

# Towards the genesis of the class category in the Nakh-Daghestanian languages<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This paper focuses on the genesis of the class category in the Nakh-Daghestanian languages and uses descriptive and comparative methods. In addition to descriptive and historical-comparative methods, the method of internal reconstruction is also used.

The universal class category, used to classify substantives according to social role, is the core of the grammar of the East-Caucasian languages, completely penetrating the morphological structure of the noun and the verb. Initially, the class systems found in the studied languages are discussed, to which a synoptic table of classifiers is attached. The second part deals with the old and very relevant problem of postulating class systems. The transformational processes and semantic changes in the functioning of classifiers are characterized. The system of grammatical classes of the Nakh-Daghestanian languages, starting from their Proto-Caucasian to the synchronous position, follows the main trend of change - the cardinal line of reduction of classes. The paper presents an attempt to reconstruct the archaic form of the grammatical category of class.

**Key words:** Grammatical class category, postulation, classifier

## Introduction

The universal grammatical class category, used to classify substantives according to social value, is the core of the grammar of the Nakh-Daghestanian languages, completely penetrating the morphological structure of the noun and the verb. This ancient super-category also reveals features that are characteristic of inflectional languages at the synchronic level, since classifiers are used not only to classify nouns, but also to indicate grammatical number and case, and sometimes other grammatical categories. It is understood that the grammatical class category was originally created to classify nouns according to the social value, since "grammatical classes represent a hierarchy of values in terms of social significance" [Chikobava, Tsertsvadze 1962: 86].

In the history of the study of Ibero-Caucasian languages, it is difficult to find a question of this type, to which so many studies would be devoted. Beginning with the works of A. A. Shifner and P. K. Uslar and ending with the interesting study of G. V. Topuria, the grammatical category of class has been the subject of discussion by many Caucasian linguists, although some of its aspects still need explanation and clarification.

## Principal part

It should be noted that with the exception of Kartvelian, Circassian, and some Lezgi (Lezgi, Agul, and Udi) languages, classifiers have been confirmed in all languages under research. According to the singular data, two-, three- and four-class regressive systems are now observed in the Ibero-Caucasian languages. In particular, the class systems are distributed as follows: a) binary opposition is typical only for the northern dialect of the Tabasaran language, in which the class of a person ("who?") opposes the class of things ("what?"): **I** class {**d**-}, **II** class {**b**-}; b) in the regressive (resp. unified) three-class system, the human class of the binary opposition is differentiated into the classes of **men** (I - **w**) and **women** (II - **j**), while all the rest are grouped in the class of objects (III - **b**). Three-class systems are attested in the Dargwa, Avar and some Andian (Botlikh, Ghodoberi, Tindi, Bagval, Karata, Akhvakh) languages; c) in the Nakh languages, in most of the Lezgi languages (Rutul, Tsakhur, Archib, Kryz, Budukh, Khinalugh), in two Andi languages (Andi, Chamal) and Dido languages, four-class neutral

systems function [Bokarev 1959: 29; Desheriev 1963: 372; cf. Chikobava 1979: 92-96; Andguladze 1968: 24; Topuria 2003: 17].

According to a single number, two-, three- and four-class systems are now observed in the Nakh and Daghestanian languages. In particular, the class systems are distributed as follows:

Synoptic table of grammatical class markers in the Nakh and Daghestanian languages

Languages	I class	II class	III class	IV class
Chechen	<b>w</b>	<b>j</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>d</b>
Ingush	<b>w</b>	<b>j</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>d</b>
Tsova-Tushi	<b>w</b>	<b>j</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>d</b>
Avar	<b>w</b>	<b>j</b>	<b>b</b>	* <b>r</b>
Andi	<b>w</b>	<b>j</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>r</b>
Botlikh	<b>w</b>	<b>j</b>	<b>b</b>	* <b>r</b>
Ghodoberi	<b>w</b>	<b>j</b>	<b>b (m)</b>	* <b>r</b>
Chamal	<b>w</b>	<b>j</b>	<b>b (m)</b>	<b>j/l</b>
Tindi	<b>w</b>	<b>j</b>	<b>b</b>	* <b>r</b>
Bagwal	<b>w</b>	<b>j</b>	<b>b</b>	* <b>r</b>
Karata	<b>w</b>	<b>j</b>	<b>b</b>	* <b>r</b>
Akhvakh	<b>w</b>	<b>j</b>	<b>b</b>	* <b>r</b>
Dido	∅ (< * <b>w</b> )	<b>j</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>r</b>
Hinukh	∅ (< * <b>w</b> )	<b>j</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>r</b>
Khvarshi	∅ (< * <b>w</b> )	<b>j</b>	<b>b (m)</b>	<b>l (r, n)</b>
Bezhita	∅ (< * <b>w</b> )	<b>j</b>	<b>b (m, n)</b>	<b>r (j, n)</b>
Lak	∅, <b>w, j</b>	<b>d, r, j, l, n</b>	<b>b, m, w, p<sup>o</sup></b>	<b>d, r, j, l, n</b>
Dargwa	<b>w</b>	<b>d, r, j</b>	<b>b</b>	* <b>d</b>
Tabasaran	<b>d, r, j</b>		<b>b, w, f</b>	
Thsakhur	<b>w, r, j, ∅...</b>	<b>r, j, ∅...</b>	<b>b, m, w</b>	<b>d, t, ṭ, j...</b>
Rutul	<b>w, r, j, ∅...</b>	<b>r, j, ∅...</b>	<b>b, w, d, j...</b>	<b>d, t, l, j...</b>
Archi	<b>w, j</b>	<b>d, r</b>	<b>b, m, p<sup>o</sup> ...</b>	∅, <b>r, j (t, ṭ)</b>
Krits	<b>r, j, l, ∅...</b>	<b>w, r, ∅...</b>	<b>b, p<sup>o</sup>...</b>	<b>d, t, ṭ...</b>
Budukh	<b>w, r, ∅</b>	<b>r, l</b>	<b>b, p...</b>	<b>d, t, ṭ...</b>
Khinalug	<b>r, l, j...</b>	<b>d, r, j...</b>	<b>b, p</b>	<b>d, j, b...</b>

From the point of view of specialists, in the Ibero-Caucasian languages the category of class at the initial stage of evolution formed a binary opposition with the corresponding classifiers (I-**w**, II-**d**). A similar two-class system has not been proven in any of the languages studied in the same way as a progressive three-class system (I - **w**, II - **b**, III - **d**). As for the four-class system, it arose as a result of differentiation from the three-class system:

- I class — **w** (male personality)
- II class. — **j** (female personality)
- III class. — **b** (objects)
- IV class — **d** (objects) [Chikobava 1978: 23; Andguladze 1968: 46 ...]².

From the point of view of the genesis of the class system, attention is drawn to the conclusion of I. A. Javakhishvili, which is linked to the origin of the second class : “Thus, it turns out that the only marker for the female gender in the Ghilgh (Nakh - N.A.) and Leg (Daghestanian - N.A.) languages remains the semivowel **j**, the another consonants **b**, **d** and **r** should subsequently become a marker this gender” [Javakhishvili 1937: 154-155; 1992: 255; Wed Andguladze 1968: 3839].

It is noteworthy that J. Dumézil and N. S. Trubetskoy restore the four-class system for the Nakh-Dagestan (resp. Eastcaucasian) languages:

Singular	Plural	Singular
I class — <b>w</b>	I class — <b>w</b>	I class — <b>w</b>
II class — <b>j</b>	II class — <b>j</b>	II class — <b>j</b>
III class — <b>b</b>	III class — <b>b</b>	III class — <b>b</b>
IV class — <b>r</b>	IV class — <b>d</b>	IV class — <b>d</b>
	[Дюмезиль 2015: 45]	[Трубецкой 1964: 340]

Recently, similarly to A. S. Chikobava, G. V. Topuria shared the regularity of the binary opposition of classes, but, unlike him, restored {**d**-} as an marker for the first class and {**b**-} for the second class. At the second stage of the evolution of grammatical classes, as a result of the differentiation of the masculine class, we received a three-class system: I - **w**, II - **j**, III - **b**. The marker {**d**}, freed from the expression of the class of a person, was transferred to the class of a non-human (objects), which led to an additional differentiation of the names of the class of things and, as a result of reinterpretation, became an marker of class IV. The novelty of the concept of G. V. Topuria lies in the fact that it refutes the genesis connection of classes II and IV, which partially coincides with the above-mentioned opinion of I. A. Javakhishvili [Javakhishvili 1992: 255]. The origin of class II (the class of women) on the basis of the bifurcation of class IV (**d** > **r** > **j**) is questioned, which, apparently, is correct. According to the testimony of the Lak and Lezgi languages, G. V. Topuria quite rightly notes: “The presence of d, r, l, n in class II (class of a woman) in the Lezgi (as well as Lak and Dargwa) languages, as already mentioned, should be considered as the result of a reinterpretation of loose primary systems, and should also be qualified as systems of a late formation” [Topuria 2003: 22]. The four-class system he restored is schematically represented as follows:

- I class — **w** (male personality)
- II class — **j** (female personality)
- III class — **b** (objects)
- IV class — **d** (objects) [Топурия 2003: 22]

Thus, we share the opinion that the binary opposition should be singled out in the initial class system, in which the set of names was differentiated into semantic classes of deities (human class I - **w**) and objects (class II - **b**). As for the progressive three-class system, it repeated the aforementioned binary opposition with the difference that the first class (deities, adult men and beings equated to them) was separated from the second class by the proper marker {**j**-} (adult women and beings equated to them) [Chikobava 1942 :41; Topuria 2003: 22]. Such a three-class system is reconstructed at the synchronous level of the Proto-north Caucasian, which is presented as follows: I class. - **w**, II class. - **j**, III class. -**b**<sup>3</sup>.

The neutral four-class system is a “mechanical development” of class III (J. Dumézil), from which class IV was separated with the corresponding allomorphs {**d**-/**r**-}, in which various reflexes were formed and rooted as a result of various phonetic processes of a spontaneous nature: {**j** -}, {**l**-}, {**m**-}, {**n**-}. It is assumed that in the common Nakh, only the exponent {**d**-} was originally a class IV formant, since the reconstruction of the allomorph {**r**-} according to the data of the Nakh languages fails [Desheriev 1963: 385]. The materials available in the linguistic literature show that in the Daghestan mother-language class IV markers, we should have not chronologically alternating class markers, but freely varying (resp. dialect origin) exponents {**d**-/**r**-}<sup>4</sup>. With this in mind, the allomorphs {**d**-/**r**-} are reconstructed by the exponents of the IV grammatical class at the general Daghestanian chronological level, and only {**r**-} is restored in the Proto-Avar-Andi-Dido. It must be assumed that in the linguistic unit from which the Proto-Avar-Andi-Dido, {**r**-} functioned as a marker of class IV. Consequently, in the four-class system, the markers of class IV at the general Nakh and general Daghestanian levels should have been different, which is schematically represented as follows:

- |                      |                       |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| a) Proto-Nakh        | b) Proto-Daghestanian |
| I class * <b>w</b>   | I class * <b>w</b>    |
| II class * <b>j</b>  | II class * <b>j</b>   |
| III class * <b>b</b> | III class * <b>b</b>  |
| IV class * <b>d</b>  | IV class * <b>d/r</b> |

It is noteworthy that by the era of the Avar-Andi-Dido linguistic unity, it seems unrealistic to reconstruct {**d-**} as a marker of class IV, as is usually the process of **d>r** [Andguladze 1968: 45; Topuria 2003: 20 ...] could occur in the dialect from which the given moher-language arose, which encounters certain obstacles. True, the marker {**d-**} is preserved as a relic in some types of declension [Chikobava, Tsertsvadze 1962: 92-96; Gudava 1959: 9, 18-19 ...], however, the process **r** (< \***d**)<sup>5</sup> is hindered, on the one hand, by the lack of sound correspondence between the phonemes **r** and **d** [Gigineishvili 1976: 67, 76], and, on the other hand, in Lak and some Lezgi languages their presence with an allomorphic function. At the same time, in the Nakh languages for the class marker {**d-**}, and in the Avar-Andi-Dido languages for the prefix class {**r-**}, it is not possible to restore an additional marker. It should be noted that in the case of the implementation of the process **d>r** at the general Avar-Andi-Dido chronological level, {**d-**}, represented mainly by identical reflexes (resp. sound-identity), would give a differentiated sound correspondence [Gudava 1979: 68; Ardotele 2009: 89, 140]<sup>6</sup>. It turns out that the relationship between the class indicator {**d**} and the general daghestanian \***d** is limited - within the framework of the first paradigm, it changes minimally (Khvarsh. {**r-**}>{**l-**}), and **d** is represented by sound identity [Gudava 1979: 58, 67]. Taking into account all this, the following four-class system is restored at the general Avar-Andi-Dido chronological level:

- I klass \***w**
- II klass \***j**
- III klass \***b**
- IV klass \***r**

In our opinion, the binary opposition (I – **w**, II - **b**) should have been singled out in the initial class system. As regards the progressive three-class system, it repeated the aforementioned binary opposition, with the difference that the first class was separated from the second class by the proper marker {**j-**}.

It is assumed that in the Proto-North Caucasian, only the exponent {**d-**} initially functioned as a class IV formant, while in the Proto-Daghestanian it was represented by the allomorphs {**d-/r-**}. The evolution of classes is schematically represented as follows:

a) Proto-North Caucasian	b) Proto-Nakh	d) Proto-Daghestanian
I class * <b>w</b>	* <b>w</b>	* <b>w</b>
II class * <b>j</b>	* <b>j</b>	* <b>j</b>
III class * <b>b</b>	* <b>b</b>	* <b>b</b>
IV class * <b>d</b>	* <b>d</b>	* <b>d/r</b>

## Conclusion

So, the system of grammatical classes of the Caucasian languages, starting from their Proto-Caucasian to the synchronous position, follows the main trend of change - the cardinal line of reduction of classes. Therefore, the process of class category evolution looks like this: at the initial stage, in the two-class system, the human (deity) class (regardless of gender) was formed by the {**w-**} class exponent, and the objects class (everything else + the child, etc., which were equated with things) - by the {**b-**} exponent. In the progressive three-class system: Class I: {**w-**} (deities, men of age and beings equal to them), Class II: **j-** (women of age and beings equal to them), Class III: {**b-**} (things and intelligent or non-intelligent beings equal to them). In the progressive four-class system, the class of things was divided by "mechanical development" (J. Dumezil) and {**d-**} was used as a marker of the IV class, which was formed by spontaneous phonetic transformation with different reflexes: {**r-**}, {**j-**}, {**l-**}, {**n-**}, {**m-**}.

In our opinion, during the differentiation of classes III-IV, initially the classification of nouns may have been motivated (animals, birds, insects, etc. were selected for class III, and the rest of the subjects were selected for class IV), and later such motivation could no longer be maintained and classification, seems to have been going on more or less anywhere. In other cases, we should get the same result in closely related languages, which is not confirmed in fact.

In this regard, the Nakh languages show more conservatism, since the original four-class system is essentially preserved. The Avar-Andi-Dido languages, if we do not take into account the transformation of the marker of class IV (\***r** > **l**, **j**...), are more or less stable in this respect, and in the Lak, Dargwa and especially Lezgi languages the grammatical class category stands in the way of decay and subsequent extinction.

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<sup>2</sup> In the four-class system for class II, N. D. Andguladze restores {**d**} [Andguladze 1968: 38].

<sup>3</sup> N. D. Andguladze's point of view that "**d-formant should be recognized as the exponent archetype of the second grammatical class of objects**", in our opinion, is incorrect [Andguladze 1968: 45]. Such a solution to the problem is hampered, on the one hand, by the firm and unchanging position of class III marker b, and, on the other hand, by the higher value of class III names in terms of social significance.

<sup>4</sup> A number of circumstances show that {**d**/-**r**-} should be considered allomorphs: a) the identical functional distribution of class indicators in the Lak language; b) in the Tsakhur and Avar-Andean-Dido languages, the indicator {**d**-} is actually absent; c) inadequate sound matching, etc.

<sup>5</sup> V. Topuria considers **r** to be an archetype: \***r**>**d** [Topuria 1942: 178-179; cf. Javakhishvili 1992: 256; Andguladze 1968: 43...].

<sup>6</sup> Of course, unless we share the "Dumesil phenomenon," which implies different patterns of correspondences in the grammatical inventory [Dumesil 2015: 38-39].

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