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The geography of Georgian q'e

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In this paper I will discuss the geographical and semantic range of the Georgian clitic *q'e*. While it has been known for some time that this particle serves as a number agreement marker for plural objects in some dialects, little has been done to identify the factors which condition its use. I will present evidence that the NPs controlling agreement in *q'e* are almost always animate and presupposed, and attempt to relate this to the syntactic changes that have been underway in Georgian over the past millenium.

1. Agreement morphology. I will begin with a brief discussion of Kartvelian agreement morphology. The Kartvelian verb can agree with two — in some dialects three — arguments. The two sets of person agreement affixes used in early Old Georgian are shown in {1a}. The correlation between case, person agreement set and semantic role is given in {1b}.¹

{1a} Set V (grammatical subject)		
1sg	v-	-0
1pl	v-	-t
2sg	x/h/s/0-	-0
2pl	x/h/s/0-	-t
3sg		-s/a/o/n
3pl		-n/es/en/ed

Set M (grammatical object)	
1excl	m-
1incl	gw-
2	g-
3 DAT	x/h/s/0-
3 NOM	0-

{1b}	ACTIVE STEM		
	AGENT	PATIENT	REC/EXP
Series I			
agr.	V	M	M
case	NOM	DAT	DAT
Series II			
agr.	V	M	M
case	ERG	NOM	DAT
Series III			
agr.	M	V	— —
case	DAT	NOM	[+ postp]

PASSIVE STEM	
THEME	REC/EXP
V	M
NOM	DAT
V	M
NOM	DAT
V	M
NOM	DAT

Note that the feature of (formal) number is marked by Set V affixes but not, originally, by Set M.

¹ The following abbreviations will be used in the glosses to the Georgian examples: (a) case: **NOM**inative, **ERG**ative, **DAT**ive, **GEN**itive, **INS**trumental, **ADV**erbial; (b) verb-paradigm series: **I** (present/future, imperfect, conjunctive); **II** (aorist, optative, permansive); **III** (present perfect / evidential; pluperfect); (c) verb-stem class: **active**, **passive**; (d) other: **QT** (direct-quote marker), **PL**ural. Verb agreement marking is given in the order: Set V / Set M / pluralizer.

{5} g-i-txrob-d-i-t aramed rametu tkwen tana v-i-q'av-0 [ms Jer-32:137r,24]
 [tell-Ia-1/2pl rather that you(pl)-DAT with be-IIp-1]
 “I was telling you rather that I was with you.” <early OG g-i-txrob-d-i>

{6} še-0-e-šin-a-t priad [I Kings 7:7]
 [be-afraid-IIp-3/3pl greatly]
 “They were very much afraid.” <early OG še-0-e-šin-a>

Two distinct strategies are represented here. Example {4} comes from a document [psevdok'ari megwip't'elis sc'avlani “The teachings of Pseudo-Makarias the Egyptian”] which seems to be of southwest Georgian origin [Sarjveladze 1984:566]. Agreement with the 3pl DAT “real subject” is coded by a 3rd plural Set V suffix (-an) in conjunction with the expected Set M 3rd person prefix (0- prevocally). In examples {5} and {6} the Set V suffix associated with 1st and 2nd person plurality (-t) is used to mark plural NA with a 2nd person addressee {5} and a 3rd person experiencer {6}. This second strategy is now normative in modern literary Georgian; the first strategy is still used by speakers of several western Georgian dialects as well as the Kartvelian languages Laz, Mingrelian and Svan [Dzidzishvili 1958, K'iziria 1974, Chikobava 1936:94-102].

2. Use of *q'e*. Less than a century after the sentences in {4-6} were written, the particle *q'e* was being used — sporadically — in written Georgian for a similar purpose. One of the earliest documents where *q'e* is attested is a charter granted by King David the Builder to the monastery at Shio-Mghvime, dated 1125 [Dzidziguri 1984:57]:

{7} twit adr-it-gan mamaoba-sa 0-e-c'er-a-**q'e** saebisk'op'oso-d
 [even early-INS-from father-(coll.)-DAT write-IIIa-3/3/pl episcopacy-ADV]
 “From the very beginning it was ascribed to the fathers as an episcopacy.”

Sarjveladze [1984:562-7] gives several other examples from 12th century documents:

{8} esodeni šiš-i da-g-i-p'q'rob-s-**q'e** tkwen [ms Jer-22:25r,20b]
 [so-much fear-NOM seize-Ia-3/2/pl you(pl)-DAT]
 “So much fear will seize you.”

{9} ray-mca ara 0-e-kmn-a-**q'e** [ms A-52:38r,12]
 [what-NOM not do-IIIa-3/3/pl]
 “which they would not have done”

{10} egret amat-ca mšwidoba-sa mi-s-cem-s brdzol-isa-twis,
 [thus them-DAT-also peace-DAT give-Ia-3/3 struggle-GEN-for
 romel-i mat-da mimart 0-a-kwn-d-a-**q'e** [ms A-52:146r,10-11]
 which-NOM them-ADV toward have-IIp-3/3/pl]
 “Thus he will grant them peace instead of the contention which he had toward them.”

The definition of q'e most often given by Kartvelologists is that it codes the plurality of “grammatical objects,” i.e. arguments crossreferenced by Set M person markers, which can be assigned either DAT or — in the case of transitive verbs in the aorist/optative series — NOM case.² In sentences {7} and {9} the DAT agent NP of a transitive verb which has undergone inversion is coded for plurality in the verb. Note that **notional** rather than formal plurality is marked in {7}, where q'e crossreferences the collective mamaoba “group of fathers [priests].” In {8} the 2pl direct object controls NA in q'e. Occasionally one comes across instances where the motivation underlying the appearance of the clitic is difficult to establish. Sarjveladze [1984:568] views the q'e in {10} as “functionless.” It may be that the plurality of the oblique argument matda mimart “toward them” is responsible for the occurrence of q'e. (Another possibility is that it marks habitual Aktionsart, as in some of the modern dialects which we will discuss further on.) The early 13th century epic poem “The knight in the panther’s skin” by Shota Rustaveli contains two tokens of q'e, both, interestingly enough, cliticized to the noun preceding the verb rather than to the verb itself.

{11} mi-0-xoc-d-es da mi-i-srod-es, mindor-s sixxl-ita mi-0-a-sxmid-es;
 [slaughter-Ia-3pl/3 and shoot-Ia-3pl field-DAT blood-INS smear-Ia-3pl/3
 ra isar-i da-0-e-lev-i-s, mona-n-i-**q'e** mi-0-a-rtmid-es. [75:2,3]
 what arrow-NOM exhaust-1p-3/3 servant-PL-NOM-**pl** proffer-Ia-3pl/3]
 “They slew and shot, drenching the field with blood;
 Whenever their arrows ran out, servants brought them more.”

In this excerpt, q'e marks the plurality of the recipients of the fresh arrows (Rostevan and Avtandil), who are coded by zero anaphors throughout. (An overt NP denoting them would be assigned DAT case by the verb miartmides). Before we begin looking at the data from modern Georgian dialects, I shall lay out some initial observations concerning q'e:

[a] For the most part — excluding cases like {10} — this clitic codes the notional plurality of grammatical objects, i.e. arguments controlling Set M (object) agreement in the verb.

[b] In the majority of Old Georgian attestations — and all modern ones — q'e is attached to the end of the verb. Instances like {11} indicate that at one time this morpheme was more particle-like and less suffix-like than it is now.

[c] Once the old inclusive/exclusive distinction marked by the Set M prefixes gw- and m- was lost, a coding asymmetry resulted: for arguments controlling Set M person agreement, number agreement was obligatory for 1st person, but not possible for 2nd or 3rd person NPs. When, in literary Georgian, the semantic range of the Set V suffix -t was extended to include the coding of plural grammatical objects, it was (and still is) employed in complementary distribution to the prefix gw- giving the following “balanced” Set M paradigm:

² In his dialect dictionary Ghlon't'i [1984:605-6] has collected several such definitions, e.g.: (a) “particle placed after the verb in the sentence to indicate object plurality [V. Beridze]; (b) particle used to express plurality of an object in the dative or nominative case, or of a subject in the dative case [GTK:679].

{12} *Set M affixes (Modern Standard Georgian)*

1sg: m-	1pl: gw-
2sg: g-	2pl: g- -t
3sg: h/0-	3pl: h/0- -t

Usage of *q'e* shows the same complementarity: it is never used to code the plurality of a 1st person grammatical object.

[d] Unlike person agreement, number agreement in *q'e* is not obligatory when a plural argument in the appropriate formal relation to the verb is present. For example, in “The knight in the panther’s skin” only two of the hundreds of plural DAT arguments are correlated with *q'e*. The same is true for Set M *-t* in the standard language and in those dialects where it is used: NA with 2nd and 3rd person arguments controlling Set M person agreement is not obligatory,³ while agreement with 1st plural arguments in *gw-* — and for that matter, agreement in *-t* with 1st and 2nd plural NPs in the Set V paradigm — is.

3. *q'e* in the modern Georgian dialects. With the above as background, let’s turn to some data from the modern Georgian dialects. The accompanying map shows the location of the principle dialects and subdialects, as described in Gigineishvili, Topuria and K’avtaradze 1961 — henceforth abbreviated **GTK**.

These can be divided into five main dialect groups:

- {13} **I. Northeast dialects**
Moxevian
Mtiuletian-Gudamaq’rian
Xevsurian
Pshavian
Tushetian
- II. Eastern dialects**
K’axetian
Ingiloan
Fereidanian
Tianetian
- III. Central dialects**
Kartlian
Javaxian
Mesxian

³ Of course, the factors conditioning the appearance of this morpheme as a Set M NA marker for 2nd person and for 3rd person arguments are very different. Although NA with 2pl grammatical objects was relatively uncommon in late Old Georgian, in modern standard Georgian it is for all intents and purposes obligatory; its appearance is only blocked by a morphological rule permitting no more than one plural suffix [Tschenkeli 1958:354; Shanidze 1953:184-6]. So, instead of the expected **g-i-c’er-en-t* “they are writing to you(pl),” the form *g-i-c’er-en* “they are writing to you(sg or pl)” must be used. The appearance of Set M 3pl *-t* is dependent on the same factors that are relevant for *q'e*, though the threshold varies from dialect to dialect. In the modern standard language, the basic rule is that 3rd person “real subjects” have the potential to control number agreement, but other 3rd person arguments do not [Chikobava 1967; K’vach’adze 1977:96-111; Harris 1978]. In practice, NA with 3pl experiencers, benefactives, and — rarely — recipients and addressees is widely attested in written Georgian [see Tschenkeli 1958:486-90; Jorbenadze 1981; K’iziria 1985; Tuite 1987].

da ans-i-c tavis bič'-i-a-o....” ema-s balki go-0-u-xard-a,
 and this-NOM-also her boy-NOM-is-QT this-DAT very-much rejoice-IIp-3/3
 ama-0-i-γ-o rakteni pul-i, čo-0-u-q'ar-a-q'e emeeb-sa:
 take-out-IIa-3/3 so-much money-NOM throw-IIa-3/3/pl them-DAT
 “ša-d-i-t, gamo-0-a-yidz-e-t-o.” em keniz-eb-ma-c, pul-i k'i go-0-u-xard-a-q'e,
 enter-IIp-2pl wake-IIa-2pl/3-QT the maids-ERG money indeed rejoice-IIp-3/3/pl
 amma 0-e-šinod-a-q'e ro: “em dros min ariese-o, ro čamo-sul-a-o!”
 but fear-IIp-3/3/pl that this time-DAT who-NOM is this-QT that come-IIIp-3-QT]
 He said: “It’s a good idea to wake up the people who are sleeping in the other rooms” —
 where the maids were. He went in and woke them up. He asked them: “Who is lying with
 this woman?” They told him: “This woman is the wife of a merchant, and that is her
 son.” He was happy (to hear this) and took out a large sum of money and tossed it to
 them: “Go in and wake them up.” The maids were indeed very happy about the money,
 but still frightened: “Who is this person who has come to us at this hour?” [GTK:266]

The interesting thing to note in this passage is the use of q'e to mark NA with a new topic, even before it is first explicitly mentioned. This use of the particle seems to be more frequent than the more locally-determined thematicity conditioning exemplified in {15}. Also, note that the speaker did not use q'e to mark NA with the plural object of gamoayidzeto “wake up <the woman and the boy>“ in the 7th line, evidently preferring to reserve Set M NA for the primary topic “maids.” Now consider the short Fereidanian passage given in {17}:

{17} zog dɣe-sa sakme ver ča-i-gd-i-s xel-či, sadil-ze šamo-id-i-s-q'e
 [some day-DAT affair-NOM cannot grasp-IIa-3/3 hand-in dinner-to-enter-IIp-3-q'e
 da 0-u-txr-i-s-q'e q'ein-is q'or-sa: dɣe-s sakme ar ča-m-i-var-d-a-o.
 and tell-IIa-3/3-q'e king-GEN girl-DAT day-DAT affair-NOM not fall-IIp-3/1-QT
 zog dɣe-s ro e-mušavn-i-s-q'e sayamo-s em q'ein-is q'or-ma h-k'itx-i-s-q'e:
 some day-DAT that work-IIIa-3-q'e eve-DAT the king-GEN girl-ERG ask-IIa-3/3q'e
 dɣe-s sad i-q'av-o, mis-tana i-mušavob-d-i-vo? [GTK:260]
 day-DAT where be-IIp-2-QT who-GEN-with work-Ia-2-QT]

“On those days when he can’t find something to do, he comes to dinner and tells the king’s daughter: I didn’t find a job today. On those days when he had been working, in the evening the king’s daughter asks him: Where were you, with whom were you working?”

It is clear from the context that no plural grammatical object is being referred to — in fact, some of the verbs are monopersonal. Examination of Fereidanian texts indicates these “anomalous” occurrences of q'e are most often with verbs in the permansive/habitual aspect, as in the above example.⁴ This use of the particle is by no means limited to Fereidanian. Chikobava [1937:54-5] reports that an enclitic particle k'e — which he claims is cognate with q'e — is frequently used in conjunction with the past habitual in the northeast dialect of Mtiuleti.⁵

⁴ Don Stilo, who is as far as I know the only American to have done fieldwork on the Fereidanian dialect in Iran, reports that in the texts he collected [as yet unpublished] q'e was employed **only** as an aspectual marker.

⁵ The same particle, in the same contexts, is observed in the neighboring Moxevian dialect as well. The texts in

3.3. K'axetian. In most of the K'axetian dialect region, *-t* is the Set M plural NA affix of choice, and it used pretty much the same way *q'e* is in Ingiloan. In eastern K'axeti (Q'vareli and Gurjaani Raions) *q'e* is used, as well as *-t*, which is said to be supplanting it [Chikobava 1968:277].

3.4. Central and southwest dialects. Number agreement in *q'e* is not — or longer — found in the central and southwest dialect area.

3.5. Imeretian. Moving northward into Imereti we observe that of the two major subdialects spoken in this region, Upper Imeretian prefers *-t* and Lower Imeretian *q'e* for NA with prominent grammatical objects, though both morphemes are attested in both dialects. In many of the Imeretian texts that I have read, it appears that *-t* is preferred for grammatical objects that have “real subject” status, i.e. the DAT case-marked agents of active verbs that have undergone inversion, and the experiencer arguments of *verba sentiendi*. For other topical arguments controlling Set M person agreement, NA in *q'e* is generally used. Compare the use of the two plural NA markers in this Upper Imeretian example:

{18} k'itx-es rac 0-u-ndod-a-t; 0-u-txr-a-**q'e** [GTK:458]
 [ask-IIa-3pl/3 what-NOM want-IIp-3/3pl tell-IIa-3/3/pl]
 “They told him what they wanted; he said to them...”

For the most part, NA in Imeretian is as in Ingiloan and K'axetian. In western Imereti, most notably in C'uluk'idze Raion, a surprising extension of the usage range of *q'en* (a variant form of *q'e*) is observed (Dzidziguri [1940:164, 1954:152]; K'ublashvili [1985:140-2]):

{19} ame-0-i-q'van-o-c'-**q'en** kal-eb-ma q'vel-i-o [Dzidziguri 1940:164]
 [bring-up-IIa-3/3/pl woman-PL-ERG cheese-NOM-QT]
 “The women should bring up the cheese.” <NA with 3pl ERG agent>

{20} še-me-xvec'eb-od-e-c'-**q'en** [K'ublashvili 1985:141]
 [plead-Ip-3/1/pl]
 “They would be pleading with me.” <NA with 3pl NOM agent>

{21} ver dzlebulob-s-**k'en** amden sakme-s ertad [ibid]
 [cannot manage-Ia-3/3/pl this-many matter-DAT together]
 “They cannot manage to do so many things at the same time.”
 <NA with 3pl NOM agent>

It may be the case that the range of *q'en/k'en* has been expanded by analogy with the range of the 3pl Set V agreement marker *-en*. In the southwest dialects, *-en* is used to code NA with DAT-case subjects which control Set M agreement; compare {4} above, which is believed to have originated in southwest Georgia. The suffix, therefore, codes plural real subjects, regardless of

GTK contain several examples:

{i} gazapxul-is p'ir-ci ker-i da-v-tes-i-t-**k'e** da stwel-ze mo-v-mk'-i-t-**k'e**
 [spring-GEN mouth-in barley-NOM sow-IIa-1pl/3 and vintage-at mow-IIa-1pl/3]
 “In early spring we (habitually) sow barley, and at vintage time we reap it.”

their case. In C'uluk'idze Raion it appears that *q'en/k'en* has taken on similar characteristics.

3.6. Lechxumian and Rach'an. The semantic range of *q'e* in Lechxumian and Rach'an is about the same as in Ingiloan and (most of) Imeretian.⁶ NA in *q'e* is found here in essentially the same contexts as in the other northwest dialects. The following passage was recorded in the Rach'an village Ch'iori:

{22} čagele-et 0-q'av-d-a-**q'e** bat'on-i. katam-i-c rom da-0-e-k'l-a-s-**q'e**,
 [Chagele-DATPL have-IIP-3/3/PL lord-NOM chicken-NOM that kill-IIIa-3/3/PL
 naxevar-i bat'on-i-tvin unda mi-0-e-c-e-s-**q'e**
 half-NOM lord-GEN-for must give-IIIa-3/3/PL
 mara ertxel mo-0-u-vid-a-**q'e** iašliši:
 but once come-IIP-3/3/PL mishap-NOM
 bat'on-eb-i i-txov-d-en met'-s; met'i ama-t ar 0-kon-d-a-**q'e**.
 lord-PL-NOM demand-Ia-3pl/3 more-DAT more-NOM they-DAT not have-IIP-3/3/PL
 mo-vid-en, a-0-u-t'q'd-en-**q'e** da c'a-i-q'van-es-**q'e** tavis i ak'van-eb-ita
 come-IIP-3pl attack-IIP-3pl/3/PL and take-IIa-3pl/3/PL their cradle-PL-INS
 da tavis i bayv-eb-it kal-eb-i-ca da k'ac-eb-i-c.
 and their child-PL-INS woman-PL-NOM and man-PL-NOM-too] [GTK:524]
 “The Chageles had a (feudal) overlord. Whenever they would kill a chicken, they had to give half to the overlord. One day misfortune came upon them: The overlords demanded more, but they did not have more (to give). So they [i.e. the overlords] came, attacked them and carried them off, women and men, with their cradles and their children.”

3.7. Factors relevant to use of *q'e*. On the basis of the Georgian dialectological materials available to me, the following general observations can be made concerning the morpheme *q'e*:

[1] It almost invariably crossreferences an NP with an animate denotatum. Only one of the over 200 occurrences of *q'e* in my sample coded NA with an inanimate. This is to be expected, of course, given the tendency observed in most of the Georgian-speaking area for all NA processes to be sensitive to animacy.

[2] Animacy is not the whole story: topicality is also an important criterion for number agreement. For example, in the corpus I examined, in 86 of 121 instances of *q'e* NA with a (non-real-subject) direct or indirect object the latter was represented by a null anaphor.

4. Parallels in Georgian morphosyntax. In the course of its recorded history Georgian has undergone significant changes. Among the more extensive of these changes has been the realignment of the number agreement component of the syntax. In every modern dialect, save the most conservative dialects of northeast Georgia, NA, however it might be marked, is sensitive to

⁶ According to Dzidziguri [1954:230-1] for NA with plural grammatical objects in Rach'an both *-t* and *q'e* are used when the grammatical subject is 3rd person. With a 1st or 2nd person gram. subj., only *q'e* is used for this purpose, to avoid confusion with the primary use of *-t* as a 1st/2nd Set V plural NA marker: hence, (*sen*) *0-u-txar-i-q'e* (*mat*) “you(sg) told it to them,” but not **(sen) 0-u-txar-i-t* (*mat*); the latter verb can only mean “you(pl) told it to him/her/them.”

the animacy, and in some cases topicality, of the argument concerned. In Old Georgian, formal number was the primary determinant of NA: if the NP in question was marked with the appropriate plural suffix [NOM *-n-i*, ERG *-t(a)*], NA generally occurred; otherwise 3sg agreement was marked, even if the argument was notionally plural, or marked with the pluralizer *-eb-* [Shanidze 1982:182-3; Harris 1985:210-3; for exceptions see Sarjveladze 1984:543-64]. In modern standard Georgian, *-eb-* is the unmarked plural suffix, and NA with plural 3rd person NPs controlling Set V person agreement is largely dependent on animacy (Chikobava 1968:272-3; K'vach'adze 1977:99-104).⁷

{23} mucela-s k'bil-**eb**-ma k'ac'k'ac'-i da-0-u-c'q'-o [Vazha-Pshavela]
 [M.-DAT tooth-PL-ERG chatter-NOMbegin-IIa-3sg/3]
 “Mucela’s teeth began chattering.”

{24} jarisk'ac-**eb**-ši ga-i-sm-i-**s** xm-**eb**-i [Chikobava 1968:272]
 [soldier-PL-in is-heard-1p-3sg voice-PL-NOM]
 “Voices are heard from among the soldiers.”

Chikobava comments that “*ga-i-sm-i-an xm-eb-i* [is-heard-1p-3pl voice-PL-NOM] is unacceptable in modern Georgian, although in Old Georgian *i-sm-i-an qma-n-i* [is-heard-1p-3pl voice-PL-NOM] would have been normal” [ibid:272]. Likewise, in the Mountain Rach’an village Glola, the one place outside of the northeast dialect area where NA in *-(e)n-* with NOM direct objects is still found, animacy appears to be a necessary condition for this agreement to occur.⁸ Furthermore, there is evidence that in at least some dialects, notably Lower Imeretian [K’iziria 1974:81] even NA with animate subjects is to some degree dependent on topicality. Consider the following excerpt from a Lower Imeretian folk tale [in GTK:474] about three brothers — two smart and one foolish — seeking their fortunes. The foolish brother is spending the night in a grain hopper.

⁷ Consider the following near-minimal pair, from two Old Georgian translations of the gospels, which demonstrate the syntactic properties of the *-t(a)* and *-eb-ma* ERG plural forms; only the former governs NA:

{i} k'ac-**ta** mat vitarca i-xil-**es** sasc'aul-i igi ... [John 6:14 (Op'iza)]
 [man-ERGPL the-ERGPL as see-IIa-3pl/3 miracle-NOM the-NOM]

{ii} k'ac-**eb**-man man vitarca i-xil-**a** sasc'aul-i igi ... [John 6:14 (Adish)]
 [man-PL-ERG the-ERG as see-IIa-3sg/3 miracle-NOM the-NOM]
 “When the men saw the miracle ...”

In modern Georgian, the plural suffixes *-n-i* [NOM] and *-t(a)* [ERG, DAT, GEN] are stylistically marked, restricted for the most part to literary or official registers, and to fixed phrases.

⁸ Animacy was not a relevant factor for determining the occurrence of *-en-* agreement in Old Georgian. For example, in the 6th century Xanmet’i texts edited by Molitor [1956], of 45 instances of *-en-* NA with transitive direct objects, only half of them [22] refer to animate beings; likewise, in a sample of texts from the northeast dialect area (where the NA mechanism is basically the same as in Old Georgian) less than half [21 of 44] of the direct objects controlling NA in *-en-* have animate referents. By contrast, in the Glola Rach’an texts that I have examined, almost all such NPs [24 of 26] denote animate beings.

- {25} dila-ze gare-dan pxak'a-pxuk'-it mo-vid-a tagv-eb-i
 [morning-at outside-from scratching-INS come-IIp-3sg mouse-PL-NOM
 da ga-0-a-ps-en xvimir-i pul-it.
 and fill-IIa-3pl/3 hopper-NOM money-INS
 game-0-e-k'id-a sulel-i tagv-eb-s da da-0-a-t'ueb-i-a pul-eb-i.
 chase-IIp-3/3 foolish-NOM mouse-PL-DAT and leave-IIIa-3/3 money-PL-NOM
 ga-0-a-ps-o didi sapule pul-it da c'e-vid-a sax- ši.
 fill-IIa-3/3 big money-bag-NOM money-INS and go-IIp-3 home-in
 č'k'viani dzman-eb-i sax-ši da-0-xt-a.
 smart brother-PL-NOM home-in meet-IIp-3sg/3
 veraper-i ver 0-e-šon-a-t da ke da-brunebul-iq'v-en calieri.
 nothing-NOM cannot find-IIIa-3/3pl and indeed return-IIp-3pl empty]
 “In the morning the mice came from outside with a scratching sound and filled the hopper
 with money. The foolish brother chased away the mice and the money was left behind.
 He filled a large bag with the money and went home. The smart brothers met him at home.
 They had not found anything, and had returned empty-handed.”

Two formally plural animate NPs appear in this passage: *tagv-eb-i* “mice” and *dzman-eb-i* “brothers.” Although both serve as both grammatical and “real” subjects of their respective verbs at their first appearance, both control 3rd singular Set V agreement — or perhaps it would be more accurate to say: 3rd person Set V, not specified for plurality. Verbs in the following clauses, however, crossreference these same arguments with specifically 3pl agreement markers. Some aspects of the use of the NA marker *-t* with arguments controlling Set M agreement in Modern Standard Georgian also remind us of the discourse-related phenomena mentioned above. Consider the following excerpt from a recently published short story:

- {26} me megobar-i yvt-is c'q'alob-it bevr-i m-q'av-s,
 [I-DAT friend-NOM god-GEN grace-INS many-NOM have-IP-3/3
 tanac iset-eb-i ar-ian, st'umroba tu gan-i-zrax-es,
 besides that-PL-NOM be-IP-3pl guesthood-NOM if intend-IIp-3
 veranairi amind-i ver da-0-a-brk'oleb-t.
 no-kind weather-NOM cannot hinder-Ia-3/3pl]
 “By the grace of God I have many friends; furthermore, they are the sort of people that,
 if paying a visit is on their minds, no kind of weather can hinder them.” [J. Karchxadze
Mnatobi #1:70 (1986)]

My consultants in Tbilisi told me that the topicality and animacy of the patient (“my friends”) as opposed to the rhematicity and inanimacy of the agent (“weather”) contributed to the occurrence of NA in *-t* with the former.⁹ If the patient NP is less highly presupposed, plural NA is less acceptable:

⁹ According to I. K'ik'nadze 1983, the popular Georgian novelist Otar Ch'iladze makes especially frequent use of the Set M plural suffix *-t* to code the number of topical 3rd plural arguments, even when these are not serving as subjects in the usual sense of the term (and therefore number agreement would not be expected according to the norms of modern literary Georgian).

{27} veranairi amind-i ver da-0-a-brk'ol-eb-s'??-t st'umr-eb-s
 [no-kind weather-NOM cannot hinder-1a-3/3 guest-PL-DAT]
 “No kind of weather can hinder the guests.”

5. Conclusion. In evaluating number agreement in the various modern Georgian dialects, we can list several hierarchies which are relevant to the process:

{28} a. DISCOURSE-FUNCTIONAL: topical > non-topical
 b. REFERENTIAL: animate > inanimate
 c. FORMAL: 1st/2nd > 0 > pronoun > other NPs

To some extent these hierarchies overlap with each other, of course. Speech-act participants are almost always animate, and both the topicality and formal NP-type hierarchies reflect degree of presupposedness [Silverstein 1976,1981]. The Georgian dialects differ in which specific hierarchies from the list are of importance, and where they draw the line between forms that do and do not have the potential of controlling number agreement. For Set V number agreement, in most instances, animacy is the major criterion, though as we saw, topicality can play a role in Imeretian. For Set M agreement, the number of relevant factors is greater in most dialects, and the cut-off points are less clear cut. In the case of the topicality criterion, for example, there is variation — perhaps only idiolectal — concerning the status of newly-introduced arguments that are destined for a prominent role in the discourse.

Secondly, one can describe the morphosyntactic systems of individual languages or dialects in terms of the manner of distribution of what one might call “syntactic privileges” within the clause: which argument classes receive these privileges, and how asymmetric the distribution is. In early Old Georgian, the privilege of controlling number agreement was distributed according to formal criteria: the case assigned an NP [ERG or NOM, not DAT] and the set of person agreement markers it controlled [Set V, not Set M]. Other syntactic privileges, such as ability to bind reflexive and reciprocal anaphors and likelihood of participating in cross-clausal reference maintenance, were determined according to semantic criteria, in particular animacy and relative position on a hierarchy of deep-case roles ranked from most to least agentive¹⁰ [Harris 1981, Tuite in progress]. One of the important changes in Kartvelian diachronic syntax, as pointed out by Cole et al 1980 (see also Aronson 1976), has been the reapportionment of these privileges in the direction of greater convergence onto one type of argument. More precisely, the number agreement process — that is, a very **local** syntactic privilege — has realigned to accord more closely with prominence in the less local, cross-clausal domain. For this purpose, number agreement morphemes were, in a sense, “recruited” to code prominent arguments which had not earlier controlled number agreement. The marker *-an* used in {4} and the *-t* in {5} and {6} came from Set V. The origins of *q'e* are still not known with certainty, though the use of this particle to code iterative and permansive Aktionsart in Fereidianian and Mtiulian may be an important clue toward the solution of this mystery.

¹⁰ In Harris’ terms, these operations are sensitive to “initial subjecthood,” which is in most cases predictable from the agentivity hierarchy [Harris 1981:258] though, as in other languages, exceptions occur [cp. Rosen 1984].

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abbreviations

EnIMKI = Ak'ad. N. Maris saxelobis enis, ist'oriisa da mat'erialuri k'ult'uris inst'it'ut'is moambe (Bulletin of the Academician N. Marr Institute of language, history and material culture)

GTK = Gigineishvili, et al. 1961.

IKE = iberiul-k'avk'asiuri enatmecniereba (Ibero-Caucasian linguistics)

IKEC = iberiul-k'avk'asiuri enatmecnierebis c'elic'deuli (Annual of Ibero-Caucasian linguistics)

KESS = kartvelur enata st'rukt'uris sak'itxebi (Issues in the structure of the Kartvelian languages)

TSUG = tbilisis saxelm'ipo universit'et'is gamomcemloba (Tbilisi State University Press)

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