Questions in Sanzhi Dargwa
Diana Forker

1. Introduction: Dargi languages and Sanzhi Dargwa
- Nakh-Daghestanian language family, Dargi subbranch
- Dargi languages are spoken by about 500,000 people living in the Caucasian mountains and the Daghestanian plains
- Sanzhi Dargwa is a South Dargi variety, approximately 150 speakers, heavily endangered since all speakers left the village more than 40 years ago
- rather large consonant inventory, including a number of ejectives
- predominantly dependent-marking with a rich case inventory, ergative case
- gender/number marking (of the absolutive argument) and person indexing (according to a person hierarchy) on verbs and other parts of speech
- rich inventory of finite and non-finite (converbs, participles, infinite, masdar) verb forms
- most common constituent order: SV, AOV, head-final at phrase level

2. Questions in Sanzhi Dargwa
- examples mostly from texts and from dialogues based on the Family Picture Task (San Roque et al. 2012)
- no distinctive constituent order, no special verb forms
- marked through intonation (optional), enclitics and question words (WH-questions)
- interrogative enclitics belong to a larger set of predicative particles (Kalinina & Sumbatova 2007) that are responsible for the finiteness of the clause and are also used in focus constructions
- the particles are not verbs though they have some verbal properties and partially express verbal categories such as person, tense, polarity
- they are encliticized to a host (commonly the verb)
- other members of this set: person enclitics = da (1st person, 2pl), = de (2sg); present tense copula ca- (affirmative), aku (negative); past enclitic = de; emphatic marker = q’al

3. Content questions
- marked by means of
  - intonation (optional)
  - interrogative words
  - enclitic = e/ = ja

Interrogative words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ča</th>
<th>who</th>
<th>cel(ij)</th>
<th>why</th>
<th>kusa</th>
<th>how much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ce</td>
<td>what</td>
<td>cet’le</td>
<td>how</td>
<td>čum</td>
<td>how many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>čina</td>
<td>where</td>
<td>kutti</td>
<td>which</td>
<td>čujna, čumna</td>
<td>how many times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ceqːel</td>
<td>when</td>
<td>cešuna</td>
<td>how, which kind, like what</td>
<td></td>
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ceqːel:  
   ce + = qːel (‘when’)

celij:  
   ce + -li (oblique stem marker) + -j (dative)

cet’le:  
   ce + -t’ + -le (‘adverbializer’)?

cesuna:  
   ce + = ūna (‘like, as’)

čujna / čumna:  
   ču-j / čum + -na (‘times’)

- ča ‘who’, ce ‘what’, čina ‘where’, čum ‘how many’ and probably also kutti ‘which’ take further case suffixes

Table 1: Partial case paradigms for ‘who’ and ‘what’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>who</th>
<th>what</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>absolutive</td>
<td>ča</td>
<td>ce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ergative</td>
<td>hil</td>
<td>celli</td>
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<tr>
<td>genitive</td>
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<td>cella</td>
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<td>dative</td>
<td>hij</td>
<td>celij</td>
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<tr>
<td>allative</td>
<td>hišu</td>
<td>celišu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in-lative</td>
<td>hicce</td>
<td>celice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comitative</td>
<td>hiccella</td>
<td>celicella</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Interrogative enclitic for content questions**

= e after consonants, = ja after vowels
- usually added to the predicate (verbal or nominal),
- added to the question word or the head of the interrogative phrase if there is no verb
- not used in questions containing second person indexing or the past marker = de that end with /e/

ča ‘who’
- human reference (male or female)
- inflects for all cases for which nominals with human reference inflect, allomorphemic stem
  hi- for all cases except absolutive
- can be marked for plural with -qal (associative plural, from qal ‘house’)

(1) a i j ča = ja iž?
but this who = q this
‘And this, who is it?’

(2) hi-la rursːi = de?
who.obl-gen girl = 2sg
‘Whose daughter are you?’

ce ‘what’
- inflects for all cases for which nominals with non-human reference inflect (including ergative)
- can be used as a head or as a modifier (‘which’)
- base for the derivation of some other question words (e.g. cel, celij ‘why’)

(3) dešːa zamana ce saniʔat b-irχ-ul = e?
ancient time what skill n-be.ipfv-icvb = q
‘In the ancient times, what skills (hand crafts) were there?’

- occasionally used with the meaning ‘where’, ‘how’ (4) and as indefinite pronoun ‘some, something’ (5), or as pause filler

(4) ženiʔχ newesta, dam ce b-aχ-ide heχ-tiʔ?
bridegroom bride 1sg.dat what n-know.pfv-1/2irr this-pl
‘Bridegroom, bride, how should I know them?’
(5) iž = ūuna ce musa k’e-b
    this = eq what place exist-n
    ‘There is a / some place like this.’

čina ‘where’
- takes spatial cases: gender suffix for purely locational (‘essive’) meaning, unmarked for
directional (‘lative’) meaning, -r(ka) for ablative meaning

(6) čina-w = de u?
    where-m = 2sg 2sg
    ‘Where are you?’

teqːel ‘when’
- temporal adverb

(7) teqːel hak’-ub = de u?
    when appear.pfv-pre = 2sg 2sg
    ‘When were you born?’
    (or: u teqel hak’ubde?)

kutːi ‘which’
- can occur as a head or as an NP modifier (adjective-like)

(8) kutːi ca-b = e ala mašin?
    which be-n = q 2sg.gen car
    ‘Which is your car?’

(9) ca zamana waqčib.?a’=t’a = ra ū’ra = ra čːal
    one time turtle = and hare = and argument

        d-uq-un [kutːi halak-le sa-b-irx-an = el]
    npl-go.pfv-pre which fast-advz hither-n-come.ipfv-ptcp = indq
    ‘Once the turtle and the hare argued who of them could faster come back.’

cesuna ‘how, which kind, like what’
- not clear whether this is really a word in its own right
- the enclitic = ūuna ‘like’ is often attached to demonstrative pronouns (5)
When they take him to prison, which shirt?
(a shirt like what / this?)

*cel(ij)* ‘why’

When did you not gather (herbs) there?

*ce'tle* ‘how’

How can I know about the history of Sanzhi?

*kusa* ‘how much’

Fruits in the forest how much you want

*čum* ‘how many’

How many are there?

Even they do not know in which year they were drawn.
(16) ĉum-li-ʃ b-iq'-ul = e kursiʔ
how.many-obl-dat n-cost.ipfv-icvb = q stool
‘How much does the stool cost?’

čujna, čumna ‘how many times, how often’
- suffix -(j)na ‘times’ is also added to numerals, e.g. aʁʷ-na ‘four times’ (aʁʷal ‘four’)

(17) hel=ʃuna cik’al čujna = ra d-arq'-ib-te = de
this = eq something how.often = and 1/2.pl-do.pfv-pret-attr.pl = pst
nušːa-l, čujna = ra
1pl-erg how.often = and
‘Something like this, how often did we do it, how often.’

- from most question words indefinite pronouns can productively be derived, e.g. specific indefinites:
ča-jal somebody kuti-jal some
cė-jal something celiʃ-jal, cel-el some-why
čina-jal somewhere cɛtˈle-jal somehow
ceqɛl-el sometimes čujna-jal, čumna-jal some times

4. Simple polar questions and disjunctive polar questions
- marked by means of
  • intonation (optional)
  • enclitic =w/ =uw / =ew

Polar interrogative enclitic
= w after vowels, =uw after consonants; =ew after the imperfective converb suffix -ul
- added to the predicate: verb if there is a verb, otherwise to the nominal predicate

(18) miʃi-l ca-w =uw iχ iχ-i-jʔ
similar-advz be-m = q this this-obl-dat
‘Is this similar to him?’

(19) hel musa-j ɣa’nhrefa b-ik’-u = wʔ ?e
this place-dat khanhara hpl-say.ipfv-prs = q yes
‘Is this place called khanhara? Yes.’
(20) q:abu= w ce ca-d= el ču-la afrika-la
    pumkin-pl = q what be-npl = indq refl.pl-gen African-gen
    ‘Are (these) pumpkins or what, their African …’

- cannot be added to another constituent if the clause contains a verb

(21) t’ult’ le-b = uw ala?
    bread exist-n = q 2sg.gen
    ‘Do you have bread?’

(22) * t’ult’uw leb ala?

- in disjunctive polar questions the interrogative enclitic appears on each member of the disjunction (on the predicate)

(23) tusnaq-le-w = uw iž ?a’rmija-le-w = uw?
    prison-spr-m = q this army-spr-m = q
    ‘Is he in a prison or in the army?’

- seems that this construction can also be used in assertions

(24) hek’ bari-li-j = uw bac-li-j = uw miši-l ca-b
    this sun-obl-dat = q moon-obl-dat = q similar-advz be-n
    ‘This is similar to the sun or the moon.’

- a similar multifunctionality of interrogative particles covering polar and WH-questions as well as in declarative disjunctions and some other contexts is also attested in other languages (e.g. Hinuq, Japanese and Malayalam, see Slade 2011: 2)

5. Answers to questions
- the answer to a content question can consist of only the focus part (what corresponds to the question word), or it can be a whole clause

[Where are you?] (6)

(25) du ala sunduq’-le-w wi-w le-w = da
    1sg 2sg.gen box-spr-m m-in-m exist-m = 1
    ‘I am inside your box.’
[When did grandfather go to Sanzhi?] (48)

(26)  
har   dus, ij   dus   ag-ur-il = de  
every year this year go.pfv-pret-ptcp = pst  
‘Every year, he went this year.’

- answers to affirmative polar questions: minimally ?e ‘yes’ or a, aʔa ‘no’
- or the copulas are used ca- ‘is/are’ and akːu ‘is not’ (negative present tense copula)

(27)  
“b-ebč'-ib-le = w?”   ik”w'-ar, “akːu”   haʔ-ib = da  
n-die.pfv-pret-cvb = q   say.ipfv-prs   neg   say.pfv-pret = 1  
‘Did (the cow) die?’ (he) says. “No” I said.’

(28)  
ca-w   qumuqlan = de = w?   aʔa,   darkːʷan = de  
refl-m   Kumyk = pst = q   no   Dargwa = pst  
‘Was he himself Kumyk? No, Dargi.’

- but often the answers contain a full predicate

(29)  
erk”w   χ”al-le = k”i = w?   hana   χ”al-le = de  
river   big-advz = neg.pst = q   now   big-advz = pst  
‘Was the river not big? Now it was big.’

-answers to negative polar questions always contain a predicate

(30)  
daʀχaᵊ = ra   heχtu-d   a-d-už-ib = da = w?  
evening = and   there-1/2.pl   neg-1/2.pl-be-pret = 2pl = q  
ca   dučːi   d-už-ib = da  
one   night   1/2.pl-be-pret = 1  
‘Did you not also spend the night there? We stayed one night.’

- if the question is headed by a non-finite verb form without a copula, only the negative copula can stand alone in an answer

(31)  
it   w-ax-ul = ew   Derbent-le?  
he   m-go.ipfv-icvb = q   Derbent-spr  
‘Is he going to Derbent?’

w-ax-ul   ca-w / (w-ax-ul)   akːu / * ca-w  
m-go.ipfv-icvb   be-m   m-go.ipfv-icvb   be.neg   be-m  
‘He is going / not going.’
- if the question already contains the affirmative copula, than the copula itself is enough for making up a complete answer

(32)  it  w-ax-ul  ca-w = uw  Derbent-le?  ca-w  
    he  m-go.ipfv-icvb  be-m = q  Derbent-spr  be-m  
  ‘Is he going to Derbent? Yes, he is.’

6. Embedded questions and rhetorical questions
- marked with the enclitic \( =\text{jal}/=\text{el}/=l \)
  - \( =\text{jal} \) after vowels
  - \( =\text{el} \) after consonants
  - \( =l \) after some suffixes ending in /e/
- this enclitic is used in embedded interrogatives (content questions, polar and disjunctive polar questions), as a complementizer with verbs of speech and cognition, and for the formation of specific indefinite pronouns (see above)

- embedded content questions:
  (33)  pikri  ik'-ul  ka-jž-ib  ca-w  heχ [ce  
    thought  say.ipfv-icvb  down-remain-pret  be-m  this  what  
    b-arq'-ij  hažat-le = \text{jal}  ik'-ul  
    n-do.pfv-inf  need-advz = indq  say.ipfv-icvb  
  ‘He is thinking, sitting, about what must be done.’

- embedded polar question
  (34)  a  [iš-ti  q:alpuz-e = \text{jal}]  aχːu  heštːi  
    but  that-pl  watermelon-pl = indq  not.know  these  
  ‘I don’t know whether these are watermelons.’

- embedded disjunctive polar question
  (35)  duc'  ik'-ul,  duc'  ik'-ul,  er = itːi  sark'-ul,  
    run  move.ipfv-icvb  run  move.ipfv-icvb  look = after  inspect.ipfv-icvb  
    [le-r = \text{el}  ruci  r-aku = \text{jal}]  ik'-ul  hel  
    exist-f = indq  sister  f-neg = indq  say.ipfv-icvb  this  
  ‘He ran and ran, looked around, wondering whether his sister is there or not.’
- rhetorical questions (see also (12) above)

(36) cet'le herʔ-an-ne = l, aj Allah!
      how say.ipfv-ptcp-cvb = indq oh Allah
   ‘How should I say this, oh, Allah!’

- complementation

(37) [otkaz b-iχ-ub-le = l] ik'-ul-da
    refusal n-be.pfv-pret-cvb = indq say.ipfv-icvb = 1
   ‘He refused, I think.’

- very often there is no matrix complement-taking predicate
- used when speakers are expressing thought whose truth they do not vouch for, when they advance a hypothesis, asking themselves (rhetorical questions)
- can be used with a converb, but the resulting clause is finite (insubordination / desubordination)
- often with the phrase ce ca-b = el (ce ca-d = el) ‘what it might be, whatever’ lit. ‘what be-N-INDQ’ (20)

(38) heš-tː-a-l sud b-irq'-ul = el
    this-pl-obl-erg trial n-do.pfv-icvb = indq
   ‘They are making a trial or what.’

7. Tags
- mostly expressed by means of the negative present tense copula to which the polar question marker = w is attached: ak'u = w? ‘Right?’ (lit. ‘Is it not?’)
- the tag occurs after the utterance which itself is rather an assertion

(39) ag-ur d-iχ-ub-t-a-l-la qari = či-r ḫaj ik'-ul
    go.pfv-pret npl-be.pfv-pret-pl-obl-gen up = spr-abl word say.ipfv-icvb
    ca-w heχ, ak'u = w? ca-b
    be-m this be.neg = q be-n
   ‘He is talking about what had happened, right? Yes.’

(40) ij kampanija ca-b, ak'u = w?
    this company be-hpl neg = q
   ‘This is the company (group of friends), right?’
- occasionally with other verbs

(41) [a iš-ti jildaš-e ce b-ik'-ul = el] tolko hel
but that-pl friend-pl what n-say.ipfv-icvb = indq only this

s:surrat ha'sible b-ay-ij e-ry-ar,
picture following n-know.pfv-inf neg-be.able.ipfv-prs

w-iry-ar-an-ne = w? e-ry-ar-an-ne, e
m-be.able.ipfv-ptcp-cvb = q neg-be.able.ipfv-ptcp-cvb yes
‘And these friends, what they are saying, only by means of the picture, (one) cannot know, can one? One cannot know, yes.’

- or with the affirmative copula ca-:

(42) baliq-e ak:u = q'al, ca-d = uw? aχ:u wallah
fish-pl be.neg = emph be-npl = q not.know by.God
‘(These) are not fish, are they? By God, I don’t know.’

8. The syntax of questions
- questions can be headed by non-finite verb forms (14), (27), (31)
- position of question word: often in situ, but can also be fronted to clause-initial position
- the question word can never occur after the verb (this restriction includes embedded questions, in (47) ce could be interpreted as pause filler)

(43) Madina-l ce as:ib = e? A-O-V
Madina-erg what buy.pfv-pret = q
‘What did Madina buy?

(44) ce Madinal as:ibe? O-A-V
(45) ce as:ibe Madinal? O-V-A
(46) * Madinal as:ibe ce?

(47) * Murad-li-j b-alχ-ul ak:u [Madina-l as:ib = el
Murad-obl-dat n-know.ipfv-icvb be.neg Madina-erg buy.pfv-pret = indq

ce] what
Intended meaning: Murad does not know what Madina bought.
- copula clauses with present time reference that are used as questions often do not contain a copula (1), (23)
- items before the question word as well as what follows the predicate are usually (48), but not always (49) topics

(48) Sanži-le ceqel ag-ur-il = de χat:aj?
    Sanzhi-spr when go.pfv-pret-ptcp = pst grandfather
    ‘When did grandfather go to Sanzhi?’

(49) bah χ:ula-ce w-irχ-i = w χat:aj ču-la
    most big-attr m-be.ipfv-hab.pst = q grandfather refl.pl-gen
    uc:-b-a-ce-r? at:aj-ar χ:ula-te = ra b-irχ-i
    brother-pl-obl-in-abl father-comp big-attr.pl = and hpl-be.ipfv-hab.pst
    ‘Was grandfather the oldest among their brothers? There were also those older than grandfather.’

- more than one constituent can be questioned (and the order of the question words seems to be free, at least in (50) hil and ce can exchange their positions)

(50) hi-l ce padarit b-arq’-ib = e?
    who.obl-erg what make.present n-do.pfv-pret = q
    ‘Who made what present?’

9. Pragmatics
- some questions are used as greetings

(51) r-alh-un = de = w! / w-alh-un = de = w!
    f-wake.up.pfv-pret = 2sg = q m-wake.up.pfv-pret = 2sg = q
    ‘Good morning!’

(52) ka-r-iž-ib-le = de = w! / ka-d-iž-ib-le = da = w!
    down-f.be.pfv-pret-cvb = 2sg = q down-1/2pl.be.pfv-pret-cvb = 2pl = q
    ‘Hello!’ (lit. ‘Are you sitting?’)

    ka-r-iž-ib-le = da
down-f-be.pfv-pret-cvb = 1
    ‘Hello!’ (lit. ‘I am sitting.’) (answer to (52))
(53) ce ?aʾči b-arqʿib = de?
what work n-do.pfv-pret = 2sg
‘What (work) have you done?’

- the verb - ik- ‘want, like’ has a special suffix -i that is only used for statements with first person subjects and questions with second person subjects (egophoric marking)

(54) at b-ik:-i? dam a-b-ik:-i
1sg.dat n-want.ipfv-1/2 1sg.dat neg-n-want.ipfv-1/2
‘Do you want it? I don’t want it.’

10. A short glance at other languages

10.1. Non-finite verb forms in questions
- in a number of Nakh-Daghestanian languages questions can be headed by non-finite verb forms, e.g. in Avar (55) and Aghul (56)

(55) Avar (Akhlakov & Khalilov 1976)
[begawul-as λʾu-ra-b] ičʾgo suʾal-āle żawab
village.chief -m.erg give-ptcp.pst-n nine question-dat answer

λʾ-eze kʾo-le-w šːiw = xa?
give-inf can-ptcp.prs-m who.m = emph
‘Who is able to give the answer to the nine questions asked by the chief?’

(56) Aghul (Sumbatova 2009: 318)
fi e ge-wur.i lix.a-je-f?
what cop that-pl.erg build.ipfv-ptcp-nm
‘What (exactly) are they building?’

10.2. Specialized verbal suffixes in questions
The Tsezic languages Hinuq and Tsez have interrogative suffixes in addition to interrogative enclitics. Suffixes and enclitics have partially divergent forms. The suffixes obligatorily replace the witnessed/neutral past suffixes in all witnessed/neutral past tenses (57). They are not used in any other tenses. For instance, in declarative sentences Tsez uses -s(i) for the witnessed past, but in questions this suffix is replaced by = (iy)ā. Omitting the interrogative suffixes in questions with the tense/evidentiality meaning ‘witnessed past’ and replacing them with the normal suffixes otherwise used in declarative sentences leads to ungrammaticality.
“best’alaw-ni kid y-exur-iyä” =λ.in esir-no nesi-q. step-def girl f-kill-q = quot ask-uwpst he.obl-at

“y-exur-si”=λ.in = gon żawab nesä = n teλ.-no f-kill-wpst = quot = emph answer 3sg.erg = and give-uwpst

‘(They) asked him “Did you kill the stepdaughter?” He answered “(I) killed her.”’

10.3. Interrogative markers (Forker 2013)

In Nakh-Daghestanian languages interrogative particles serve three functions: (i) they mark interrogative illocutionary force, and also tag questions and rhetorical questions, (ii) they serve as complementizers, and (iii) they express focus.

The occurrence of interrogative particles in questions is in some languages by and large obligatory (e.g. in polar questions in Akusha Dargwa and Archi) and in other languages optional though preferred (e.g. Bagvalal, Tsakhur), depending also on the question type and on verb forms. Usually only one particle per clause is allowed (except for disjunctive polar questions). In all investigated languages it is possible to attach the markers to the verb. In a few languages such as Chechen, Ingush, Akusha Dargwa and Archi the verb is, at least in questions containing a verb, the only admissible host.

Bagvalal is typologically rather unusual because in this language two out the five interrogative particles show gender agreement with the addressee. For example, in polar questions =ištoː is used with male addressees (58) and =ištaː with female addressee. If the speaker does not want to choose one of the two variants s/he can employ the short form =iš(t) or the non-agreeing particles =ile and =ilaX.

(58) Bagvalal (Kibrik 2001: 744)

[A conversation between two men]

o-ba sani b-uh-a-la ŋilla b-uk’a-b-o

this-hpl together hpl-gather-caus.pot.inf reason n-be-n-cvb

ek’ʷa =jišt-o?:

be = q-m

‘Was there a reason for them to gather together?’
**Abbreviations**

ABL ablative, ADVZ adverbializer, AT location marker ‘at, by’, ATTR attributive, CAUS causative, COMIT comitative,COND conditional, COP copula, CVB converb, DAT dative, DEF definite, EMPH emphatic, ERG ergative, F feminine, GEN genitive, HAB habitual, HPL human plural, ICVB imperfective converb, IMP imperative, IN location ‘in’, INDQ indirect question, INF infinitive, IPPV imperfective, M masculine, N neuter, NPL neuter plural, NEG negative, OBL oblique stem, PFV perfective, PL plural, POT potential, PRET preterite, PRS present, PRT particle, PST past, PTCP participle, Q question marker, QUOT quotative, REFL reflexive, SG singular, SPR location ‘on’, WPST witnessed past, UWPST unwitnessed past

**References**


