



NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY
HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

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COPULA g^wa: A SKETCH OF A
PORTRAIT**

BASIC RESEARCH PROGRAM

WORKING PAPERS

SERIES: LINGUISTICS
WP BRP 47/LNG/2016

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**THE MEHWEB “ASSERTIVE” COPULA *g^wa*:
A SKETCH OF A PORTRAIT** ²

In this paper, I consider the syntactic property of the Mehweb predicative marker *g^wa*. This is a particle that serves as a finite predicate, supplementing the auxiliary in periphrastic form - a phenomenon attested in a number of East Caucasian languages. What is less common - or at least less documented - are the rules of how the particle is placed in the clause. The aim of the paper is to show that, while it can be placed, expectedly, after the lexical verb or after the focused constituent, it may also appear on a constituent other than the focus.

JEL Classification: Z.

Keywords: East Caucasian, Dargwa, Mehweb, focus, predicative particle, copula, word order.

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² The author is grateful to his consultants in Mehweb for their patience and to Michael Daniel and Nina Dobrushina for useful comments on earlier versions of the paper. The article was prepared within the framework of the Academic Fund Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) in 2015 — 2016 (grant №15-05-0021) and by the Russian Academic Excellence Project «5-100».

1. Introduction

This paper presents a preliminary description of the particle *g^{wa}* in Mehweb, a language of the Dargwa branch of the East Caucasian family.³ The following examples illustrate the use of this marker in a verbal clause (1) and in an equative clause (2):

- (1) *ʒudidi-li ħark^w-li ar-χ-uwe g^{wa}*
under.EL-ATR river-ERG PV-bring.IPFV-CVB.IPFV ASRT
‘The river carries away the lower one!’
(corpus, Molla Rasbaddin goes to the market place: 1.11)
- (2) *hel čudu g^{wa} di-la*
this chudu ASRT I.OBL-GEN
‘This pie is mine.’

The function of *g^{wa}* is not obvious. Etymologically, this particle is likely to originate from the imperative of the verb ‘see’. Magometov (1982: 128) translated *g^{wa}* by the Russian particles *ved’* and *že*, whose semantics is by no means clear. The speakers often suggest that *g^{wa}* is frequent in disputes and emphasizes a claim (“подчёркивает утверждение”). Given this, I will tentatively label it an *assertive* marker. Further research is needed for an exhaustive description of the rules that govern its use. What I will argue are the following two specific points:

- (i) *g^{wa}* is a copula,
- (ii) the position of *g^{wa}* does not necessarily depend on the position of the predicate or of the focus.

The latter makes *g^{wa}* look quite peculiar against the background of what we know about copulas in many East Caucasian languages and in Dargwa languages in particular.

The issue of copula-ness is addressed in Section 2. In Section 3, I discuss the use of the marker in verbal predications and describe syntactic restrictions on its position. Section 4 describes the use of *g^{wa}* in non-verbal predications. The last section presents conclusions.

2. Assertive marker as a copula

Many East Caucasian languages have elements that are often described as copulas or predicative markers, i.e. as markers which are normally added to some lexical material in order to form complete predications (finite, unless these copulas themselves take a subordinate form).⁴ Although their individual morphological and syntactic properties may vary, these elements are clearly distinguishable from verbs. There are typically several predicative markers in a single language: for example, many languages have dedicated predicative markers used in questions in addition to those used in simple declaratives.

³ The general sources on the grammar of Mehweb include Magometov 1982 and Khajdakov 1985. This paper is based on the sentences elicited by the author during the HSE field trip in May 2016 and, to a smaller extent, on the corpus of Mehweb texts recorded by the members of the HSE Mehweb project. Most elicited examples have been checked with no less than two speakers. Note that the principles of glossing generally follow the rules accepted for the HSE Mehweb project, which is why the morphological analysis proposed here may differ from the analysis followed by the author in other papers.

⁴ Some important studies addressing the behaviour of predicative markers in East Caucasian (especially with respect to their interaction with focus) include Harris (2000; 2002) on Udi, Kazenin (2002) on Lak, Sumbatova (2011) and Sumbatova and Lander (2014) on Tanti Dargwa. Forker (2013) discusses question particles which typically represent a kind of predicative markers in these languages. Testelec (1998), Kalinina and Sumbatova (2007) and Belyaev and Forker (2016) describe the influence of the position of some predicative markers on the overall clause structure.

Predicative markers appear both in verbal and non-verbal predications. Below I will illustrate their use with a few examples from Udi, a language belonging to the Lezgian branch of the East Caucasian family, thus being only distantly related to Mehweb.⁵

Predicative markers in Udi are highly grammaticalized and now commonly described as clitics (Harris 2000, 2002). They include personal markers which usually show agreement with the subject (either the intransitive subject or the transitive agent) and the question marker, which only appears in the interrogative contexts and is not discussed here (but see Harris 1992). The following examples illustrate the use of the 1st person plural personal marker =*jan* in a non-verbal predication (3) and in verbal predications (4)-(5):⁶

(3) *jan=al t:e χalg-aun mand-i χalg=jan*
 we=ADD that nation-ABL remain-AOR(PTCP) nation=1PL
 ‘We are the nation that continue (lit. remain from) that nation.’

(4) *me äš-urχo lap mat mand-e=jan*
 this affair-PL(DAT) very surprised remain-PERF=1PL
 ‘We really remained surprised at these facts.’

(5) *pajiz-e dirij-a=jan kašʼ-e*
 autumn-DAT vegetable.garden-DAT=1PL dig-LV:PRS
 ‘In autumn, we dig in the vegetable garden.’

Note that predicative markers may attach not only to the lexical predicate (4) but also to the focused element (5). This can be viewed as a kind of competition for acquiring head properties between the semantic head (the predicate) and the most relevant element of the clause (i.e. focus).⁷

In Dargwa languages, predicative markers are less grammaticalized than in Udi. In particular, they show some properties of autonomous words. Many such markers readily constitute autonomous expressions (such as ‘yes’ or ‘no’). Some of them may take attributive and adverbial morphology and hence are akin to content words.

The primary Mehweb predicative marker is the copula *le-CL*, with a “class” (i.e. gender) marker controlled by the absolutive argument. Its use in non-verbal predications is shown in (6)-(7), while its use in verbal predications is illustrated in (8)-(9).

(6) (corpus, A blind judge: 1.11)
vača ħa-la aħin, di-la le-b
 calf you.sg.OBL-GEN COP.NEG I.OBL-GEN COP-N
 ‘The calf is not yours, (it) is mine.’

(7) (corpus, The Story of Akula Ali, 1.21)
arci-ze-b le-b-re ħa-la daħ-la surat
 money-INTER-N(ESS) COP-N-PST you.sg.OBL-GEN face-GEN picture
 ‘On the coin (lit., money), there was a picture of your face.’

⁵ Here I omit some important details of the Udi system, including the existence of a series of dative clitics and a more verb-like copula-like element used in existential, possessive, and identificational clauses, which also takes a predicative marker.

⁶ The Udi examples are from the corpus of text in the Nizh dialect of Udi collected by Dmitry Ganenkov, Timur Maisak and the author.

⁷ See Lander 2009 for some discussion of competition between semantically obligatory elements and the most relevant elements for the head properties.

- (8) (corpus, A brother and sister: 1.6)
xunuj-s ruzi ĥa-d-ig-es d-aʔ-i-le le-r
 wife.OBL-DAT sister NEG-F1-love.IPFV-INF F1-start.PFV-PST-CVB COP-F
 ‘The wife disliked (her husband’s) sister.’
- (9) (corpus, Two sons: 1.65)
wallahi, k’as le-b q’-o’we
 Allah big.fish COP-N go.IPFV-CVB.IPFV
 ‘My God, a whale is going (here).’

Like in Udi, the Mehweb predicative marker in verbal clauses may follow either the verb or the focused constituent. However, unlike in Udi, the Mehweb copula requires that a verb be in a non-finite form (a participle, the neutral converb, or the infinitive), while finite verb forms do not combine with the predicative marker. In fact, combinations of a copula and a lexical verb look like periphrastic forms, although the issue of monoclausality of these constructions may be tricky.⁸

Turning to the assertive marker *g^{wa}*, it can be shown that it has the distribution of a copula. There are two pieces of evidence for this. First, similarly to *le-CL*, the assertive marker cannot appear in clauses that contain finite verb forms (10).

- (10) a. *doʕhi ar-b-ik-ib (*g^{wa})*
 snow PV-N-fall.PFV-PST ASRT
 ‘The snow fell.’
- b. *mator b-uz-an (*g^{wa})*
 engine N-work.IPFV-PRS ASRT
 ‘The engine is working.’

Second, the assertive marker cannot combine with a copula (11a-b), unless the latter does not appear in a non-finite form, as in (11c). If we assume that *g^{wa}* is a copula, this is explained: a clause cannot contain two copulas.

- (11) a. *dag it derbenti-ze-la w-ak’-i-le le-w (*g^{wa})*
 yesterday that Derbent-INTER-EL m-come.PFV-PST-CVB COP-M ASRT
- b. *dag it derbenti-ze-la w-ak’-i-le g^{wa} (*le-w)*
 yesterday that Derbent-INTER-EL M-come.PFV-PST-CVB ASRT COP-M
- c. *dag it derbenti-ze-la w-ak’-i-le le-w-le g^{wa}*
 yesterday that Derbent-INTER-EL M-come.PFV-PST-CVB COP-M-CVB ASRT
 ‘Yesterday he came from Derbent.’

It is worth mentioning, however, that *g^{wa}* differs from *le-CL* in that it does not take any morphology.

3. Verbal predications

Just like the copula *le-CL*, the assertive marker need not follow the verb but can appear after focused elements:

- (12) a. *nuša-jni g^{wa} kulubi-s remont b-aq’-i-le*
 we-ERG ASRT club-DAT renovation N-do.PFV-PST-CVB
 ‘It was us who made the renovation for the club.’

⁸ See Sumbatova and Lander 2014 for a detailed discussion of this issue in Tanti Dargwa, another Dargwa variety.

- b. *nuša-j-ni kulub-i-s g^{wa} remont b-aq'-i-le*
 we-OBL-ERG club-OBL-DAT ASRT renovation N-do.PF-PST-CVB
 ‘It was the club for which we made the renovation.’

I will distinguish between the wide scope use of *g^{wa}*, where it has a scope over the whole sentence or over the predicate and follows this predicate, and the narrow scope use of *g^{wa}*, where it should follow exactly the focused phrase. In verbal clauses, the wide scope *g^{wa}* is found with the neutral converb (13) and with the infinitive (14)-(15) but not with the participle (cf. the infelicitous (16) with (19) below):⁹

- (13) (corpus, Widow)
q^{we} b-iq'-uwe g^{wa}, ħu ħa-k-i-le ħa-wʔ-iša
 vow N-do.IPFV-CVB.IPFV ASRT you.sg NEG-bring.PFV-PST-CVB NEG-M.be-FUT.1/2
 ‘I swear I will take you as a wife.’
- (14) (corpus, Widow)
durʔa uh-ub-i-li derq^w uh-ub-i-s
 losing M.become.PFV-AOR-ATR-ERG winning M.become.PFV-AOR-ATR-DAT
ca dus-li quli-w w-at-ul-le uz-es g^{wa}
 one year-ERG house.LOC-M(ESS) M-put.IPFV-PTCP-ADVZ M.work.IPF-INF ASRT
 ‘The one who will lose will work as a servant for the one who will win, for one year.’
- (15) *ħad hete ħunt'a-l qul-le-šu uʕq'-es g^{wa}*
 you.sg.DAT there(LAT) red-ATR house-PL-AD(LAT) M.go.PFV-INF ASRT
 ‘You should go there, to the red houses.’
- (16) **musa-ni poʕroʕm b-oʕrʔ-aq-ib-i g^{wa}*
 Musa-ERG glass N-break.PFV-CAUS-AOR-ATR ASRT
 ‘Musa broke the glass.’

If the assertive marker follows a constituent other than the predicate, the choice of the verb form is less restricted. In particular, in this construction not only the converbal form (17) and the infinitive (18) but also the participial form (19) are allowed:

- (17) *maħmudi-ni g^{wa} b-ilt'-uwe heš surat*
 Mahmud-ERG ASRT N-take.out.IPFV-CVB.IPFV that picture
 ‘It was Mahmud who is drawing that picture.’
- (18) *rasuj-ni g^{wa} nu k-es*
 Rasul.OBL-ERG ASRT I bring.PFV-INF
 ‘It is Rasul who will bring me here.’
- (19) *musa-ni g^{wa} poʕroʕm b-oʕrʔ-aq-ib-i*
 Musa-ERG ASRT glass N-break.PFV-CAUS-AOR-ATR
 ‘It was Musa who broke the glass.’

In the examples (17)-(19) we observe the assertive copula following focused NPs. (20)-(22) demonstrate that *g^{wa}* may follow other kinds of constituents, such as adverbs and embedded clauses:

⁹ Presumably, the assertive marker should combine with the participle where it functions as the head of the nominal predicate in a nominal clause. However, I lack relevant examples.

- (20) *išbari g^{wa} nuni praznik b-aq'-ib-i/ b-aq'-i-le*
 today ASRT I.ERG feast N-do.PFV-AOR-ATR N-do.PFV-CVB
 ‘It was today when I organized the feast.’
- (21) *it q'aju g^{wa} w-aš-uwe*
 that slowly ASRT M-go.IPFV-CVB.IPFV
 ‘He is moving SLOWLY.’
- (22) *musa rasuj-šu quli w-ak'-ib-i-jake g^{wa}*
 Musa Rasul.OBL-AD(LAT) house.LOC(LAT) M-come.PFV-AOR-ATR-CVB.ANT ASRT
χamis g-ub-le
 Khamis see.PFV-AOR-CVB
 ‘After MUSA’S COMING TO RASUL, he saw Khamis.’

Still, we do find restrictions on what can be focused by means of *g^{wa}*.¹⁰ For example, the assertive marker cannot immediately follow postpositional objects; rather, it should occur after the whole postpositional phrase:

- (23) a. **heč' dubur-li-če g^{wa} aqu-r dirig^w xa?*
 that mountain-OBL-SUP(LAT) ASRT up-NPL(ESS) cloud appear
d-uh-ub-le
 NPL-become.PFV-AOR-CVB
- b. *heč' dubur-li-če aqu-r g^{wa} dirig^w xa?*
 that mountain-OBL-SUPER over-NPL(ESS) ASRT cloud appear
d-uh-ub-le
 NPL-become.PFV-AOR-CVB
 ‘It is over that mountain that the cloud appeared.’

Further, the assertive marker cannot be embedded in an NP. In particular, it cannot occur immediately after an adjective attribute (24), an attributive demonstrative (25) and a quantifier (26) when they precede the head noun:

- (24) a. **ħunt'a-l g^{wa} burχa-li-če-r karβ-ube*
 red-ATR ASRT roof-OBL-SUPER-NPL(ESS) stone-PL
- b. *ħunt'a-l burχa-li-če-r g^{wa} karβ-ube*
 red-ATR roof-OBL-SUPER-NPL(ESS) ASRT stone-PL
 ‘There are stones on the RED roof.’
- (25) a. **heš g^{wa} β^wet'i-če-r d-aqil inc-be d-urh-uwe*
 that ASRT tree-SUPER-NPL(ESS) NPL-much apple-PL NPL-become.IPFV-CVB.IPFV
- b. *heš β^wet'i-če-r g^{wa} d-aqil inc-be d-urh-uwe*
 that tree-OBL-SUPER-NPL(ESS) ASRT NPL-much apple-PL NPL-become.IPFV-CVB.IPFV
 ‘There are many apples growing on THAT tree.’
- (26) a. **har-il g^{wa} urši-li-s midal g-i-le*
 each-ATR ASRT boy-OBL-DAT medal give.PFV-AOR-CVB
- b. *har-il urši-li-s g^{wa} midal g-i-le*
 each-ATR boy-OBL-DAT ASRT medal give.PFV-AOR-CVB
 ‘He gave a medal to EACH boy.’

¹⁰ I hypothesize that these restrictions hold for the neutral copula as well, but I lack the necessary data.

One natural way to focus an attribute is to place the assertive copula after the whole NP. Alternatively, one can split the description of a participant into two NPs with a semantic attribute being nominalized and taking its own case marker. Since the semantic attribute itself constitutes a complete NP in this construction, it becomes possible to place *g^{wa}* immediately after it (27). Notably, for absolutive NPs this may result in the illusion of the embedment of the assertive marker in an NP (28), but this is likely to be a consequence of the fact that absolutive NPs do not receive overt case marking, so the two adjoined absolutive NPs may look as a single phrase.

- (27) *ħunt'a-j-če-r* *g^{wa}* *burχa-li-če-r* *варк-убе*
 red-OBL-SUPER-NPL(ESS) ASRT roof-OBL-SUPER-NPL(ESS) stone-PL
 'There are stones on the RED roof.'
 (Lit., 'There are stones on the red one, on the roof.')

- (28) *b-urq'-il* *g^{wa}* *bartbisu* *iχi-ni* *ħa-s:-i-le*
 N-old-ATR ASRT carpet that-ERG NEG-take.PFV-AOR-CVB
 'He did not buy the OLD carpet.'

Further, *g^{wa}* cannot occur within syntactic islands. For example, it cannot be embedded in a coordination construction (29) or in a converbal clause (30).

- (29) **rasuj-ni=ra* *g^{wa}* *nu-ni=ra* *past'an* *b-erb-u-le*
 Rasul.OBL-ERG=ADD ASRT I-ERG=ADD vegetable.garden N-dig.PFV-AOR-CVB
 'RASUL and I digged the vegetable garden.'

- (30) a. **b-urq'-il* *bartbisu* *g^{wa}* *b-ic-i-le*,
 N-old-ATR carpet ASRT N-sell.PFV-AOR-CVB
d-aqil *arc* *d-aq'-i-le*
 NPL-much money NPL-do.PFV-AOR-CVB
 b. *b-urq'-il* *bartbisu* *b-ic-i-le* *g^{wa}*,
 N-old-ATR carpet N-sell.PFV-PST-CVB ASRT
d-aqil *arc* *d-aq'-i-le*
 NPL-much money NPL-do.PFV-AOR-CVB
 'After selling THE OLD CARPET, he got much money.'

Unlike most Dargwa varieties, Mehweb has developed a biabsolutive construction¹¹. In this construction, a transitive verb appears as a converb and requires a copula but the actor appears in the absolutive, same as the undergoer. This construction is possible with *g^{wa}* (31a-b), yet the assertive copula cannot occur between the P-argument and the converb (31c).¹² This contrasts the biabsolutive construction with a simple combination of the converb with a copula and suggests that this pattern contains an embedded converbal clause which is an island, at least with respect to *g^{wa}*:

- (31) a. *musa* *kaš* *d-uk-uwe* *g^{wa}*
 Musa kasha NPL-eat.IPFV-CVB.IPFV ASRT
 'Musa is eating kasha.'

¹¹ Biabsolutive (binominative) constructions are quite widespread in the East Caucasian family, but are not typical for the Dargwa branch, where they have been previously only reported for Itsari Dargwa (Sumbatova and Mutalov 2003). See Forker (2012) and Gagliardi et al. (2014) for surveys of some properties of this kind of constructions as well as for a discussion of their diversity and possible analyzes.

¹² The same set of facts is observed for the simple copula *le*-CL.

- b. *musa g^{wa} kaš d-uk-uwe*
 Musa ASRT kasha NPL-eat.IPFV-CVB.IPFV
 ‘It is Musa who is eating kasha.’
- c. **musa kaš g^{wa} d-uk-uwe*
 Musa kasha ASRT NPL-eat.IPFV-CVB.IPFV
 Intended ‘It is kasha that Musa is eating.’

With clausal complements, the situation is less obvious: some (but by no means all) speakers allow positioning *g^{wa}* within a clausal complement (32)-(33).

- (32) *%it kaltuška g^{wa} d-elʔ^w-eʕs d-aʔ-i-le*
 that potato ASRT NPL-seed.IPFV-INF NPL-start.PFV-PST-CVB
 ‘She started to plant potatoes.’
- (33) *%heš k^wiha g^{wa} b-eq^w-es aħmadi-ni di-ze*
 that ram ASRT N-cut. PFV-INF Ahmad-ERG I.OBL-INTER(LAT)
hari b-aq’-i-le
 request N-do.PFV-AOR-CVB
 ‘Ahmed asked me to cut this ram.’

While the placement of *g^{wa}* after a constituent other than the predicate usually indicates the focus shift, even in this case it does not need to follow the constituents that are (likely to be) focused. Consider the following example:

- (34) *ħadižati-ni=ra heš kung g^{wa} b-elč-u-we*
 Khadizhat-ERG=ADD that book ASRT N-read.PFV-AOR-CVB
 ‘Even Khadizhat has read that book.’

In (34) one can hypothesize that the focused constituent is the ergative NP, since it is marked with the additive clitic meaning ‘even’, but the assertive copula follows the absolutive argument. These examples suggest that focus is possibly not the only factor which determines the position of *g^{wa}*. More generally, we can conclude that in verbal clauses the grammatical position of *g^{wa}* should be determined neither by the predicate nor by focus.

4. Non-verbal predications

Non-verbal predications include existential clauses and non-existential clauses with non-verbal predicates (nouns, adjectives, numerals, demonstratives, etc.). In Mehweb, the latter allow the absence of a copula while the former normally do not.¹³ The assertive copula may appear in both types.

(35)-(36) show examples of the use of *g^{wa}* in existential predications that assert the existence of entities or events described by an NP. Note that, in Mehweb, this type includes possessive predication (37).

¹³ An important exception is the use of NPs denoting events, which allow the absence of copula, as in (i):

- (i) *išbari meh^we-b beħ*
 today in.Mehweb-N(ESS) wedding
 ‘There is wedding in Mehweb today.’

- (35) *ɸuni-b g^{wa} muzej*
 in.Gunib-N(ESS) ASRT museum
 ‘There is a museum in Gunib!’
- (36) *išb^{ari} meħ^we-b beɸ g^{wa}*
 today in.Megeb-N(ESS) wedding ASRT
 ‘There is wedding in Mehweb today!’
- (37) *pat’imat-la q^{’wa}’l g^{wa}*
 Patimat-GEN cow ASRT
 ‘Patimat has a cow!’

The assertive copula may also be found in clauses emphasizing the existence of the already known entities (sometimes in combination with the converbal form of the copula; cf. (38)) or describing the location of the already known entities (39):

- (38) *meħ^we (le-b-le) g^{wa}*
 in.Mehweb COP-N-CVB ASRT
 ‘Mehweb does exist!’
- (39) *musa ɸuni-w g^{wa}*
 Musa in.Gunib-M(ESS) ASRT
 ‘Musa is in Gunib.’

(40)-(41) show examples of the use of *g^{wa}* in clearly non-existential predications.

- (40) (corpus, Two sons)
heš-di hum-be g^{wa} ha^{’b} dek’ar-i
 that-PL road-PL ASRT three different-ATR
 ‘These roads are three different (roads).’
- (41) (corpus, Molla Rasbaddin and the neighbour’s cauldron, 1.5)
ħa-la k’unk’ul-li-ʔini b-aq’-ib-il k’unk’ur g^{wa} iš
 you.sg.OBL-GEN cauldron-ERG N-do.PFV-AOR-ATR cauldron ASRT that
 ‘This (cauldron) is the cauldron originating from (lit., made by) your cauldron.’

At least if the assertive marker follows the demonstrative, their combination may be embedded within the alleged subject phrase. In (42) the phrase *heš g^{wa}* ‘that is’ is embedded within the relative clause construction ‘the house which Rasul built’.

- (42) *rasuj-ni [he.š g^{wa}] b-aq’-ib-i qali*
 Rasul.OBL-ERG that ASRT N-do.PFV-PST-ATR house
 ‘The house that Rasul built is that one.’

Negative non-verbal predications in Mehweb contain a dedicated negative copula. If *g^{wa}* is needed, this copula appears in a converbal form:

- (43) *it učitil aħi-je g^{wa}*
 that teacher COP.NEG-CVB ASRT
 ‘He is not a teacher!’

For equative clauses, determining what is the predicate may be a complex issue because of the formal similarity between the subject and the nominal predicate. However, one can find indirect evidence for the predicate status of one of the noun phrases based on various semantic and syntactic tests. By using these tests, it is also possible to show that, like in verbal predications, here, too, the assertive marker does not have to immediately follow the syntactic predicate.

First, if a nominal phrase in an equative clause includes a reflexive bound by the other part of the clause, it is likely that it is a predicate and the reflexive is bound by the subject. Curiously, *g^{wa}* need not adjoin such a nominal predicate:

- (44) *šamil g^{wa} sune-s-al w-eʔ*
 Šamil ASRT SELF.OBL-DAT-EMPH M-boss
 ‘Šamil is a boss of himself.’

Second, in an equative clause, an expression with a true distributive quantifier arguably should not function as a predicate (Partee 1987; but see Arkadiev and Lander 2013 for counterevidence). Yet, *g^{wa}* is possible with the quantified NP:

- (45) *har insan g^{wa} sune-s-al uħna-w rasul ħamzatow*
 every person ASRT SELF.OBL-DAT-EMPH M.inside-M(ESS) Rasul Gamzatov
 ‘Everyone is Rasul Gamzatov (a famous Daghestanian writer) deep inside.’

Finally, if an equative clause contains an adjunct, the assertive copula may follow this adjunct:

- (46) *anwar meħwe-ja uškuj-ħe-w g^{wa} učitil*
 Anwar in.Mehweb-GEN school.OBL-IN-M(ESS) ASRT teacher
 ‘Anwar is a teacher at the Mehweb school.’

Thus, the assertive marker need not follow the predicate. At the same time, it is not obvious that *g^{wa}* always follows the focus. For instance, in the elicited dialog (47), *g^{wa}* is attached to the first part of the clause ‘Šamil is a singer’, while its focus is constituted by its second part. Also, in answers to content questions, *g^{wa}* is by default attached to the part of the utterance which does not contain new information, as in (48) and (49).

- (47) *šamil učitil. — aħin! šamil g^{wa} dalaj uk'-an-či!*
 Šamil teacher COP.NEG Šamil ASRT song M.say.IPFV-HAB-AG
 ‘Šamil is a teacher. — No! Šamil is a singer!’

- (48) *meħwe-la χ^walajli či-ja? — meħwe-la χ^walajli g^{wa} Israpil*
 in.Mehweb-GEN chief who-INTRG in.Mehweb-GEN chief ASRT Israpil
 ‘Who is the head of Mehweb? — The head of Mehweb is Israpil.’

- (49) *israpil i-ja? — israpil g^{wa} meħwe-la χ^walajli*
 Israpil who-INTRG Israpil ASRT Mehweb-GEN chief
 ‘Who is Israpil? — Israpil is the head of Mehweb.’

Thus, we find that, in non-verbal predications as well as in verbal predications, the assertive copula does not necessarily follow the predicate and the focused element.

5. Conclusion

To sum up, the assertive marker *g^{wa}* has the distribution of a copula (though lacking non-finite forms which are available for the copula), but its position does not fit into the picture that is usually documented in East Caucasian languages in that it does not need to be linked to the predicate and the focus. At the same time, we observe some constraints on its distribution in complex constructions (in particular, its reluctance to occur in syntactic islands), which may be, however, subject to variation. I conclude that more research is needed both to approach the functions of *g^{wa}* and to understand the principles that govern its syntactic position.

Further, it seems that our assumed knowledge of the principles regarding other kinds of predicative markers is overestimated. Indeed, while the idea of focus-determined positions of copulas is important for East Caucasian, I am aware of no detailed corpus-based study of the position of predicative markers for any language of the family. Given the fact that during the last years the amount of corpora of East Caucasian languages has been increasing, one may hope that such studies will soon appear.

Moreover, as I emphasized in Section 2, predicative markers may differ in their behavior, both within a single language and cross-linguistically. For East Caucasian, we need a more elaborated intragenetic typology of predicative markers. The present paper is to be considered a contribution to this line of investigation.

Abbreviations

| | |
|-------|--|
| 1/2 | locutive agreement |
| ABL | ablative |
| AD | 'near' (localization) |
| ADD | additive particle |
| ADVZ | adverbializer |
| AG | agent nominalization |
| ANT | anterior converb |
| AOR | aorist |
| ASRT | assertive |
| ATR | attributivizer |
| CAUS | causative |
| COP | copula |
| CVB | general converb |
| DAT | dative |
| EL | elative (orientation) |
| EMPH | emphatic (particle) |
| ERG | ergative |
| ESS | essive (orientation) |
| F | feminine (agreement class) |
| F1 | feminine (additional agreement class, unmarried women) |
| FUT | future |
| GEN | genitive |
| HAB | habitual |
| INF | infinitive |
| INTER | 'in a substance' or 'between' (localization) |

| | |
|-------|------------------------------------|
| INTJ | interjection |
| INTRG | interrogative |
| IPF | imperfect |
| IPFV | imperfective (verb stem) |
| LAT | lative (orientation) |
| LOC | default localization |
| LV | light verb |
| M | masculine (agreement class) |
| N | neuter (agreement class) |
| NEG | negative |
| NPL | non-human plural (agreement class) |
| OBL | oblique (nominal stem) |
| PERF | perfect |
| PL | plural |
| PRS | present |
| PST | past |
| PTCP | participle |
| PV | preverb |
| SELF | reflexive/logophoric pronoun |
| SUPER | 'on' (localization) |

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