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The Grammatical and Modal Functions of the Verb Unon in Laz

Nato Akhalaia

Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, Georgia

Abstract

In Georgian, the form *unda* functions both as an independent verb expressing desire, with person and number agreement (e.g., *me minda vašli* “I want an apple”, *šen ginda mušaoba* “you want to work”, *mas unda vašli/mušaoba* “s/he wants an apple/to work”), and as a modal element indicating obligation, which appears only in the generalized third-person form regardless of the subject (e.g., *me unda vimušao* “I must work”, *šen unda imušao* “you must work”, *man unda imušaos* “s/he must work”). Laz, a related Kartvelian language, employs the morphophonetic form *unon*, derived from Old Georgian *una*, exhibiting similar dual functionality. Grammatically, *unon* inflects for person and number and coordinates with both subject and direct object, expressing desire for an object or for an action (e.g., *man minon uškiri* “I want an apple”, *sin ginon oxtimu* “you want to go”). In Laz, the form *unon* is also used with a modal function. However, unlike Georgian, the modal element is person-marked – in other words, each person has its own specific form. The third person is often represented in a reduced *yon* form. The modal component follows a verb in the Subjunctive Mood (Series II) and, together with it, conveys the semantics of an obligatory action (e.g., *man vida minon* “I must go”, *sin ida ginon* “You must go”, *iya/emuk idasinon/idasyon* “s/he must go”). The analysis of the empirical data demonstrates that *unon* in Laz reflects a Common Kartvelian linguistic pattern that encodes both volition (i.e., wishes) and deontic modality (i.e., obligations) in equal measure.

Keywords: Kartvelian Languages, Laz Language, Modav Verbs, Volition and Obligation, Unon