Final report
Documenting Dargi languages in Daghestan: Shiri and Sanzhi (2012-2019)

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Introduction

Due to a number of historical circumstances, Dargwa remains one of the most underdescribed genera of Nakh-Daghestanian (= East Caucasian) languages. The people now known as Dargwa were never unified into a single political entity before becoming part of the Russian Empire and then, the Soviet Union, and up to this day, have strong regional identities. Consequently, many of the Dargwa "dialects" are mutually unintelligible and possess numerous grammatical and lexical differences — an estimate by Yuri Koryakov puts the linguistic distance between Dargwa varieties on par with Germanic.

However, due to Soviet language policy in the 1920–1930s all Dargwa varieties were lumped together into a single Dargwa language, with the dialect of Akusha as the basis of its standard form. While this dialect was and remains one of the largest, it is certainly not representative of the group as a whole, and Standard Dargwa is perceived as a foreign language by the speakers of the majority of the Dargwa varieties. As a consequence, most local varieties, treated as mere "dialects", are poorly described. With the exception of larger varieties such as Akusha and Kubachi, all of them are heavily endangered, especially since villagers travelling to the lowlands are rapidly switching to Russian.

Shiri and Sanzhi were in especially dire need of adequate documentation for two additional reasons. First, these varieties are virtually unmentioned in the specialist literature. Sanzhi is treated as constituting one dialect with Itsari, which, as we have found during work on this project, is not actually the case. Shiri has not even been mentioned in the literature, with the exception of one or two sources where it is classified, without any discussion, together with Kubachi. Second, the people of Shiri and Sanzhi, along with some other Daghestanian peoples, were forcibly moved to Chechnya during the Second World War to replace the deported Chechens. This displacement put a heavy toll on their populations; according to some estimates, more than half of their populations died due to malnutrition and various diseases. In the 1950s, the Chechens were allowed to return, and the people of Shiri and Sanzhi had to move again. The majority of them chose to relocated to the new collective farms in the lowlands (Druzhba, Chinar, etc.) rather than stay in their villages, which were half-ruined and without any reliable transport. This has led to rapid language loss.

1. Scientific results

Our scientific goals were, in addition to the documentation and description (see Section 2 for details of the documentation) to specifically focus on TAM /evidentiality and person agreement, to organize a workshop on this topic (and an additional workshop on Dargwa languages) and to perform ethnographic / anthropological analyses with a focus on the resettlements, migration, social and linguistic change.

We have largely reached our aims. Sanzhi and Shiri have been analyzed and described in many scientific papers, posters and presentations. We have published more than 20 articles on Sanzhi and Shiri languages and cultures (including comparative articles that contain data on Sanzhi and Shiri). Forker has published a comprehensive grammar of Sanzhi Dargwa (around 650 pages) with Language Science Press, an open-access publisher founded by Stefan Müller and Martin Haspelmath (https://langsci-press.org/catalog/book/250). The Shiri grammar is currently in preparation, to be finished in 2020 and submitted to the same publisher. Several publications are devoted to TAM /evidentiality and person agreement. Forker has also edited a collective volume on this topic.

A full list of the publications can be found below.

All project members have presented results of their studies at numerous international conferences during the entire duration of the project. We have also participated in two conferences in Makhachkala (2017, 2019) to raise the interest in Daghestanian researchers for unwritten Dargwa languages and dialects.

Oleg Belyaev has taught a course on the fundamentals of the grammar of Shiri Dargwa at the Leiden Summer School in Languages and Linguistics in 2016 and 2018, through which students could become familiar with the grammar of Dargwa languages and with Daghestanian languages in general. A similar course was also taught by Belyaev at Lomonosov Moscow State University in 2016 and 2019.

Forker has given two presentations on Sanzhi Dargwa and, more generally, endangered Caucasian languages, for the general public at the "Naturhistorische Gesellschaft Nürnberg" (2015, 2017). In addition, she has organized a workshop on Nakh-Daghestanian languages at the University of Bamberg in 2016.

Kaliszewska has given three presentations for the broader public about plants in Shiri (Dom Spotkań z Historią in Warsaw in 2018, Pracownia Etnograficzna in 2018 and Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology in Warsaw in 2016).

2. Contribution towards the funding initiative's specific goals

The aim of the project was to produce a multimodal documentation of Sanzhi and Shiri, two endangered Dargwa varieties from Dagestan. This aim has been achieved. We have produced two corpora, electronic dictionaries for both languages, community materials, and scientific grammars and papers.

Corpora

We have recorded and archived 359 sessions of Shiri and Sanzhi speech data, of which 111 include ELAN transcriptions and translations into Russian and partially also English. The recordings are available upon request through The Language Archive (https://archive.mpi.nl/tla/islandora/search/%2A%3A%2A?f%5B0%5D=cmd.Collection%3A %22DoBeS%20archive%20%3A%20Shiri%20and%20Sanzhi%22).

The sessions cover different genres (traditional narrations, autobiographies, other types of monologues, discussion, stage-directed communication, interviews) and a wide range of

speakers (around 30-40 speakers) of the middle and older generation, because the young generation is dominant in Russian.

A large part of the recordings has been transcribed and translated into Russian and partially also English. Two corpora have been produced by means of FLEx. The total number of words in the Sanzhi corpus is around 47,000. Most of these texts have been checked with native speakers. The glossed Sanzhi corpus has been put on the internet and is freely is accessible (http://web-corpora.net/SanzhiDargwaCorpus/search/index.php?interface_language=en). This corpus consists of 75 texts from 24 speakers of Sanzhi who were between 21 and 80 years old when the texts were recorded (mostly between 2012 and 2015). Many more texts have been transcribed and translated into Russian with ELAN.

Electronic dictionaries

The main electronic dictionary of Sanzhi was built up with Lexique Pro and has been published with *Dictionaria* (https://dictionaria.clld.org/contributions/sanzhi). The dictionary contains around than 5 500 entries written with Cyrillic and Latin script, Russian and English translations, grammatical information, and example sentences as well as audio recordings for (almost) every entry. The original Lexique Pro version of the dictionary is also accessible via the project homepage (http://www.kaukaz.net/dargwa/sanzhi/lexicon/index.htm). The homepage also contains a third electronic dictionary of Sanzhi in the form of a simple word list Sanzhi-Russian and Russian-Sanzhi, which is easier to use for the language community. The Shiri dictionary, which is based on the texts analyzed in the project that are being constantly updated, is also available through a link from the project website (shiri.webonary.org).

Community materials

We have developed two practical orthographies for Sanzhi and Shiri (Cyrillic orthographies based on the orthography for Standard Dargwa and thus particularly reader-friendly for those who have learned Standard Dargwa in school).

For the Sanzhi community a book with 562 pages has been prepared and 150 exemplars were printed in Makhachkala (2017). This book was handed over to the community during Forker's field trips. The book contains 42 texts of various genres (fairy tales, legends anecdotes, descriptions of games and recipes, oral history, a poem) written in Sanzhi and with a sentence-by-sentence translation in Russian as well as a Sanzhi-Russian and a Russian-Sanzhi dictionary. The book also includes some pictures of the village of Sanzhi and Sanzhi speakers. It is freely available for download from the project's website.

Additionally, two posters with pictures from Shiri and Sanzhi were designed by Iwona Kaliszewska and distributed among Shiri and Sanzhi speakers. They still adorn walls of their homes.

Iwona Kaliszewska in close cooperation of the Shiri community and ethnobotanists from Warsaw Botanic Garden designed a booklet with 64 pages about edible plants from Shiri, with their pictures, description and local uses. The booklet was distributed among Shiri people in 2017-2019 and was greatly appreciated.

3. Self-assessment in comparison with the original goals and planned objectives (e.g. unexpected findings, other intrinsic/methodological divergence)

We have achieved the majority of our goals both within the scientific domain as well as with respect to the documentary aims and the community-related aims.

The main scientific result of the project has been the description of various aspects of Shiri and Sanzhi grammar and lexicon (see Sections 1 and 2). For the first time, the position of this idioms among Dargwa languages has been convincingly established (Belyaev 2019b). Sanzhi turned out to be indeed close to Itsari, but not so much as to constitute the same language. Shiri is in fact by no means a dialect of Kubachi, but a member of a wholly separate Dargwa subgroup, which also includes the idiom of the neighboring village Amuzgi; the two may be said to be dialects of the same language. What has led some prior researchers to postulate that Shiri and Amuzgi are Kubachi dialects was their historically close ties with Kubachi and certain phenomena in morphology that are only or mainly found in these varieties (the Aorist in *-aj*, the attributive in *-zi-b*, etc.). However, some of these features can be explained as archaisms (whose retention could have been supported by language contact) or contact-induced features. It is telling that, while Shiri and Amuzgi are very close both lexically and grammatically, and mutually intelligible, the system of Amuzgi spatial cases (including the form of their markers) is similar to the Kubachi system, while that of Shiri is virtually identical to the Sanzhi system. This corresponds to the geographical proximity between these varieties.

The project shifted from the originally planned focus (TAM, evidentiality) to the investigation of reflexivity (however, see Belyaev (2019a) for a paper within the original focus). Sanzhi (as well as a number of other Nakh-Daghestanian languages) has reflexive pronouns that show some unexpected features. For instance, they can serve as subjects and they can control first-person agreement despite the fact that they are, in fact, third person pronouns. The results of this study have been published as Forker (2014, 2019b, 2019e) and Belyaev (2017b, 2016b). It had originally been planned to finish the Shiri grammar much earlier, but unfortunately this goal has not been met due to other commitments and the difficulty with data analysis: While it was possible to hire Sanzhi consultants to analyze the text, no such community language workers could be found for Shiri, and all texts had to be analyzed by the researcher together with native speakers, which is a very time-consuming process.

Initially, the ethnographic part included broad documentation of everyday life including its social (in particular religious) and material aspects (this part resulted in 4 academic papers and numerous conference presentations). Eventually, Kaliszewska focused on social context of plant collection and on generally on edible plants (in particular leafy greens) that are actively collected in Shiri by the older generation. This knowledge is unlikely to survive due to migration processes, so Kaliszewska found it important to document both plant names and their local uses. One of the unexpected findings included collecting a specimen of *Oberna multifida* Ikonn. (*Caryophyllaceae*), widely used in Shiri village, but never before reported as edible. This (and other) findings resulted in 2 papers published in a peer-reviewed "Journal of Ethnobotanics and Ethnomedicine" and one publication for a broader public as well as community materials (plant booklet). The field material collected by Kaliszewska is likely to become the basis of more academic publications.

A few other planned goals could not be achieved for various reasons:
- organization of a one-day festival in the village for Sanzhi with presentations of the materials and results (due to the fact that the Sanzhi people do not live in their village of origin anymore, it is impossible to bring together a reasonable amount of people in Sanzhi, which can only be reached by foot; most elderly people who are the ones most interested in the project are not able to travel to Sanzhi because of health conditions)
- arrange classes in the schools of Druzhba and Chinar with language games, traditional songs, etc. (young people and children are generally not interested in such activities; the language policy of the Russian Federation has considerably deteriorated during the duration of the project and mother tongue classes even for larger languages are more

and more abandoned and replaced by 'culture' classes taught in Russian; this political tendency has a clear negative impact on the language attitude of parents and school children)

- organize a workshop on language documentation at the Daghestanian State University (due to the decreasing interest in minority languages there was not enough interest among the local researchers and students for such a workshop)
- collect terminology and stories related to place names (this topic turned out to be not very fruitful and was thus abandoned)

4. Gain in knowledge as result of interdisciplinary and international cooperation

The project has brought together linguists and one anthropologist from three different countries.

A gain in ethnobotanic knowledge was possible only due to interdisciplinary and international cooperation between anthropologist Iwona Kaliszewska and linguist Oleg Belyaev (who helped with proper spelling of plant names as well as their variation) as well as ethnobotanists and botanists from Warsaw Botanic Garden (who identified the collected plants) and Dagestanian Academy of Science (who helped to gain a broader picture of Dagestanian flora).

As a result of linguistic-ethnographic cooperation we were able to better understand the relationship between social status and languages revitalization. Shiri speakers turned out to belong to more privileged lineages and most of them eagerly supported any form of knowledge/languages preservation. They initiated the idea of the Shiri plant book for the use of the local school. By the end of the project, most of them called their language "Shiri", whereas most Sanzhi speakers (materially and socially less privileged) continued to use the general term "Dargi". Our findings show that in languages documentation and revitalization projects it is very important to take into account historic social divisions (here: into noble/not-noble linages) since they may affect the very processes of data collections and languages revitalization.

5. Inclusion of junior researchers

During the project two members, Oleg Belyaev and Iwona Kaliszewska, have finished their dissertations, and Diana Forker has finished her habilitation.

We have involved four student assistants at the university of Bamberg during the project. Three of them have been mainly working on the Sanzhi electronic dictionary and the annotation of Sanzhi ELAN files that are used for the Social Cognition project. They have thus acquired some knowledge of Caucasian languages along with valuable skills in language documentation technology. One of the students (Felix Anker) is now a PhD student in Caucasian Studies at the FSU Jena, where Forker is employed since 2016. He plans to write his PhD thesis on reported speech in Caucasian languages and therefore continues to work with Sanzhi profiting from his experience as a student assistant.

6. Further perspectives and sustainable effect of the project

For the Sanzhi and Shiri communities
First of all, Kaliszewska has set up a project website to inform the community and the public about the project and about the two languages: http://www.dargwa.kaukaz.net. The website contains materials for the Shiri and Sanzhi people as well as material for the scientific community. One can find pictures, videos, the preliminary electronic dictionaries of Shiri and Sanzhi, Shiri and Sanzhi texts written in Cyrillic with Russian translations, and additional files with the interlinear glosses and English translations. All texts are accompanied by audio and sometimes video files. The website also contains some scientific papers on Sanzhi and Shiri. It is known by the Shiri and Sanzhi people and they regularly express their wishes with regard to new materials that should be added. This website is of special importance for Shiri and Sanzhi people since it represents their communities on the Internet thus visible to the outside world. The website is known by community members and they are proud of it.
All recordings have been archived in the TLA and are thus preserved and accessible for community members (even though access for non-specialists is not easy).

The documentation and description of Sanzhi has been carried out in close collaboration with Gadzhimurad Gadzhimuradov, the main consultant from the Sanzhi community. Forker continues her collaboration with Gadzhimuradov, who continues to transcribe and translate recordings that have been made during the last two years of the project. She also plans to examine other topics (sociophonetics, demonstrative pronouns, bilingualism and language contact), which is now possible because the basic descriptive work has been done. This research will be supported by the Sanzhi community, in particular through the help of Gadzhimurad Gadzhimuradov.
The preparation of plant booklet (community material) has been carried out in collaboration with Shiri inhabitants, who are eager to continue cooperation and in future, print a book with all (not only edible) plants from their region so that this knowledge is saved for future generations. They planned to use the booklet in local school which unfortunately has been closed.

For the scientific community
The main results of the project are available in the form of more than 20 publications, in particular a detailed descriptive grammar of Sanzhi, and the archived corpora.
The data collected during the project are now being used by other projects and researchers, namely
- the **LexCauc** project led by Diana Forker and Oleg Belyaev: this project uses the electronic dictionaries of Sanzhi and Shiri
- the **Multi-CAST** (Multilingual Corpus of Annotated Spoken Texts) project hosted by the university of Bamberg uses a large part of the Sanzhi corpus (https://multicast.aspra.uni-bamberg.de/#sanzhi)
- **Language Documentation Reference Corpora** (DoReCo) project uses a part of the Sanzhi corpus (http://doreco.info/languages/)

Unfortunately, a project of this scope cannot realistically contribute to stopping the loss of a language. Overall, the sociolinguistic situation of both Shiri and Sanzhi linguistic community is such that the success of any revival project is highly unlikely: coherent language communities no longer exist as the majority of the villagers have moved to the lowland where they interact with speakers of other languages, and mainly use Russian for communication;

the initial number of Shiri and Sanzhi speakers is very low and cannot be preserved with the loss of their traditional environment and ways of life. Still, we believe that this project has made a positive contribution to the state of the Shiri and Sanzhi languages. It has raised awareness of their native tongues among the respective communities, for whom these idioms are parts of their cultural heritage. Given that the extinction of Shiri and Sanzhi is highly likely within one or two generations, it is vital that the participants of the project have been able to document a wide variety of spontaneous discourse. The texts include not only narratives, but also dialogues and the descriptions of various cultural activities. Much work has also been done in anthropological documentation, especially in the village of Shiri, where many traditional procedures and rituals have been recorded (mawlid for the holiday of Shaykh Hasan, cooking, herb collecting, etc.). Iwona Kaliszewska has amassed an extensive collection of plants and herbs and described the patterns of their naming in Shiri — this is a contribution not only to the study of the lexicon of Shiri and other Dargwa languages, but also to the field of ethnobotany in general. Kaliszewska plans to continue ethnobotanic research both in the Shiri and in the neighboring communities. Emphasis will be on finding more (possibly unknown) edible specimens collected in all seasons as well as at the social aspect of plant collection, however, the linguistic aspect will also be taken into account.

7. Other aspects
(e.g. any particular advantageous or constraining circumstances, appraisal of cooperation, integration in the scientific or institutional environment)

For all project members the participation in the project has been fruitful and helpful for their further academic career. It has enabled them to present and discuss the results at various conferences and summer schools, which, in turn, has led to new cooperation.
Since 2016 Forker is involved in the **Social Cognition Parallax Interview Corpus (SCOPIC)** (https://scopicproject.wordpress.com/) led by Prof. Nick Evans (ANU). She has contributed with data from Sanzhi that is available through the regular TLA archive, but is additionally available through the Paradisec archive (http://catalog.paradisec.org.au/collections/SocCog). The Sanzhi data is permanently annotated for a number of different categories. The project will lead to a publication on various aspects of social cognition in Sanzhi.
In 2017 Forker and Belyaev successfully applied for a grant from the BMBF for the **LexCauc** project, which aims at gathering comprehensive lexical data from Caucasian languages. The project includes data form Sanzhi and Shiri.
Diana Forker and Oleg Belyaev, two project members, are both founding members of the series **"Languages of the Caucasus"** with Language Science Press, an open-access publisher. The Sanzhi grammar is the second book published in this series.
Forker continues to work on Sanzhi and further gathers new data. At the moment she cooperates with Melanie Weirich from the FSU Jena in a sociophonetics projects that examines differences in the voice qualities of male and female Sanzhi speakers and seeks to correlate them with imagined gender roles. She is also collaborating with Holger Diessel in a project on demonstrative pronouns for which she plans to collect data of the 18 demonstrative pronouns of Sanzhi.
Kaliszewska closely cooperates and plans further research with ethnobotanist Iwa Kołodziejska from Warsaw Botanic Garden, who specializes in the ethnobotany of post-Soviet space as well as Magomedrasul Magomedov (Prikaspiyskiy Institut Biologicheskikh Resursov Dagestanskogo Nauchnogo Centra RAN, Dagestan).

8. List of publications

Monographs & collective volumes

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Forker, Diana & Timur Maisak (eds.) 2018. *The semantics of verbal categories in Nakh-Daghestanian languages: Tense, aspect, evidentiality, mood/modality*. Leiden: Brill.

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Belyaev, Oleg I. 2019b. Mesto širinskogo i amuzginskogo sredi dialektov darginskogo jazyka [The position of Shiri and Amuzgi among Dargwa varieties]. *Tomsk Journal of Linguistics and Anthropology* 2(24). 20–38.

Belyaev, Oleg I. 2019c. Molitva Gospodnja na kubačinskom i literaturnom darginskom jazykax [The Lord's Prayer in Kubachi and Standard Dargwa]. *Rodnoj jazyk* 1. 84–113.

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Forker, Diana. 2020b. Information structure in Caucasian languages. In Polinsky, Maria (ed.) Handbook of Caucasian languages. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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