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A Case of Taboo-Motivated Lexical Replacement
in the Indigenous Languages of the Caucasus

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Abstract. A large number of indigenous languages of the Caucasus employ a lexeme of Indo-European origin to designate the daughter-in-law. In this article, the authors examine the likely Indo-European sources of the word, its reflexes in the Caucasian languages, and the social factors that conditioned its borrowing and spread in the region. The article concludes with a brief discussion of the relevance of this case study for the analysis of the distribution of kin terms in other parts of the world.

1. Reflexes of *snus-o- in Caucasian languages. The Indo-European root meaning 'daughter-in-law' is one of a handful of roots shared by Indo-European with all three indigenous Caucasian language families, these being Kartvelian or South Caucasian, Abxaz-Adyghean or Northwest Caucasian, and Nax-Daghestanian or Northeast Caucasian. (We have yet to be convinced that any two of these families, to say nothing of all three, are genetically related.) Some examples with the phonological shape *nus(a)/nəsa/nisa* include the following:

South Caucasian

> Zan: Mingrelian *nisa* (Senak'i [eastern] dialect), *nosa* (Zugdidi-Samurzaq'an [western] dialect) '*nevestka*' (Q'ip̌idze 1914:289; Andronik'ašvili 1996: 210); Laz *nusa/nisa* '*novobračnaja, nevestka*', *nusaya/nusava/nisaq'a*, 'wives of two brothers (with respect to each other)' (Marr 1910:174); Georgian dialectal *nusadia* 'uncle's wife' (< ? Mingrelian *nusa* + *dia* 'mother') (Orbeliani 1965:600)

Northwest Caucasian

> Circassian (Adyghe, Kabardian): *nəsa* 'daughter-in-law', '(father's) brother's wife' (cf. Kabardian *nəsa-š'e* '*nevesta*; new bride'; *nəse-ɣ°* 'husband's brother's wife') (Kuipers 1975:89; Apažev and Kardanov 1957)
> Ubyx *nəsá:ɣ* '*femme du frère du mari; belle-soeur*' (Mészáros 1934:297; Vogt 1963:154; Dumézil 1965:235)

Northeast Caucasian

Lezgian branch: Archi *nus–du–r* 'son's wife' 'SW' (Kibrik, Kodzasov, Olov-jannikova, and Samedov 1977:286)

Avaro-Ando-Cezian branch: Avar *nus*; Andic subbranch *nus/nusa/nusey* (Tindi, Karata, Andi, etc.); Axwax *nuša–* 'bride' (Kibrik and Kodzasov 1990:60; Nikolaev and Starostin 1994:856)

Nax branch: Bacbi, Chechen, Ingush *nus* 'daughter-in-law' (Nikolaev and Starostin 1994:856; Johanna Nichols p.c. 1998)

Among the other Indo-European–pan-Caucasian lexical isoglosses mentioned by Klimov (1965:64), Starostin (1986), and Nikolaev and Starostin (1984) are roots meaning 'horse', 'apple', and 'silver'. We will endeavor to demonstrate here that a daughter form of *snus-o–*, despite the near-universality of the role it designates in western Asia, is just as likely a candidate for *Wanderwort* status as terms associated with innovations in agriculture, transport, and trade. The motivation for borrowing the former term is, however, quite different from that conditioning the appropriation of vocabulary linked to technology and commerce. We believe that the lengthy trajectory of the Indo-European daughter-in-law word was paved by linguistic restrictions and taboos associated with the role of in-marrying women in traditional Caucasian societies.

Before examing the Caucasian reflexes of *snus-o–* in detail, we present here the terms for 'daughter-in-law' from most of the Caucasian languages, along with the words for 'son-in-law', in tables 1–3. Note that some of the latter also contain roots phonologically resembling *nus–*. We will return to this problem in section 4.

Table 1. South Caucasian Terms for 'Daughter-in-Law' and 'Son-in-Law'

	DAUGHTER-IN-LAW	SON-IN-LAW
Georgian	*rdzal–*; (dial.) *nusadia* 'uncle's wife'	*sidze*
Zan (Laz-Mingrelian)	(i) *nisa/nosa/nusa* (ii) Mingrelian *xateci/xaceci* (iii) Mingrelian *moč'q'udu*	*si(n)ǯa*
Svan	*telɣra*	*či:že*

Table 2. Northwest Caucasian Terms for 'Daughter-in-Law' and 'Son-in-Law'

	DAUGHTER-IN-LAW	SON-IN-LAW
Circassian	*nəsa*	Kabardian *maλχe, śawe* 'žénix'; Adyghe *maχλe*
Ubyx	(i) *px'aš'áyən* 'belle fille' (= fille + mûr, mûrissant) (ii) *śasá* 'bru'; cf. *nəsá:ɣ* 'HBW'	(i) *q°aš'áyən* 'beau fils (d' une marâtre)' (= fils + mûr) (ii) *məxə* 'gendre', 'ZH or DH'
Abxaz-Abaza	Abxaz *a–táca*; Abaza *taca*	Abxaz *á–maḥʷ*; Abaza *maḥʷə*

Table 3. Northeast Caucasian Terms for 'Daughter-in-Law' and 'Son-in-Law'

	DAUGHTER-IN-LAW	SON-IN-LAW
Nax branch:		
Chechen, Ingush	*nus*, †*nuskal*	Chechen *nuc*,
		Ingush *najc*
Bacbi	*nus*, *c'inus*	
Avaro-Andian branch:		
Avar (Standard)	*nus*, †*baḥára-j* 'the new one'	*durc*, ‡*baḥára-w*
Avar (Ancux)	*nusa-j*	*nusa-w*
Andic subbranch:		
Andi	*nusa*	*nuso*
Axvax	*nuša*, †*baḥárakk'a*	*nuša*, ‡*baḥare:k°'a*
Axvax (Tadmagitli)	*nusa*	*nusa*
Chamalal	*wahwí has:*, †*baḥáre*	*nusa*, ‡*baḥáro*
Tindi	*nus(a)*, †*baḥára-j*	*nusa*, ‡*baḥára-w*
Botlix	*nusa-ɬ:i-*, †*baḥáraj*	*nusa*, ‡*baḥara-w*
Ghodberi	*nuse-j*, †*baḥara-j*	*nuso-w*, ‡*baḥáro-w*
Karta	*nusa*, †*baḥára-j*	*nusa*, ‡*baḥaro-w*
Bagvalal	*wašašúj hak°'i*, †*baḥára*	*nusa*, ‡*baḥara-w*
Cezian branch:		
Cez	*ža:s báru*, †*baḥára*	*kídbes χédiju*,
		‡*bahara-w*
Hinux	*úžiš báru*, †*baḥára-j*	*kédes χódo*, ‡*bahara-w*
Bezhta	*öždis áqo*, †*q'ímako báharaw*	*kíbas bet'érhan*,
		‡*q'ímako báharaw*
Xunza	*óǯis áqe*, †*c'utula*, †*baḥára-j*	*kidbós bet'érhan*,
		‡*báḥára-w*
Xwarshi	*úžašɣí?ne*, †*ísiχu kad* ('aunt'	*kándus χol*, ‡*ísiχu úže*
	+ 'girl')	('aunt' + 'boy')
Xwarshi (Inxoqwar)	†*bahara-j*	*bahara-w*
Lak branch:		
Lak (Xosrex)	*halmaχ-š:ar*, *halmaʁaj*	*halmaχ-ču*, *žalin*
		(< Turkish), *wiri-ču*
Dargwa branch:		
Dargwa	†*c'ikuri*	*gujaw*, ‡*halmaγ*
Dargwa (Chirag)	*j-ik:aná* 'desired', †*nis:e*	∅*-ik:aná*, *nuca*
Lezgian branch:		
Eastern subgroup:		
Lezgi	*s°as* (Jark'i *χ°eχ°*), †*s°as*	*jezne* (< Turkish), ‡*čam*
Tabasaran	†*s°uš°*, *adaχlú* (? < Turkish)	(Etek *jazna*), ‡*adaχlú*,
		žam
Aghul (Richa)	†*sus*	*begi* (< Turkish *beg*)
Aghul (Burkixan)	†*sus*	‡*nawruz-begi*
Aghul (Fite)	†*sus*	‡*žam*, *ǯam*
Aghul (Burshag)	†*s:us:*	*jazná*
Southern subgroup:		
Kryz	*sis*	‡*bäg*
Budux	*suz*, †*suz*	*jazna*, ‡*bəg*

Western subgroup:		
Rutul	[†]sus, izdaɣ, istaχ	jazna, [‡]lišánli
		(< Persian)
Caxur	izdaɣ, istaχ, [†]sos	[‡]lišánli, cima, beg, χan
Marginal group:		
Archi	nus-t:u-r, [†]mac'át:ur	nus-t:u, [‡]mac'át:u
Xinalugh	[†]c'inás	[‡]bäg
Udi	bin, [†]bin	muʔquʔ jezna, [‡]bäj

NOTE: [†] = 'bride'; [‡] = 'groom'.

The distribution of the daughter-in-law lexeme contrasts sharply with those of other kin terms in the Caucasian language families.[1] In South Caucasian, the only Caucasian family for which fairly complete and reliable etymological dictionaries exist (Klimov 1964; Fähnrich and Sardshweladse 1995), several lexemes designating affines can be reconstructed at the Proto–South Caucasian level, including *sidźe- 'daughter's or sister's husband' and *kwiś- 'wife's sister's husband'. The lemma *mtil- 'father-in-law' (cf. Georgian mama-mtil- 'wife's father' and Laz mtiri 'spouse's father') goes back at least as far as Common Georgian-Zan. By contrast, no daughter-in-law lexeme can be reconstructed for any antecedent stage of South Caucasian, each branch having a root etymologically unrelated to those of the other two branches: Georgian rdzal-; Svan telɣra; Zan (i) nisa/ nosa/nusa, (ii) xateci/xaceci, and (iii) moč'q'udu (the last two only attested in Mingrelian).[2] In Northwest Caucasian, as well, a son-in-law lexeme can be traced back to the protolanguage, whereas borrowing (or paraphrasis) has supplanted the original daughter-in-law word in some or all of the branches (Šagirov 1977:259–60).

Before proceeding further, we should make one remark concerning the semantics of the daughter-in-law words discussed in this article. The gloss given in dictionaries for the overwhelming majority of the Caucasian words cited above is Russian nevestka (sometimes accompanied by snoxa). The kin term nevestka has as its prototypical meaning 'daughter-in-law' ('son's wife'), but can be used to refer to the brother's wife as well. Whereas snoxa and its cognates in contemporary Indo-European languages refer almost exclusively to the son's wife, there are indications that older Indo-European forms descended from *snus-o- could also denote the wife of the grandson or even the great-grandson (Latin nurus), or the wife of a kinsman (Homeric nuós [Gates 1971:99–101]). A similarly wide semantic range applies to many of its Caucasian counterparts, even those that are based on other roots, e.g., Chechen nus, Georgian rdzali, Abxaz a-taca 'son's or brother's wife'. This, no doubt, derives from the sense of kin terms referring to in-marrying women in societies of the Caucasian (or early Indo-European) type. Since marriages in such societies were contracted between families, more so than between individuals, the new bride affiliated herself to the patrilineage of her husband, of which the male members (H, HF, HB, HFF) were conceived as the core members. The ceremony, widespread in the Caucasus

until this century, of having the new bride circle her in-law's hearth served to symbolize her (partial) transfer to her husband's lineage, which was represented by the chain hanging over the hearth (Charachidzé 1986:195–99). It appears, therefore, that the prototypical meaning that anchors the semantic field of *snus-o- and its Caucasian counterparts is "in-marrying woman from the perspective of the head of the household into which she marries." In the most typical case, the head would be the husband's father. In slightly less prototypical cases, the term is applied to the in-marrying woman from the perspective of her husband's brother or grandfather and, in its broadest sense, to any woman marrying into one's extended family or clan (the Georgian term rdzali is frequently employed with this latter meaning in casual discourse). For simplicity's sake, the gloss 'daughter-in-law' will be used in the following discussion, but it is understood that its denotation is rather more like that of nevestka or rdzali.

2. Possible sources of Caucasian daughter-in-law terms.

Daughter-in-law words based on some form of the stem nəsa/nusa are sufficiently widespread in the two northern Caucasian language families that some Russian linguists have attempted to reconstruct antecedent forms going back as far as a hypothesized "Proto–North Caucasian" level, from which Northeast Caucasian and Northwest Caucasian are alleged to have descended. Diakonoff and Starostin (1986:37) reconstruct Proto–Northeast Caucasian *nusV or *nəwsV 'bride, daughter-in-law' and Proto–Northwest Caucasian *nəsa, which in turn go back to Proto–North Caucasian **nusA 'daughter-in-law' (Starostin 1986; Nikolaev and Starostin 1994:856). Were such a language to have existed, it would have been spoken some seven or eight millenia ago, the Northeast Caucasian family itself being the approximate age of Indo-European (Nichols 1997a:125; Schulze 1998; cf. Nikolaev and Starostin 1984). Whatever the merits of "Proto–North Caucasian" might be as a linguistic construct (see Schulze 1997), we regard it as extremely unlikely that the root in question originated in even one of the northern Caucasian families, let alone both. On the other hand, there is every reason to suppose that it was borrowed by the northern Caucasian speech communities from an Indo-European source (or sources) and that the borrowing took place after the breakup of Proto-Indo-European.

2.1. The origins of Indo-European *snus-o-.

Reflexes of *snuso-, or *snusû-, as reconstructed by Szemerényi (1977:68), are attested in six, perhaps seven, branches of Indo-European: (1) Indo-Iranian: SKT snuśâ, Ossetic nostæ , Sogdian šwnš (the latter two from Abaev [1958–89, 2:190]); (2) GK νυός; (3) LAT nurus; (4) Armenian nu (gen. nuoy); (5) OHG snur, OE snoru; (6) OCHSL snъxa— all glossed 'Schwiegertochter' by Walde and Pokorny (1927–32, 2:701–2). Less certain is (7) Albanian nuse 'Braut', which may represent an old borrowing from LAT nuptia. Discussions of the anterior history of *snuso-, far from questioning

its Indo-European pedigree, have proposed links to other well-attested Proto-Indo-European roots, of which there is no lack of attractive candidates. Walde and Pokorny (1927–32, 2:701–2), Trubačev (1959:131–33), and Friedrich (1966) pass them in review, but, in the end, agree that Brugmann's (1907) proposed derivation of *snuso- from *sneu- 'drehen, knüpfen' (Walde and Pokorny 1927–32, 2:696) is the most reasonable.[3] As Trubačev (1959:132) notes, the derivation of a term referring to kinship by marriage from a verb meaning 'tie together' makes perfect sense semantically and furthermore finds a close parallel in the etymology of GK πενθερος 'father-in-law' (cf. SKT bándhu- 'Verwandter' [Walde and Pokorny 1927–32, 2:152]) from *bhendh- 'bind'. Friedrich (1966) hypothesizes that both *snusós and *sneu- go back to a more ancient root meaning 'sinew, tendon'.

2.2. The origins of Caucasian *nusa.   As mentioned in section 2, Starostin and his colleagues (Starostin 1986; Diakonoff and Starostin 1986; Nikolaev and Starostin 1994:856) believe that the northern Caucasian daughter-in-law words go back to a common protoform within Caucasian. The superficially similar Hurrian naž-ardə 'concubines' (< Hurro-Urartean *nas-) presents no difficulty, since Diakonoff and Starostin (1986) regard Hurro-Urartean as a branch of Northeast Caucasian (see also Diakonoff 1980, 1990).[4] As for the Indo-European root of interest to us, they aver simply that their reconstructed "North Caucasian" lexeme "may be in some way related to Indo-European snus-â" (Diakonoff and Starostin 1986:37). Starostin (1986) presents a list of twenty-one Indo-European–North Caucasian lexical isoglosses, including *snuso ~ *nusa. Although he does not single out the latter for separate discussion, in speaking of the list as a whole, he asserts that "the majority of lexemes listed . . . appear to have been borrowed from North Caucasian into IE" (Starostin 1986:163), rather than the reverse. The hypothesis of a North Caucasian origin for the 'daughter-in-law' root (cf. also Polák [1946], cited by Trubačev [1959:132], where the same hypothesis appears to have been asserted), or even the proposal that it is extremely ancient within North Caucasian, strikes us as ingenuous, to say the least, in view of (1) the perfectly plausible pedigree of *snuso within Indo-European, (2) the presence of what appears to be an Indo-European feminine-gender suffix in the North Caucasian reflex *nusa,[5] and (3) the cultural evidence, to be presented below, that a lexeme meaning 'daughter-in-law' is a likely candidate for taboo-motivated borrowing.

There can be no doubt that at least the primary source of the Caucasian daughter-in-law words under discussion here ended in -a. Forms ending in this vowel occur in all three families. While indigenous Caucasian nominal stems may end in -a (especially common in Kartvelian [Fähnrich and Sardshweladse 1995:28]), the ending has no link with feminine gender. In Indo-European, on the other hand, some daughter forms of *snuso shifted (independently?) to the a-stem class more characteristic of feminine-gender nouns. This occurred rela-

tively early in Indic (or Indo-Iranian, cf. SKT *snuśâ*), and in Slavic (cf. OCHSL *snъxa*). The rare form *nura*, instead of the more usual *nurus*, indicates that this change was underway in Latin as well. One might at first assume that the proximal Indo-European source of Caucasian **nusa* had also lost *s*-mobile (as in Latin, Greek, Armenian, etc.), which would leave us with the embarrassing situation of having no attested Indo-European candidates with the desired phonological shape.[6] As it turns out, Abaev (1958–89, 2:190–91) reconstructs **snuša* as the Iranian ancestor of Ossetic *nos-tæ* 'daughter-in-law'.[7] Whereas Persian, Sogdian, etc., have retained *s*-mobile, Ossetic has lost it, rendering it conceivable that an intermediary form close or identical to the desired **nusa* once was in use among the Iranian dialects spoken north of the Caucasus in the second and first millenia B.C.E. It may even be the case that the presence or absence of *s*-mobile is a false problem, if certain conditions on the trajectory of the borrowing are met. Historically, the Northeast Caucasian languages have had especially severe phonotactic constraints on initial clusters. Should the principal entry point for **(s)nusa* into the Caucasus have been in Northeast Caucasian–speaking territory, the simplification of **sn- > n-* may have occurred within the recipient, rather than the donor, language (Johanna Nichols p.c. 1998).[8]

The daughter-in-law words in the core, or Samur-River, Lezgian languages (i.e., the eastern, western, and southern subbranches) have highly similar forms, which we believe are also reflexes of **snuso* via Iranian: Lezgi (literary) *s°as*, Tabasaran *š°uš°*, Aghul *sus*, Rutul *sus*, Caxur *sos*, Kryz *sus*, and Budux *suz*.[9] This fact is all the more interesting when we note the absence of **nusa* in this branch of Northeast Caucasian.[10] In view of the geographic distribution of the Northeast Caucasian languages, it appears that, whereas the northern group of Northeast Caucasian languages (the Avaro-Andian, Cezian, and Nax branches) may have borrowed their daughter-in-law words from an Iranian source that had already lost *s*-mobile, the more southerly Lezgian branch (Schulze 1997) must have borrowed **s°əs* or **sus* from a language that still retained it, perhaps one close to the ancestors of Sogdian *šwnš* or Pehlevi **šunuš* (the latter from an unpublished inscription on a bracelet from Armazi, a late first millenium B.C.E settlement near the old Georgian capital of Mcxeta [Abaev 1958–89, 2:190–91]).[11]

3. The appropriation and spread of *nusa* in the Caucasus.

The scenarios presented above, involving a pre-Ossetic Iranian source and one or two points of entry in Northeast Caucasian, converge on the northern Caucasus region as the locus of borrowing of the source of most, perhaps all, Caucasian daughter-in-law words resembling **nusa*. Even though Northwest Caucasian and, to a somewhat lesser degree, Northeast Caucasian were peripheral to the main route of spread of cultural vocabulary (from Mesopotamia to Indo-European and South Caucasian, among others) in the fourth millenium B.C.E.,

and neither appears to have been noticeably influenced by Indo-European at this time,[12] in the centuries subsequent to the breakup of the protolanguages, Indo-European–speaking communities from the steppes north of the Caucasus came into increasing contact with Northeast Caucasian, as evidenced by later borrowings between individual Indo-European and Northeast Caucasian languages—e.g., the cognate of English *buck* from some centum Indo-European language > Nax *bƒok' 'male goat' (Nichols 1997a:124–29). The entry of *nusa into the Caucasus is likewise clearly subsequent to the Proto-Indo-European period, since the root has already undergone a change of final vowel and perhaps loss of *s*-mobile. The borrowing could have taken place as early as the initial contacts between Indo-European communities and the peoples of the Caucasus, perhaps during the Middle Bronze Age (marked by an abrupt transition from the Early Bronze Kuro-Araxes Culture of Transcaucasia and Daghestan [Gadžiev 1987]), or during the spread of Indo-Iranian, and later Iranian-speaking, peoples across the Ponto-Caspian steppes in the second and first millenia B.C.E.[13]

3.1. Speech taboos involving the daughter-in-law. We have just asserted that the lexeme *(s)nusa* 'daughter-in-law' was borrowed by one or several northern Caucasian communities from an Indo-European source, most likely Iranian, some time in the two millenia preceding the common era. What could have motivated the appropriation of this lexeme? We believe the answer is to be sought in the nature of traditional Caucasian society—in particular, the beliefs and practices concerning marriage and women. According to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century ethnographic accounts, marriage involved the transfer of a woman from her father's household (and patrilineage) to her husband's. We have no reason to believe that fundamentally different marriage or residence practices characterized the indigenous northern Caucasians of the Bronze and Iron Ages. Indeed, the near-universality of these beliefs and practices, both within the Caucasus and in the area surrounding it, and corroborating evidence from comparative mythology (Tuite forthcoming), make it reasonable to assume that similar marriage practices, and beliefs concerning women, were observed three or four millenia ago.[14]

As a consequence of the cultural practices related to the transfer of women between lineages, a word denoting 'daughter-in-law' was likely to be tabooed, and a replacement borrowed from a neighboring language. There is abundant ethnographic material from all regions of the Caucasus that indicates that, in historical times at least, a woman, and in particular one who had recently married into the family, was subjected to numerous restrictions limiting her communicative behavior, movement, and participation in religious ceremonies. As a woman, she was deemed impure and a potential source of pollution—of which menstrual blood was the most concentrated manifestation—that could have negative impact on the family's fortune.[15] As an outsider, coming from another

clan, she was doubly dangerous, or at least potentially so.[16] It would be, in fact, more accurate to say that the cultures of the Caucasus invested the in-marrying woman with potent and profoundly ambiguous significance: on the one hand, she represented an object of male desire, essential for the continuation of the lineage and for forging alliances with other families, but, on the other, she was regarded as an impure being (due to her demonic origins, according to some highland Georgian myths [Charachidzé 1968:279]) with the potential to bring danger and misfortune to her husband's family.[17]

  While some aspects of the ideological armature supporting attitudes towards women might vary from one Caucasian community to another (avoidance of women by men being justified as a sign of respect among some groups, but as a means of avoiding pollution by others [Charachidzé 1968:80–87]), restrictions on the behavior of the in-marrying woman, especially one recently arrived, are found throughout the region. She might be excluded from most domestic religious observances (cf. Baxia and Bigvava 1987:74), be required to remain standing in the presence of her in-laws (especially those older than herself), and be spatially segregated from the menfolk (e.g., among the Svans [Chartolani 1961] and the Avars [Kosven et al. 1960:452]). The taboos of particular pertinence here are linguistic, and it is precisely this type of restriction that is the most widespread in the region and the most persistent to the present day (Smirnova 1986). In many communities (e.g., the Circassian and Nax peoples in the northern Caucasus, the Georgian Pshavs and Xevsurs, and also many Turkic and Indo-European peoples of the Caucasus, such as the Karachays, the Balkars, and the Ossetes), the wife did not speak her husband's name, either in direct address to him or in reference (at least, not in the presence of others). In some communities in the Georgian province of Mingrelia, she also could not address her elder in-laws by name, but only by kin term. Among the Abxazians, where this practice has been preserved until quite recently, a newly arrived bride conferred new names upon her husband's near relatives, since she was prohibited from using the names by which blood relatives addressed them. In turn, she was given a new name by her father- or mother-in-law, which the members of her husband's family would henceforth use. Her original personal name continued to be employed by her blood relatives (Džavaxadze and Shinkuba 1987:61; cf. Inal-Ipa 1965:464–65).[18] In general, the most severe restrictions applied to the in-marrying woman's relationship with her father-in-law. For months and often years after her marriage, she could not speak to him at all, and, in some communities, she avoided his presence entirely (Kosven et al. 1960; Friedrich and Diamond 1994; see especially the articles by Volkova [1994a, 1994b] on the Khinalugs and Udis in the latter collection).

3.2. Taboo-motivated lexical replacement. In circumstances such as those just described, it is not surprising—indeed, it would be expected—that terms designating an in-marrying woman would be themselves subject to taboo and

replacement. Those Northeast Caucasian languages from the Andian and Tsezian branches that do not—or no longer—have a reflex of *nusa* employ the paraphrastic expression "son's woman" (e.g., Xwarshi *užaš yi?ne*, Bagvalal *wašašúj hakᵒ'i*) to designate the daughter-in-law. Mingrelian, as mentioned in note 2, has borrowed at least one, and more likely two, daughter-in-law words from Northwest Caucasian. According to Trubačev (1959:90–95) and Vasmer (1987), the Russian daughter-in-law word *nevestka* may itself be the output of such a process. They derive it from *ne-vest-* '(the) unknown (one)', this designation being a reflection of restrictions, observed until recently in many Slavic countries, on naming her or speaking with her, especially during the first few days after marriage, during which her in-laws, even those already acquainted with her, treat her like a complete stranger. Taboo-motivated lexical replacement has, to be sure, been reported for many other parts of the world, most notably in Australia (Dixon 1980) and New Guinea (where a renaming process similar to that mentioned in section 3.1 for the Abxazians has been reported [Foley 1986:42]). The original South Caucasian lexeme for 'wolf', whatever it might have been, appears to have been independently replaced by roots borrowed from Indo-European in Svan (*txe:re* < ?GK θηρ) and in Georgian-Zan (*m–gel–* < Armenian *gayl*) (Hübschmann 1972:397; Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1984:496).[19] A similar fate may have befallen the daughter-in-law lexeme in at least some branches of the South Caucasian family, since, as mentioned in section 1, each has a root etymologically unrelated to those of the other two branches.

3.3. The trajectory of *nusa from northern to southern Caucasia. Avoidance behavior involving the daughter-in-law was universal in the Caucasus region, but the specific character of the interdictions observed in Mingrelia show the clear imprint of influence from Northwest Caucasian–speaking peoples, most particularly the Abxazians (Baxia and Bigvava 1987; Džavaxadze and Shinkuba 1987; see also Baxia [1986] for other parallels between Abxazian and Mingrelian culture). Not surprisingly, one of the Mingrelian daughter-in-law lexemes is a transparent borrowing from Abxaz, as mentioned in note 2. We believe that the term variously pronounced *nisa/nosa/nusa*—although, of course, ultimately of Indo-European provenance—likewise passed into Zan from a Northwest Caucasian source, since the variant vocalism is more consistent with a borrowing from Northwest Caucasian *nəsa* than from Northeast Caucasian (or Indo-European) *nusa*.[20] It follows that Indo-European *nusa, having entered the northern Caucasus sometime in the Bronze or Iron Age, would have passed into Zan, most probably from a Northwest Caucasian source, at a date preceding the breakup of the latter into Laz and Mingrelian in the late first millenium B.C.E. The attestation of reflexes of the lexeme in the two Zan languages, which have been separated by Georgian speakers for two millenia, gives us a lower limit for the time that *nusa* has been in circulation in the

Caucasus. The linguistic evidence gives no clear indication whether the Northwest Caucasian daughter-in-law lexeme was itself borrowed from Northeast Caucasian, or directly from an Iranian source. The simplification of initial *sn–* > *n–* and the unrounding of the root vowel could have occurred either in Northeast Caucasian (most likely in Nax) or independently in Northwest Caucasian.[21]

4. The coincidental resemblance with the Northeast Caucasian 'son-in-law' word. In the Northeast Caucasian language Andi, the masculine counterpart to *nusa* 'daughter-in-law' is *nuso* 'son-in-law' (Nikolaev 1985:66; Aglarov 1994; Kibrik and Kodzasov 1990:60–61). Apparently related lexemes meaning 'son-in-law', 'husband', and 'prince' (*zjat', ženix, knjaz'*) are found throughout Northeast Caucasian:

1. Nax branch: Chechen *nuc*, Ingush *nejc* 'son-in-law'

2. Avaro-Andian branch: Avar *nuca* 'prince'; Andi *nuso* 'son-in-law'; Axwax *nuša-s:u–* 'groom' (cf. *nuša-li–* 'bride', with class II [human female] oblique-stem formant *–li–*)[22]

3. Cezian branch: Bezhta *nuzo* 'husband'

4. Dargwa branch: (Icari dial.) *nuca* 'brother-in-law'

5. Lezgian branch: Archi *nus-du* 'son-in-law'

It is almost certainly the case that these lexemes derive from at least two different sources. Avar, Dargwa, and Nax *nuc(a)* appear to have a common origin. One possibility is diffusion through borrowing, most likely from Avar, from which Nax and Dargwa adopted the word for 'prince' as a designation for the groom (ZH or DH, cf. Georgian *nepe* 'king' for 'bridegroom' and the numerous Lezgian languages that employ Turkish *beg, bey* to designate the groom or son-in-law [see table 3]). The ultimate source of the Avar term remains unclear. Nikolaev (1985:66; also Johanna Nichols p.c. 1998) believes that these lexemes go back to a Proto–Northeast Caucasian antecedent *nawcV–* or *nywcV–*, from which the *nuca* forms, along with the Ingush reflex *nejc*, could be derived through regular sound laws.

Andi *nuso* 'son-in-law', paired with *nusa* 'daughter-in-law', requires another explanation. One's first reaction might be to wonder if the Indo-European source for Caucasian *nusa* had innovated a masculine-gender form *nuso*, which was likewise borrowed by Northeast Caucasian–speaking groups. In the case of Andi, Archi, and perhaps Bezhta,[23] something like that appears to have been the case, although the innovation of a masculine counterpart took place within Northeast Caucasian and involved purely Northeast Caucasian gender marking. In many Northeast Caucasian languages, some kin terms are inflected for gender by the same set of suffixes (or prefixes) that mark gender agreement in the verb and adjective. For example, the root designating DH and SW in most Andian and Cezian languages is *baḥara–*, to which a gender suffix is added: either class II (female human) *–j* for SW, or class I (male human) *–w* for DH. The

borrowed kin term *nusa* has been assimilated to this inflectional pattern, leading to Andi *nuso* < *nusa-w (cf. Chamalal *baḥaró-*, Ghodoberi *baḥarow* 'son-in-law' < *baḥara-w). The equally striking, albeit less Indo-European-looking, resemblance between Archi *nus-du* 'son-in-law' and *nus-du-r* 'daughter-in-law' has a similar explanation. In the absolutive singular of certain Archi kin terms (some of which are shown in table 4), the gender marker—class I (human males) *w/∅*, class II (human females) *d/r*—is appended to the derivational suffix *-du-/-t:u-*. The plural forms are identical for the two genders (Kibrik, Kodzasov, Olovjannikova, and Samedov 1977). Although Archi is a language of the Lezgian branch, the Archi speech community now occupies a small territory between the Avar- and Lak-speaking areas. Archi has borrowed many words from Avar, including *nus 'daughter-in-law', which was subsequently integrated into the inflectional schema followed by such epicene Archi kin terms as *oš-* and *šekér-* (see table 4).

Table 4. Archi Gender-Marked Kin Terms

GENDER AND NUMBER	'B' OR 'Z'	FIRST COUSIN	'DH' OR 'SW'
Masc. (class I), absolutive singular	[w]-úš-du-∅	šekér-t:u-∅	nús-du-∅
Fem. (class II), absolutive singular	d-óš-du-r	šekér-t:u-r	nús-du-r
Masc./fem., absolutive plural	oš-ób	šekér-til	nus-rúl

5. Conclusion.   Lexical borrowing to replace tabooed vocabulary items can "play havoc with the attempt to use lexical materials as a basis for determining groupings" among languages (Comrie 1988:90). This problem is well known to specialists in Pacific linguistics. We hope to have demonstrated here that taboo-motivated lexical replacements show up in the lexica of several Caucasian languages, leading to the mistaken etymology contained in Nikolaev and Starostin's (1994) "North Caucasian" etymological dictionary.

Is this phenomenon of wider occurrence than had been supposed? There is at least indirect evidence that it might well be. In their introduction to a survey of Amazonian languages, Dixon and Aikhenvald (forthcoming) note that a lexeme meaning 'mother's brother' or 'father-in-law', and variously pronounced *kuku* or *koko*, is widespread among Amazonian languages belonging to several families not known to be related.[24] Also widely distributed in the area are a preference for marriage with classificatory cross-cousins, and a relationship between daughter's husband and wife's father marked by avoidance and an interdiction on addressing each other by name (Gregor 1973; see also Maybury-Lewis 1979).[25] The overlap of the distributions of *kuku/koko* and of the avoidance relationship between son-in-law and father-in-law are not likely to be coincidental. As in the Caucasus, one can suppose that the latter fact contributed to the former through the replacement of a tabooed inherited kin term with a lex-

eme borrowed from neighboring communities (Amazonia, like the Caucasus, being a region characterized by widespread bi- or multilingualism).

The lesson to be drawn from these cases of taboo-motivated diffusion—and no doubt others can be found on every continent[26]—is that linguists engaged in the grouping of languages by vocabulary should not assume that widespread attestation of cognate lexemes, even lexemes whose referents (such as wolves and daughters-in-law) would have been known to prehistoric communities, is necessarily attributable to genetic relationship. While it is no doubt the case that the examples of borrowed lexemes that most readily come to mind are of the *karaoke* and *kangaroo* types (i.e., words appropriated along with new products or technologies or designating previously unfamiliar features of a new environment), we must not forget that, even in our (post)modern speech communities, the terms we apply to some very basic body parts and their functions change with dizzying rapidity. The word *taboo* may have entered our lexicon recently, but the phenomenon is as old as language itself.

Notes

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Abbreviations. The following abbreviations are used: B = brother; D = daughter; dial. = dialect; F = father; gen. = genitive; GK = Greek; H = husband; IE = Indo-European; LAT = Latin; M = mother; OCHSL = Old Church Slavonic; OE = Old English; OHG = Old High German; S = son; SKT = Sanskrit; W = wife; Z = sister.

1. The Caucasian kinship systems will not be described in detail here. The Northwest Caucasian languages employ a handful of lexemes for the core relations (brother, daughter, mother, etc.), out of which most other kin terms are formed by agglutination, e.g., 'father-his-sister-her-son' = 'FZS' (Colarusso 1979). At the same time, the Northwest Caucasian language Abxaz has monomorphemic terms for 'DH or ZH', 'SW or BW', and even 'WZH', in which respect it resembles the South Caucasian system. The Georgian kinship system looks somewhat like that of Russian, in that there are distinct terms for a man's and a woman's in-laws, but this distinction is not found in other South Caucasian languages. In address (not in reference), Georgian speakers make frequent use of kin term mirroring, as where a (classificatory) uncle addresses his niece as *bidzik'o* 'little uncle'. The most distinctive feature of the Northeast Caucasian kinship vocabulary is an extensive set of terms for cousins, e.g., Archi *šekér-t:u-(r)* 'first cousin' (suffix *-r* for female), *i-šekér-t:u-(r)* 'second cousin', *ej-šekér-t:u-(r)* 'third cousin (*četverujurodnaja sestra)'* (Kibrik, Kodzasov, Olovjannikova, and Samedov 1977; cf. Kibrik and Kodzasov 1990:55–56). There is further discussion of Northeast Caucasian kinship terminology in Schulze (n.d.).

2. The Georgian lexeme appears to be decomposable into a root *rdz-* (? < *śdź-* 'milk' [Fähnrich and Sardshweladse 1995:320–21]) and a participial suffix *-al*. The origin of the Svan daughter-in-law term is unknown. Two of the Zan equivalents have been borrowed: *nisa/nusa*; and Mingrelian *xateci/xaceci* < Abxaz *a-taca* 'sister- or daughter-in-

law' (Q'ipšidze 1914:396). Mingrelian *moč'q'udu* is a participle from *č'q'udua* 'give in marriage' (Q'ipšidze 1914:395).

3. Szemerényi (1977:68–69) argues for one of the alternative etymologies, deriving **snusû-* from ***sûnu-sû-* 'son's child-bearer', i.e., 'son's wife'. He believes that the broader denotation of the term noted by Gates (1971) in Homeric Greek would have to be an innovation in that language. We maintain, on the basis of what was said in section 1 about the usage of the daughter-in-law word in the Caucasus, that the broader sense— albeit having 'son's wife' as a prototypical denotatum—was characteristic of the early Indo-European lexeme as well.

4. The Hurrian lexeme might rather represent a borrowing from some Semitic source (cf. Hebrew *nâšîm* 'women'), if the resemblance is not simply fortuitous (cf. Schulze 1997:159; Orel and Stolbova 1995:406).

5. Although both Northwest Caucasian and Northeast Caucasian mark gender-like distinctions at different places in their morphologies, there is nothing remotely similar, formally or structurally, to the classical Indo-European gender system. On Northwest Caucasian gender marking, which is limited to Abxaz-Abaza, and there only expressed in agreement and the choice of pluralizers, see Hewitt (1989) and Lomtatidze and Klychev (1989). On the very different, and far more salient, Northeast Caucasian gender-class system, see, among many other studies, Nichols (1989) and Schulze-Fürhoff (1992).

6. With the possible exception of a Thracian reflex *nusâ*, mentioned by Mann (1984: 1238).

7. The loss of the initial *s* of **snuša* is the expected outcome in Ossetic. The element *–tæ* is believed to represent a stem extension (*narašcenie*) attested in a handful of Ossetic roots (Abaev 1958–89, 2:190).

8. Compare these (obviously more recent) loanwords from Russian into languages of the Cezian subgroup: Cez *t'akan* < *stakan* 'drinking glass', Bezhta *pička* < *spička* 'match' (Bokarev 1967:418; Bokarev and Madieva 1967:469).

9. The Lezgian daughter-in-law words, including the Lezgi dialect form $\chi^w e \chi^w$, are the expected reflexes of a Proto-Lezgian root **sus*; cf. Murkelinskij (1971:132), Mejlanova (1964:70, 343–44).

10. The Archi daughter-in-law word based on *nus-* appears to have been borrowed from a source in the nearby Andian branch. Diakonoff and Starostin (1986:34) analyze Xinalug *c'inás* as a compound **c'i-* 'new' + *nás* < **nusa*, i.e., 'new bride', citing Batsbi *c'inus*, for which they offer the same etymology, as a parallel. This proposal is problematic. First, Xinalug **c'i-* is not attested (the currently used word for 'new' is *t^haza*, a loanword, although **c'i-* is well attested elsewhere in Northeast Caucasian). Second, the derivation of *nás* < **nusa* requires a shift in vocalism **u > a*, for which there is no motivation either in Xinalug itself, nor elsewhere in Northeast Caucasian.

11. It is, at least in principle, possible that all of the Northeast Caucasian daughter-in-law words discussed here were appropriated from a single Iranian dialect. This would presuppose an Iranian **snusa* that, during the process of borrowing, underwent initial-cluster simplification involving loss of the *s* in the northern dialects, and loss of the *n* in Samur Lezgian. We consider this less probable than the multiple-source scenario (see note 13).

12. It should be pointed out that not all experts share Nichols's (1997a) assessment of the degree of contact, or lack of it, between Proto-Indo-European or early Indo-European and Northwest Caucasian. According to Hamp, "I expect that we should relate IE genetically (Kartvelian ablaut) or areally (syllabics, consonant features, and mythology of NW Caucasian) to the Caucasus" (1989:210). Phonological and mytho-logical parallels between early Indo-European and Northwest Caucasian speech com-munities have been discussed most notably in the work of John Colarusso (1981, 1984,

1992b), who, in recent papers, has gone so far as to propose that the two families sprang from a common ancestor ("Proto-Pontic").

13. The two principal trajectories of diffusion of the daughter-in-law lexeme—first, from north of the Caucasus southeastward through Nax, Andian, and, in the form *sus, Lezgian; and, second, southwestward via Northwest Caucasian to the South Caucasian Zan languages—show a striking overlap with the principal routes of Iranian-speaking tribes along the Black Sea and Caspian Sea coasts in the early first millenium B.C.E. (Piotrovskij 1988:71). Consideration should also be taken of recent work on the location of the Proto–Northeastern Caucasian homeland and the probable trajectories followed by the early Northeast Caucasian-speaking groups from the southeastern Caucasus (Alazani River region) to their present locations (Nichols 1997b; Schulze 1998). This could imply separate borrowings of the Iranian daughter-in-law lexeme at distinct times. The Proto-Cezian speech community appears to have been the first to leave the home-land and follow a semicircular route northeastward toward Derbent, then southwest-ward along the Andi Koysu valley to a corner near the Georgian border. They were followed by the Andian and then the Avar speech communities, who may have pushed them further upriver. Andi *nusa*, with final vowel, may have been an early borrowing from Iranian predating the arrival of Nax and Avar speakers in the north-central Caucasus. (The Cezian speakers, already to the south and upland of the Andian group, would not have had direct contact with Iranian.) Nax and Avar *nus*, without the final vowel, could represent a subsequent and independent borrowing, perhaps from early Ossetic. (It would postdate the loss of final -*a* in the Ossetic form *nos-tæ* and predate both the shift of the stem vowel from *u* to *o* and the addition of the suffix -*tæ*.) The Avar form would have been borrowed by the marginal Lezgian language Archi after the latter's arrival in its present location, between the Avar and Lak communities. The Samur Lezgian languages, of course, would have independently borrowed their daughter-in-law lexemes from an Iranian source—perhaps a southern dialect distinct from pre-Ossetic—that still had *s*-mobile. The latter seems likely in view of the fact that kin terms for affines in central and southern Daghestan have almost all been borrowed from Persian, Tat (also an Iranian language), and Turkish, rather than from sources further north (Schulze n.d.).

14. Assertions to the contrary, of course, were routinely made by Soviet ethnologists, who believed that Caucasian societies—like *all* societies—passed through antecedent stages marked by "group marriage," "matriarchy," etc. These claims were motivated by a stadial-evolutionist approach to the study of culture based on nineteenth-century Anglo-American anthropology filtered through the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels and have almost no empirical support outside of that framework.

15. The best overviews in western European languages of the Caucasian ethno-graphic data concerning women, impurity, and married life are Luzbetak (1951) and Charachidzé (1968).

16. Charachidzé (1986:64) exaggerates somewhat when he asserts that "les guerriers de la montagne n'échangent que des femmes ou des morts" (i.e., women in marriage or deaths in vendetta), since relationships between Caucasian tribes were far more multifaceted, and certainly less xenophobic, than he makes them out to be. At an ideological level, however, as reflected in poetry and ballads, it is evident that Caucasian highlanders placed far greater emphasis on their hostile encounters with outsiders than on their peaceful ones, since the former provided especially dramatic occasions for gain-ing honor.

17. In the traditional Caucasian symbolic system, as exemplified by the particularly well-elaborated belief structure of the Georgian mountaineers of Pshavi and Xevsureti, the woman was *sacra* in the old Latin sense of the word (Benveniste 1969:187–92), i.e., fundamentally impure, "chargé[e] d'une souillure ineffaçable" (1969:188) and to be

avoided, yet at the same time essential for communication between the natural and supernatural worlds (cf. the Xevsur female divinity Samdzimari, who brings priests into contact with the world of the gods, and the numerous legends of shrines founded by women, "despite" their impurity [Charachidzé 1968; Tuite 1997]).

18. Džavaxadze and Šinkuba (1987:61) cite the following example to show the extent to which this taboo might apply: A certain Abxaz woman had a brother called Kiasou. Upon marrying, she learned that one of her in-laws bore the same name. The use of the name Kiasou therefore became taboo for her *even when referring to her own brother*, for whom she thereafter used the name Digua.

19. The taboo-motivated replacement of the South Caucasian lexemes denoting 'wolf' and 'daughter-in-law' may have been further motivated by a deeper similarity between their referents in the context of traditional culture. Large carnivores, such as wolves and leopards (Georgian *vepxw-*), were believed by Georgians to live in communities similar in structure to human societies. Hunters did not kill them except in cases of extreme urgency, and should they do so, they mourned the dead animal as though it were human (Charachidzé 1968; Virsaladze 1976). The same intensely felt ambiguity toward wolves and toward in-marrying women, as potentially harmful representatives of alien lineages, may have motivated the linguistic taboos on naming them, at least among ancient South Caucasian speakers.

20. Of the three Zan variants, *nisa* seems almost certainly to have entered via Northwest Caucasian, since it closely approximates the pronunciation of the word believed to have been characteristic of earlier Northwest Caucasian and retained by modern Kabardian (where the vowel transliterated by schwa would have a front mid-high pronunciation before *s* [Colarusso 1992a; p.c. 1998]). The preservation of Laz variants with unrounded vowels, as well as the lexeme *nusaya* for a woman's husband's brother's wife (= Georgian *šil-*), indicates that borrowing from a Northwest Caucasian source preceded the breakup of Zan.

21. As is the case in Northeast Caucasian, the initial sequence *sn-* is incompatible with the phonotactics of the Northwest Caucasian languages (John Colarusso p.c. 1998). The Nax root *nus* has an oblique-case stem *nas-/nes-*, an ablaut pattern characteristic of a sizeable group of inherited Nax nouns, e.g., *butt* 'moon', oblique *batt-/bett-*; *muq* 'barley', oblique *ma:q-/me:q-* (Imnaišvili 1977:126–28). An anonymous reviewer wonders if borrowing from a Nax source might account for the attestation of both rounded and unrounded vowel variants of the Northwest Caucasian, and subsequently South Caucasian, daughter-in-law word. As mentioned in note 20, the unrounded vowel variants would be expected anyway in the light of Northwest Caucasian phonotactics.

22. In other languages of the Andian branch as well, the lexeme *nusa* can be assigned to gender class II (human female) or I (human male), depending on whether reference is made to a daughter-in-law or a son-in-law. The oblique stem is formed according to class, e.g., Botlix, Karata *nusa-t̄:i-* (class II), *nusa-š:u-* (class I).

23. Bezhta *nuzo* 'husband' is probably cognate with Xwarshi (Inxoqwar dialect) *muzo* 'son-in-law' (although the correspondance *m- ~ n-* requires explanation in view of the high stability of initial nasals in Daghestanian). If so, the Proto-Cezian antecedent would be *mež"ə* 'husband (?)', unlikely to be related to the other lexemes discussed here.

24. Matteson (1972:26, item 895), for example, reconstructs a "Proto-Amerindian" root *-ko–ki–ka* 'uncle' based on lexemes from the Arawakan, Panoan, and Tacana groups, among others. See also Payne (1991:424).

25. In many areas of central Brazil, the preferred residence pattern, at least in the initial years of marriage, is uxorilocal. The restrictions imposed on the in-marrying man in Amazonia thus provide a neat parallel to those imposed on an in-marrying woman in the Caucasus.

26. Nash (1982) describes the borrowing of a Warlpiri affinal kin term by neigh-

boring aboriginal Australian peoples, though without discussing the factors contributing to its diffusion.

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