREN), Ursun and Shimixur (HUPPUQ). Very frequent intermarriages with Lezgian women. Most speakers of KEREN and HUPPUQ have a good command of Lezgian, which is a dominant language of this area and has a relatively high prestige, since (i) the road to the lowlands goes via Lezgian villages, (ii) Lezgian is spoken in the administrative center (Qurah), (iii) shopping in Qurah and Qasumkent, (iv) Lezgian was taught as ‘native’ in schools until recently, (v) almost no contacts with other Agul villages.
• **Expectations**

- **KEREN** and **HUPPUQ** must have experienced strong contact influence of Lezgian
- **CIRXE** may have been influenced by Dargwa
- **BURSHAG** (and other QUSHAN villages) as well as **FITE** may have undergone some Dargwa and/or Tabasaran influence, although it is not expected to be very strong
- **CENTRAL AGUL** and **GEQUN** had no such close contacts with other languages, therefore, we do not expect to find much influence

3. **Morphological variation in the Agul dialects**

Some differences do not show any particular areal distribution, thus, they cannot be attributed to contact influence. A good example of this kind of difference is preservation / loss of sonorant stem augments in the infinitive and in the imperfective forms.

![Map of Agul dialects]

Some verbs have an augment in infinitive and imperfective, while in perfective this element is absent, cf. the following BURSHAG verbs:

(1) ‘work’

liχ-an-as [work-AUG-INF]
liχ-an-di [work-AUG-CVB]
liχ-u-ni [work-PFV-PST]

(2) ‘eat’

ʡut’-al-as [eat-AUG-INF]
ʡut’-al-di [eat-AUG-CVB]
ʡut’-u-naw [eat-PFV-PST]

Historically, there were two different augments -n- and -l-, which were used in both infinitive and imperfective. However, this original marking is preserved only in the QUSHAN dialect. In TPIG and CIRXE, only one augment -n- is preserved, but still in both forms. In BURKIKHAN, the same augment is preserved only in imperfective. All other dialects do not have any trace of the augments.

- **Independent development vs. contact-induced innovation vs. contact-induced preservation**

It is not always easy to distinguish a contact-induced morphological change from a change arising due to the independent development of a certain dialect. It should be noted that the contact can both the **preservation** of a particular proto-language isogloss (which can be lost in other dialects) as well as the **innovation** of some phenomenon that has never existed in the proto-language. These two cases are also difficult to distinguish between.
• We will look at the following types of evidence:
  ✓ data from Agul dialects, i.e. whether a particular feature is found in other Agul dialects
  ✓ data from neighboring languages, i.e. whether a feature is present there
  ✓ data from the most closely related languages (Lezgian and Tabasaran), i.e. whether a feature was inherited from the proto-language

The situation with the Agul dialects is also complicated because two of the contact languages, namely Lezgian and Tabasaran, are closely related to Agul – the three languages form the East Lezgic group together.

4. Case studies

Noun morphology

4.1. Noun plural marker -jar vs. -wur, -wr, -bur

Noun plural marker for words ending in a consonant is -ar in all dialects, cf.:

(3a) HUPPUQ
  dad-ar father-PL

(3b) QUSHAN
  gag-ar father-PL

For words ending in a vowel, the plural marker is -bur or -wur, -wr in most dialects. Only HUPPUQ and KEREN use -jar, cf.:

(4a) HUPPUQ
  gada-jar boy-PL

(4b) FITE
  geda-bur boy-PL

The old plural marker -wur is preserved in KEREN and HUPPUQ only in plural marking on demonstratives:

(5) HUPPUQ
  me-wur te-wur this-PL that-PL

Both the HUPPUQ and the KEREN dialects are in tight contact with Lezgian, and in all Lezgian dialects -jar is the only plural marker with nouns ending in a vowel. Thus, the plural marker -jar is definitely an innovation and was borrowed from Lezgian.
4.2. SUB vs. CONT locative forms

Most of Agul dialects distinguish between two different localization markers: (i) SUB with the marker -k, which denotes location under a landmark, (ii) CONT with the marker -k, which denotes location of a part on/in the whole (like handle on cupboard or salt in soup) and fixed attachment (like picture on wall), cf. examples from TPIG:

(6a) ḱ’an-di-k:
stone-OBL-SUB
‘(snake) under the stone’

(6b) ḱ’an-di-k
stone-OBL-CONT
‘(inscriptions) on a stone’

In HUPPUQ this distinction is completely lost, cf.:

(7a) ḱ’an-di-k
stone-OBL-SUB/CONT
‘under a/the stone’

(7b) ḱ’an-di-k
stone-OBL-SUB/CONT
‘on a/the stone’

Similarly, the distinction is lost in three KEREN villages, viz. USSUH, UKUZ, and KWARDAL, but only in the essive, while in the lative and in the elative the contrast is preserved, cf. the examples from USSUH:

(8a) ḱ’an-di-k
stone-OBL-SUB/CONT
‘under a/the stone’

(8b) ḱ’an-di-k
stone-OBL-SUB/CONT
‘on a/the stone’

(9a) ḱ’an-di-k:es
stone-OBL-SUB-ELAT
‘from under a/the stone’

(9b) ḱ’an-di-k:es
stone-OBL-CONT-ELAT
‘from the surface of a/the stone’

However, the merger of the localization markers is of different origin in KEREN and in HUPPUQ. In the three KEREN villages, this is a result of a regular phonetic process: non-aspirated stops in the final position change into the corresponding aspirated consonant.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TPIG</th>
<th>USSUH</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolutive</td>
<td>jak:</td>
<td>jak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oblique stem</td>
<td>jak-u-</td>
<td>jak-u-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In HUPPUQ no such phonetic process occurs in other words, so that the merger of the two localization markers is induced by contacts with Lezgian where the same merger happened due to phonetic reasons.
4.3. Prolative
The set of orientation markers common to all the Agul dialects includes:
(i) zero-marked essive,
(ii) lative with the marker -di,
(iii) elative with the marked -as.

The prolative meaning (‘via, across, through’) is typically expressed by the elative or, more often, by the combination of a noun in the elative with the lative form of a demonstrative pronoun. The latter, therefore, has two interpretations, cf. the following example from HUPPUQ:

(10) \[\text{q’asumhū-r-i-as gi-č} \]
Qasumkent-OBL-IN:ELAT that(DOWN)-LAT
\(a.\) ‘(go) down (to Derbent) from Qasumkent’
\(b.\) ‘(go) down (to Derbent) via Qasumkent’

In CIRXE, this combination gave rise to a new orientation marker:

(11) \[\text{ǯuq:1-a-gič} \]
Qaitag-OBL-IN:PROL(DOWN) Qaitag-OBL-IN:ELAT that(DOWN)-LAT
‘(go) down (to the lowlands) via Qaitag’

Most interestingly, this form has no interpretation ‘down from Qaitag’. Moreover, it exactly corresponds to the way prolative is expressed in some Dargwa dialects, e.g. in Qaitag:

(12a) \[\text{ši-l-ci-r-ten} \]
village-OBL-IN-ELAT-PROL(THITHER)
‘(go) there via the village’
(12b) \[\text{ši-l-ci-r-žen} \]
village-OBL-IN-ELAT-PROL(HITHER)
‘(come) here via the village’

4.4. Vocative particle \textit{ja} vs. \textit{wa}
In most dialects, the vocative proclitic \textit{ja} is used for addressing people. The only exception is the CIRXE dialect, where the vocative particle is \textit{wa}, cf.:

(13a) TPIG
\[\text{ja baw} \]
VOC mother
‘hey, mother!’
(13b) TSIRKHE
\[\text{wa baw} \]
VOC mother
‘hey, mother!’

CIRXE is located in the Dargwa contact zone, and \textit{wa} is used a vocative particle across all Dargwa dialects. Thus it seems that TSIRKHE it was introduced under the Dargwa influence, and has ousted the original proclitic \textit{ja}.

4.5. Absolutive vs. Ergative in personal pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S</th>
<th>O</th>
<th>A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
<td>zun</td>
<td>zaš</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td>wun</td>
<td>waš</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL:INCL</td>
<td>xin</td>
<td>xeš</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1PL:EXCL</td>
<td>čin</td>
<td>češ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2PL</td>
<td>čun</td>
<td>češ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The bulk of the Agul dialects does not distinguish main grammatical functions S, A, O by means of case marking when the head of an NP is a personal pronoun. Contrary to this pattern, the KEREN dialect draws such distinction having a distinct ergative form. This is obviously a contact influence of Lezgian, which also draws this distinction (e.g. zun ‘I(ABS)’ vs. za ‘I(ERG)’).
4.6. Counting system

Again, distribution of types of counting systems clearly shows Lezgian influence on HUPPUQ and four KEREN villages. Here, similarly to Lezgian, vigesimal system is used, whereas in other dialects it is either strictly decimal (in QUSHAN and CIRXE) or mixed (QUSHAN, FITE, GEQUN, and the rest of KEREN):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>USSUH</th>
<th>qan-na ic’ud</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-and 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FITE</th>
<th>qan-na jic’ud</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20-and 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BURSHAG</th>
<th>šin-c’ur [3-10]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Verbal morphology

4.7. Repetitive / reversive marker q-, qV-

A productive repetitive/reversive prefix q- is attested only in the HUPPUQ and the KEREN dialects:

(14) \( q \)-as ‘see’ > q-ag as ‘see again’,
\( χ \)-as ‘bring’ > qu-\( χ \)-as ‘bring back’,
\( ic \)-as ‘give’ > qa-\( ic \)-as ‘give back’, etc.

A similar repetitive prefix q- \( \parallel q \)- is also productive in Lezgian, and the same marker is also used (as a prefix or an infix) in two West Lezgic languages — Rutul and Tsakhur. It is in principle not impossible that this is the old repetitive morpheme inherited from Proto-Lezgic, which has been lost in the majority of the Agul dialects, in Tabasaran and in South Lezgic languages. However, there is no trace of the repetitive morpheme neither in other Agul dialects nor in Tabasaran (e.g. as a lexicalized part of verbal roots, etc.). So, it is more plausible to assume that in HUPPUQ and KEREN this morpheme was borrowed from Lezgian.

4.8. Question marker -wa vs. -n, -jin

In the majority of Agul dialects the question marker is -wa, which attaches to all the finite verbal forms, cf. the TPIG examples:

(15) aq’.u-ne-wa ?  aq’.a-wa ?  aq’-as-e-wa ?
\( do.PFV-PST-Q \)  \( do.IPVF:PRS-Q \)  \( do-INF-COP-Q \)
\‘did (he) do it?‘  \‘does (he) do it?‘  \‘will (he) do it?’
The corresponding marker in the QUSHAN dialect is \(-{n} \parallel {jin}\), cf.:

\[(16)\] \(w.aI-{n} \chi -is-{u}-{jin}\)
\(\text{go.PFV:PRS-Q} \\rightarrow \text{go-INF-COP-Q}\)
‘does (he) go?’ ‘will (he) go?’

In Tabasaran the question suffix is also \(-{in} \parallel {jin}\). However, it is hardly the Tabasaran borrowing in the QUSHAN dialect. In Lezgian the question marker is \(-{ni}\) (note that it was not borrowed into KEREN or HUPPUQ dialects, in spite of much tighter contacts). So, here we rather deal with the common East Lezgic question clitic like \(*-{n}\) or \(*-{ni}\), while \(-{wa}\) in Agul is a later innovation. This morpheme probably goes back to the Early Agul stage before the separation of the QUSHAN branch from the ‘core’ Agul community (which later broke up into several dialects), and before the rise of the new question particle \(-{wa}\) in the latter. Another evidence of the proto-Agul nature of the \(-{n}\) question marker is that it is marginally used in CIRXE with negative verbal forms to mark rhetorical questions like:

\[(16)\] \(a.{\ddot{r}}a.-{j-dawa-{n} \ zu \ wa-{s}\ ?}\)
\(\text{say.PFV-COND-COP:NEG-Q} \ I \ \text{you(SG)-DAT}\)
‘I tell you, don’t I?’

Thus, this distinction in the form of the question particle is most probably not contact-induced but rather reflects the **independent diachronic drift of the dialects**. At the same time, the preservation of \(-{n} \parallel {in}\) in QUSHAN may have been at least partly supported by the contacts with Tabasaran.

4.9. Conditional marker (-\(\ddot{c}{i}\), -\(\ddot{c}{in}\), -\(\ddot{si}{n}\) vs. -\(t{e}{n}\)) and copula (i, e vs. wu)

Two other features that distinguish the QUSHAN dialect from all the other Agul dialects are conditional marker and copula. Most dialects use the suffix \(-{\ddot{c}{in}}\) (or its phonetic variants \(-{\ddot{c}{i}}, \ -{\ddot{si}}{n}\) to mark condition: \(p.u-{\ddot{c}{in}} [\text{say.PF-COND}]\) ‘if (he) said’, whereas the QUSHAN dialect has the marker \(-{t{e}{n}}. p.i-t{e}\ {en} [\text{say.PF-COND}]\).

Similarly, the copula \(e\) (or its phonetic variant \(j\)) is found in the bulk of the Agul dialects, whereas the QUSHAN dialect uses the copula \(wu\) instead.

The former difference is definitely not contact influence, since Tabasaran has conditional marker \(-{\ddot{s}{h}}\) and Lezgian has \(-{t{e}{n}}\).

However, the difference in the shape of copula can be related to contact, since Tabasaran has exactly the same copula \(wu\) (Lezgian copula is \(ja\)). We do not think that it is the case that QUSHAN borrowed copula from Tabasaran. It is rather contact-induced preservation of the archaic feature.
4. Plural in the Imperative

The dialects also differ with regard to whether plural addressee formally marked in the Imperative forms. Most dialects do not distinguish between singular and plural in the Imperative, i.e. the forms like aq'-e [do-IMP] or uχ [drink:IMP] can denote both singular and plural address of the Imperative forms. On the contrary, QUSHAN, FITE, CIRXE as well as the village of Kurag belonging to the QUSHAN dialect have this formal distinction, cf. the following CIRXE examples:

(17) šaw šaw-aj
    come:IMP come:IMP-PL

In Tabasaran, plural imperative is also marked with -aj.

But! Shaumyan (1941) reports that this distinction is attested in BURKIKHAN (<GEQUN) and TPIG (<QUSHAN) as well. This means that the plural marking in the Imperative was more wide-spread, but it has been lost in several villages very recently.

5. Conclusions

⇒ Some phenomena do not show any clear areal distribution of features across dialects (e.g. sonorant stem augments)

⇒ KEREN and HUPPUQ experienced the strongest contact influence (from Lezgian) — borrowing of the nominal plural marker -jar, (partial) loss of the sub/cont distinction, innovative abs / erg distinction in the personal pronouns, borrowing of the repetitive marker -q, preservation of the vigesimal counting system

⇒ CIRXE also has some contact-induced morphological changes — borrowing of the vocative proclitic, development of the prolative case marker

⇒ BURSHAG shows several peculiar morphological features that distinguish it from other Agul dialects and are similar to Tabasaran. But we think that they all represent the case of the contact-induced preservation.

⇒ All other dialects do not have any visible traces of contact influence on morphology.