

Gender, Class, and Age in the Daghestanian Highlands: Towards a Unified Account of the

Morphology of Agreement in Lak.

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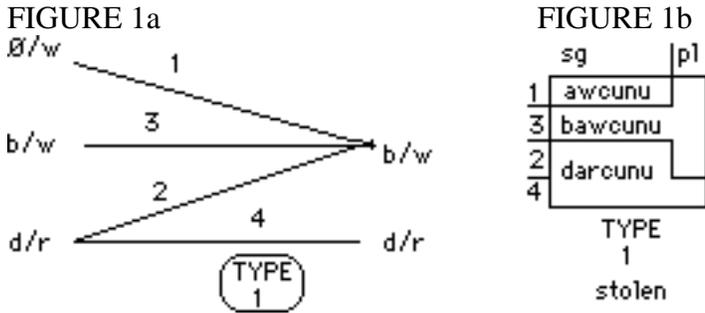
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Systems of grammatical noun classes distinguish most of the Northeast Caucasian languages (except Udi, Lezgi, Aġul, and Southern Tabassaran) from other languages of the Caucasus (except in a limited way Abxaz-Abaza; cf. Comrie 1981:208-209) and suggest links to languages to the Ancient Near East (cf. Nichols 1992:143). The class system of Lak is both fairly typical of Daghestan and has been sufficiently studied that Corbett (1991:24-26, 154, et passim) takes it as representative of Northeast Caucasian, an opinion shared with Caucasologists such as Xajdakov (1980:204-13). Despite the amount of work that has been done on Lak class, however, there are still issues worthy of attention, in particular because the literary language is demonstrably in a state of flux, there are areas in need of more detailed treatment, and there are statements in the literature that are contradictory. Among the questions in need of further study are the following: the number of classes in Lak, the basis of class assignment to nouns (if any), and patterns of syncope and their relation to the question of markedness relations. In this paper I intend to discuss the number of classes in Lak and the semantics and markedness of class and their relation to syncope.

The first point to be clarified is the terminological question of class versus gender. Like most Caucasologists, Xajdakov (1980:204) makes the distinction that gender (*rod*) is formal while class (*klass*) is based on lexical meaning. As has been pointed out by scholars such as, e.g., Harris (1978:58-61), Nichols (1992:127), and Corbett (1991:146), however, such distinctions as are actually difficult to maintain consistently, and it is certainly the case that in Lak there is an intersection between lexically based and apparently arbitrary agreement-class assignment. I shall continue to use the terms Class 1, Class 2, Class 3, and Class 4 to refer to the traditionally recognized agreement classes of Lak, since these have become well established in both the specialized and general linguistic literature, but I shall refer to the collective set of agreement classes

as the gender system or the agreement system. When it is necessary to disambiguate, I shall use the terms *agreement class*, *target gender*, and *controller gender* as defined in Corbett (1991:147-154).

For purposes of the description of Lak, an agreement class corresponds to each of the four traditional relationships as portrayed by the lines in Figure 1a (based on Corbett 1991:154). Figure 1b contains the same information in a format emphasizing syncretisms).



These four relationships also correspond to Corbett's *controller genders* (equivalent to Nichols' (1992:125) *gender*), i.e. the number of feature specifications for nouns necessary to generate the correct agreement patterns. The term *target genders* (equivalent to Nichols' (1992:125) *concord subclass*) refers to the number of morphological distinctions marked on agreeing words.¹ In these terms, the traditional description of Lak has a total of five target genders/concord subclasses -- three in the singular and two in the plural, although we shall see that in fact there are two intersecting agreement systems that can produce as many as six target genders, i.e. three in each number. On the other hand, it will turn out that the number of controller genders can be reduced to three.

Table One illustrates various realizations of the markers for the four sets of class agreement markers:

SET 1

	Prefixal	Non-prefixal	Infixal				
subset			a	b	c	d	e
1 sg	Ø-	-w(-)	-j-	-Ø-	-Ø-	-Ø-	-w-
3 sg/123pl	b-	-w(-)	-w-	-m-	-w-	-Ø-	-pp-
24 sg/4pl	d-	-r(-)	-r-	-n-	-l-	-l-	-rd-

SET 2

	deictic
1 sg	-ma(-)
234 sg	-mu(r/-) ²
1234pl	-mi(-)

SET 3a	SET 3	SET 3b
deictic	oblique	characteristic
pro/adj	inflectional	adjectival (-ssa)
1 sg	-na-	
234 sg	-ni-	
12 pl	-nna-	1sg 12pl
34 pl	-nnu-	234sg 34 pl

SET 4a	SET 4	SET 4b
oblique	pronominal	mixed
pronominal		adj/pro
1sg1234pl	-a(-) -Ø/u(-)	1234sg
234sg	-i(-)	1234pl

TABLE ONE

Set 1 markers occur in all parts of speech except pronouns. The other three sets are characteristic of pronouns but also occur in the derivation of some adjectives, which take suffixes of pronominal origin. The choice of infixal set 1 markers is conditioned in part phonologically and in part morphophonemically: the prefixal set represents the underlying form, the non-prefixal subset represents the basic variant, which can occur before a vowel, a consonant, or word-finally. Infixal subset 1a is limited to intervocalic position in numerals, 1b occurs after a nasal, subset 1c after /l/ except the case-endings in /l/ of the reflexive pronoun *cuwa*, which take 1d, while 1e occurs

intervocally in pronouns and adverbs when there are two underlying class markers in juxtaposition, which on the surface is realized intervocally. Set 2 occurs in both the nominative and (followed by set 3) in the oblique of what we can call deictic adjectivals ('that which is'), i.e. as a terminal or non-terminal suffix. Set 3 occurs as the non-terminal extender for the oblique cases of pronominals and substantivized adjectivals, but in the case of adjectivals, the pattern of class agreement varies as set 3a if the suffix is deictic (set 2) or 3b if the suffix is not.³ Set 4 occurs in certain types of pronouns and adjectives.

Table Two illustrates typical agreeing numerals, adverbs and verbs for each of the four classes in the singular:

Class 1:	K'ija ars šawa Ø -ussar	two sons are at home
Class 2:	K'ira ššarssa šarda d ussar	two women are at home
Class 3:	K'iva ssu šappa b ussar	two sisters are at home
Class 4:	K'ira xxälcu šarda d ussar	two spiders are at home

TABLE TWO

Taken as a whole, the four sets of Lak class markers can combine in various ways to yield ten types of agreement patterns. The first of these, combining Set 1 prefixal and non-prefixal markers was illustrated in Figure One. The remaining nine are illustrated in figure Two:⁴

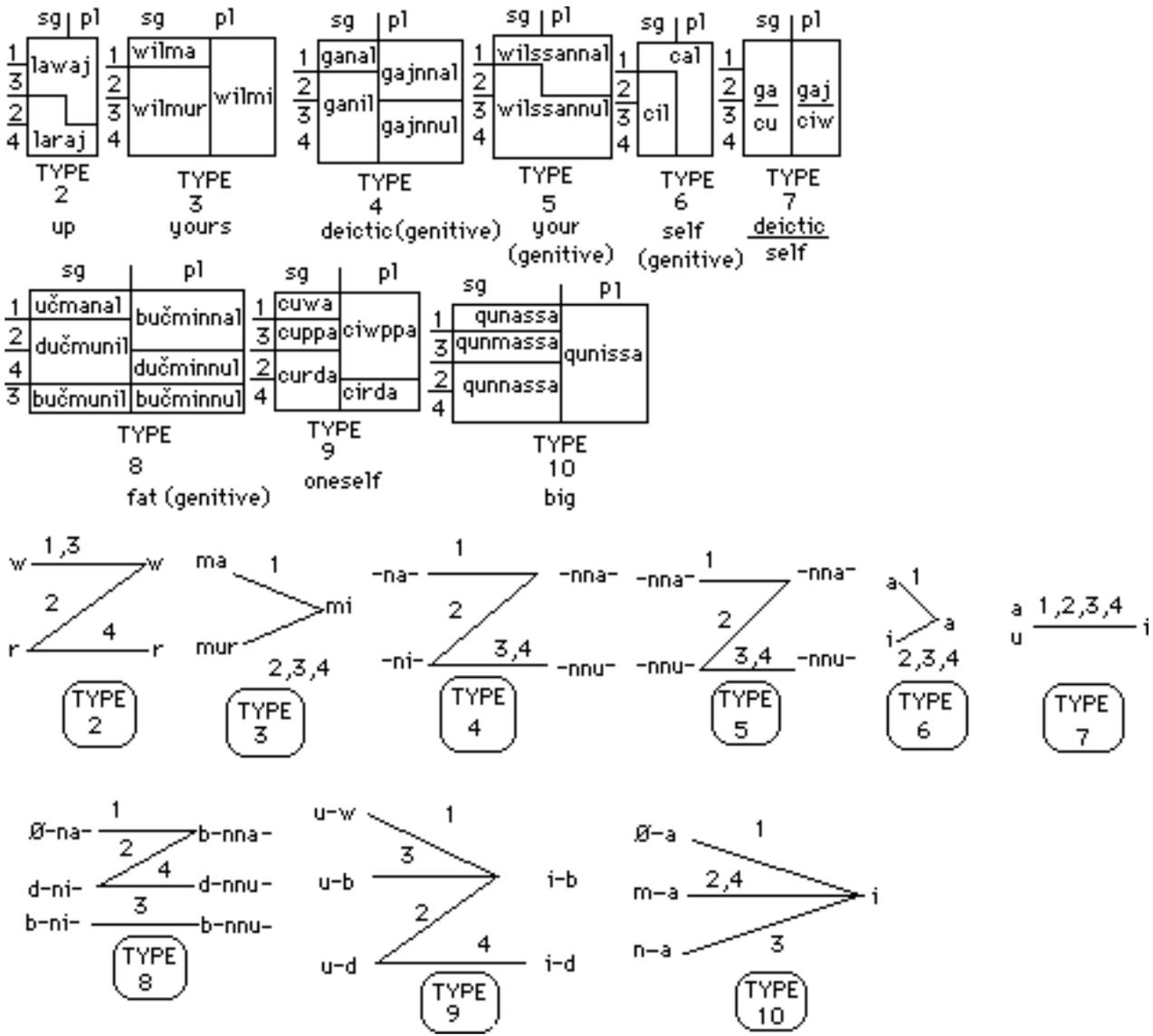


FIGURE TWO

The Types of Figure Two correspond to the Sets of Table Two in the following manner. Type 2 illustrates non-prefixal Set 1 markers alone, Type 3 illustrates suffixal Set 2 markers, Type 4 illustrates Set 3a plus 4b⁵, Type 5 illustrates Set 3b, Type 6 illustrates Set 4a, Type 7 illustrates Set 4b.⁶ Types 8, 9, and 10 illustrate combinations of Set 1 and other markers: Type 8 combines prefixal Set 1 with Sets 2 and 3a, Type 9 combines infixal Set 1e and Set 4b, and Type 10 has infixal Set 1b combined with Set 4b in the singular but only 4b in the plural. As can be seen from this account, the interaction of the different types of class markers results in a system that is considerably more complicated than that portrayed by Figure 1 alone, as is usually the case in accounts of the Lak agreement system. Moreover, the agreement pattern illustrated by Type 8 illustrates that Lak can

have as many as six target genders, due to the intersection of prefixal and pronominal class markers in certain types of oblique adjectives. We shall now address the question of the number of controller genders.

Although Lak is usually described as having four noun classes, arguments have been adduced for raising the number to five or reducing it to three. The first description of Lak and the source for many subsequent descriptions is Uslar (1890:9-16), who defines Class I for male sentient beings, e.g. *ars* 'son', *adimina* 'man' *ah'maq* 'fool', *qqač̣a-ǰ̣* 'bandit', *zal* 'god', *mala-ǰik* 'angel' (despite the fact that according to Islam angels are genderless), Class II for female or mature female humans, Class III for all other animates although many inanimates also belong, and Class IV for the remaining inanimates. Add to this the few insects attested as Class 4, and the hierarchical diagram of Figure 4 can be drawn:⁷

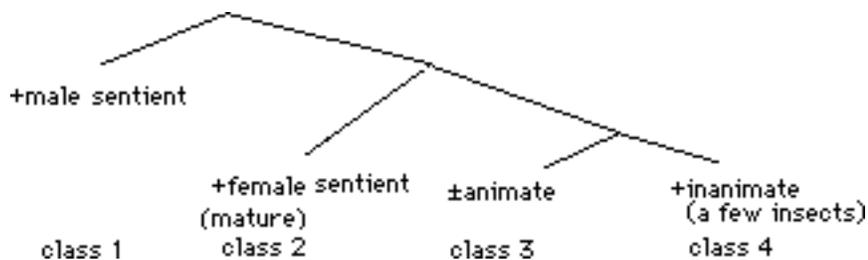


FIGURE THREE

It was Žirkov (1955) who first suggested that *qqatta* 'room/house' constitutes a fifth class because its agreement pattern is like Class 3 in the singular but Class 4 in the plural (i.e., the mirror image of Class 2), e.g. *qqatta bur* 'the room/house is' but *qqatri dur* 'the houses are'. There are two arguments against treating this agreement pattern as constituting a fifth noun class, i.e. a fifth gender. First, the word *qqatta* by itself means 'room' or 'house' in the sense of 'one-room house'. In the plural, however, *qqatri* actually has two agreement patterns. In the meaning 'rooms', it remains Class 3 and only in the sense of 'house/houses' as a collection of rooms does it take Class 4. Thus, one can have both *qqatri bur* 'the rooms are' and *qqatri dur* 'the house/s is/are' (Akiev 1964:56). This situation is not unlike that of other nouns that take different agreement patterns depending on their meanings, e.g. *bak* 'is Class 4 in the concrete meanings 'head, source,height' but Class 3 as the more abstract 'intelligence, quantifier', *za* 'thing' takes Class 4 agreement when referring to an act or concrete object with verbs such as *dan* 'do', *dukan* 'eat', but Class 3 when referring to thought

or speech with verbs such as *buwč'in*, 'understand', *busan* 'tell', *č'ap'i* Class 3 'leaf' Class 4 'sheet of paper', etc.⁸ Thus *qqatta* is not unlike other nouns that change class depending on meaning. A second argument is adduced in Corbett (1991:170), who treats *qqatta* as an example of what he calls *inquorate gender*, which he defines as genders postulated on an insufficient quantity of nouns, which should instead be lexically marked as exceptions. He goes on to cite Dee Ann Holisky's work on Tsova-Tush (Bac'bi), in which she shows that the eight genders traditionally ascribed to that language can be reduced to five, the remaining three being inquorate. Of particular interest is the inquorate status of Class 7 in Tsova-Tush, which contains fifteen items, all of which are body parts, ten of them paired and four more related to binary symmetry.

The two arguments against treating *qqatta* as representing a fifth agreement class can also be brought to bear on the question of the treatment of Class 2. Already in Uslar's time (his material was collected in the 1860's from a speaker from Vicxí (Vic'qi)), Class 3 was used for and by young women and the use of Class 2 for them was regarded as an insult. Moreover, according to Uslar it was considered inappropriate for a bride to switch to Class 2 immediately after marriage but ridiculous for a woman who already had a child to continue to use Class 3 when speaking of herself. This situation has become even more restricted in the century and a half since Uslar gathered his data. According to Žirkov (1955), the next full attempt at a Lak grammar after Uslar (1890), only a few words such as *ššarssa* 'woman' and *ninu* 'mother' are still in Class 2. All other women, including those gaining their own livelihood, are in Class 3. This process is described in some detail in Xajdakov (1966, 1980) and Schulze (1992). Xajdakov (1963:50) writes that the use of Class 2 outside the immediate family is considered inappropriate, at least for some terms, and, Schulze (1992) cites the use of Class 2 for *ššarssa* 'woman' as pejorative according to his informants. My own informant from Kaja gave essentially the same information as Xajdakov. In some Lak dialects, Class 2 has been eliminated altogether either by merging with class 3 as in Arakúl' (Düqqul; Xajdakov 1963:50) or Class 4 as in Balxár (Barqal), which Xajdakov (1966) equates with an earlier stage in Lak. Other instances of Class 4 female humans include Vicxí (Vic'qi) *c'ikuri* 'bride' and the archaism *ssurmux'x'u* 'female slave'. The list given as Table Three consists of those words defined as Class 2 in Xajdakov and Žirkov (1962):

CLASS 2

ninu	mother
aba	mother [Šadni dialect]
dada	mommy
mjammal dada	grandmother (paternal)
qunnabawa	mother, grandmother
amu	grandmother (m)
nittilssu	aunt
ššar	wife
ššarssa	woman, wife
halmaxššar	bride, wife ('lover' in Uslar)
ttuššar	non-first wife (archaic)
kurč'uššar	widow
ššaššar	widow raising children alone
č'axxuššar	neighbor
qamaluššar	guest
ššaqiriššarssa	villager
jaruššarssa	avar woman
zuziššarssa	worker
laššar	midwife
qqari	old woman
susulu	widow
buwč'u	fortune-teller (archaic)
palrutu	fortune-teller (archaic)
japaluq	beggar woman (archaic)
lut'u	sorceress, witch (Class 4 in Uslar)
qqah'wa	prostitute (Class 4 in Uslar)
čuntuka	slattern
akka	fool

ganzaw	fatso
harzaqus	chatterbox,busybody
suxasu[lu]	female evil spirit that smothers sleepers (Class 4 in Uslar)

TABLE THREE

A number of other nouns have the possibility of Class 2 agreement based on semantics and context. Of the ten possible combinations of Lak's traditional four agreement classes, all but two (2+4 and 2+3+4) are attested. The list given as Table Four illustrates all the attested combinatorial variants of Lak agreement classes in Žirkov and Xajdakov (1962).

CLASS 1&2

č'uč'ala	weeder
[janna]ttisu	tailor/seamstress
jannaššaššu	weaver
muhisu	the parent of a child's spouse
čuttuğäri	wrinkle-face
lingwist	linguist

CLASS 1&3

örč'	son (1), child (3)
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CLASS 1&4

abija-dizu	tinsmith (1), soldering iron (4)
manğaw	loathsome person (1), glanders [purulent disease](4)

CLASS 1&2&3

mačča	relative
qqawt'ala	dancer
režissër	director

CLASS 1&3&4

bak'	leader (1), intelligence, quantifier (cattle, people) (3), head, source, height (4)
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CLASS 1&2&3&4

kurč'u	widower(1), widow(2), barren cow (3), fallow land (4)
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CLASS 2&3

qunmur	older (ssu sister)
žalin	bride/young wife
bika	wife of khan/beg; lazybones
qqurtma	magician, trickster, whale
xxurttama	werewolf/vampire
učitel'nica	teacher

CLASS 3&4

qqattabax'u	charlady (3), rubbish (4)
za	thing

TABLE FOUR

Although the majority of nouns in Classes 1, 3, and 4 are bound to their classes and establish clear agreement categories that are inherent in the stem rather than determined by context, in the instance of Class 2 the nouns bound to that class are limited to six or seven kinship terms, derivatives based on those terms, and about a dozen nouns all of which have sociologically or lexically negative connotations. Almost the same number occur as nouns that can belong to more than one agreement class. Moreover, Class 2 has no morphemic markers peculiar to it. In Standard Lak it always uses the same markers as Class 4 in the singular and Class 1 in the plural. Thus, Class 2 can be treated as a pragmatic, affective or pejorative device that utilizes Class 4 agreement in the singular and Class 1 agreement in the plural to signal ontological human (or humanoid in the case of spiritual beings, etc.) female gender and possibly sociological status, i.e. mature age, in a manner not unlike the use of class differences to signal differences of gender (e.g. *örč'*), animacy (*bak'*, *abija-dizu*, *manğaw*, *qqattabax'u*), concreteness (*za*, *bak'*), etc., as seen in Table Four. It can thus be argued that Class 2 is inquirate in much the same way as is Class 7 in Tsova-Tush.

In terms of a markedness hierarchy, Class 1 is the most marked, being limited to male sentient beings (humans and humanoids such as angels) in the singular and humans in the plural, Class 4 is next, as it does not allow animacy except for spiders, a few insects, e.g. ants, earwigs, dragonflies, and in affective singular contexts, some female sentient beings (mature humans, spirits, etc.). This leaves Class 3 as unmarked, allowing any type of noun except specified male humans. The unmarked nature of Class 3 is supported syntactically by the fact that Class 3 is the default agreement

class for controllers that cannot be specified for gender such as clauses, as in the following example: Malla xxal šajxtu, qinnu h'urmatraj ikramgu buwnu, mallanax' kunu bur: "Ah ttul qunama, ... (Xalilov 1976:204). 'As soon as he saw the mullah, having made a deeply respectful bow, he said to the mullah: "Oh my elder, ...' The form *bur*, which is the third person present of 'be' functioning as an auxiliary with *kunu* 'having said', is marked here for Class 3 (*b-*) and cannot be controlled by anything in the narrated other than the quotation itself. (cf. also Corbett 1991:207-208). The Class 2 agreement pattern also supports this hierarchy. It utilizes only the two marked agreement classes and strengthens the opposition +male sentient/-male sentient in the singular and +human/+human in the plural. Combining the Class marking patterns of the singular and plural as presented in the foregoing discussion, Figure Four presents a revision of Figure Three:

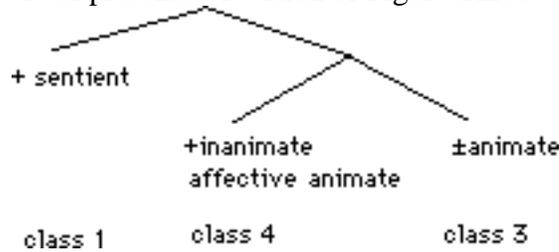


FIGURE FOUR

Having reduced the number of controller genders to three, there remain ten types of syncope,

which we can now present in Figure Five as a revision of Figures One and Two:

sg pl	sg pl	sg pl	sg pl	sg pl	sg pl	sg pl
1 awcunu 3 bawcunu 4 darcunu	1 lawaj 3 4 laraj	1 wilma wilmi 3 wilmur 4	1 ganal gajnnal 3 ganil gajnnul 4	1 wilssannal 3 wilssannul 4	1 cal 3 cil 4	1 ga gaj 3 cu ciw 4
TYPE 1	TYPE 2	TYPE 3	TYPE 4	TYPE 5	TYPE 6	TYPE 7
stolen	up	yours	deictic-gen.	your-gen.	self-gen.	deictic self
sg pl	sg pl	sg pl				
1 učmanal bučminnal 3 bučmunil bučminnul 4 dučmunil dučminnul	1 cuwa ciwppa 3 cuppa 4 curda cirda	1 qunassa qunissa 3 qunmassa 4 qunnassa				
TYPE 8	TYPE 9	TYPE 10				
fat	oneself	big				

FIGURE FIVE

The foregoing account of Lak agreement markers has attempted to bring together facts scattered or ignored in the existing grammatical descriptions in order to give a unified and more accurate

picture of the morphology of agreement marking in Lak. At the same time, it has attempted to provide some innovative interpretations derived from contemporary facts. Based on current usage, we have suggested that traditional Class 2 has evolved or is evolving into an inanimate gender. The number of nouns belonging to this class is small and restricted, and the agreement pattern itself is marked as affective or archaic. Class 1 is always opposed to class 4 whenever there is a class opposition. In terms of hierarchical marking oppositions, Class 1 is marked as sentient and restricted to males in the singular, while class 4 is marked as inanimate with affective use for some female sentients in the singular.⁹ Although this reanalysis reduces the number of controller genders to three, it does not affect the number of target genders. With respect to target genders, however, the interaction of pronominal and non-pronominal gender markers, which is not usually considered in accounts of Lak agreement classes, results in a total of six possible target genders. This is because the maximal three-member agreement class opposition in the singular is neutralized in different ways in the plural, depending on whether the class markers are pronominal or non-pronominal. Pronominal class marking strengthens the opposition +sentient/+ sentient in the plural (Class 3 merges with Class 4) whereas non-pronominal class marking strengthens the opposition +inanimate/+ inanimate (Class 3 merges with Class 1). As a result, when the two types of markers are present, both oppositions are marked in the plural. Class 3 then carries morphological markers of both and therefore merges with neither. The morphology of agreement marking thus strengthens a variety of oppositions in Lak that connect morphology to syntax: pronominal/non-pronominal, oblique/non-oblique, and categories of deixis.

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¹In Lak, agreement marking can occur on virtually all parts of speech except exclamations: verbs, adjectives, pronouns, numerals, adverbs, postpositions (when of adverbial origin), nouns (the secondary directive cases, cf. Friedman 1992), and conjunctions (when they are derived, e.g. *mukun!a* 'and also, likewise' < *mu* 'this/that' + *kun!a* 'like, as'). Exclamations can reflect real-world gender/class, e.g. *da* 'hey!' (male human), *il* 'hey!' (female human) *waha* 'hey!' (animal).

²The form is *-mur* in final position, *-mu-* when non-final.

³The distinction between adjectivals in *-ssa*, and *-ma*, etc. is beyond the scope of this paper. Roughly, *-ssa* denotes a general characteristic (approximately 'characterized as'), *-ma*, etc. is deictic (approximately 'that which is'). The two can be combined as *-ssa+ma*, etc. (approximately 'that which is characterized as'). for details see Murkelinskij (1971:138-150).

⁴Type 1, which is typical of verbal forms has variants admitting only prefixal or only infixal markers, but as these do not result in any new patterns of syncope (prefixal only remains Type 1 while infixal only is seen in adverbs such as Type 2), they are not illustrated here.

⁵Set 3a always occurs in conjunction with either Set 2 or Set 4b. In either instance, the patterns of syncretism will be those seen in Type 4.

⁶Orthographic *ciw* can represent [cī], which is the result of *cu + i*.

⁷As will be seen below, there are a few other animate items that can show up as class 4. These are all in some way anomalous, e.g. archaic, dialectal, mythical, metaphoric, etc., e.g.

ssurmux'x'u	female slave (archaic) [class 2 in Uslar 1890]
accalav	'domovoj' & scarecrow
mamav	boogey (class 2 in Xajdakov 1966, dialectally also class 3)
c'ikuri	bride [Vicxi dialect]
barzukka	dragonfly
näk'u	dragonfly
met'iququ	ant

xxälcu	spider
vič'ilunduxxu	earwig
x'x'iril misidu	rusalka

⁸ Cf. also singluaria tanta such as *qa* (3) 'barley', *nah* (4) 'oil'.

⁹The use of Class 4 for a few insects can be treated as kind of affective extension similar to the use of animate marking for some inanimates in Russian.