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205. Akhvakh

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Abstract

This article presents the productive patterns of word-formation in Akhvakh, a Northeast Caucasian language spoken in the western part of Daghestan. Section 2 provides a general overview, and gives the relevant details about the quotation forms of Akhvakh lexemes. In the subsequent sections, composition, derivation, conversion, and reduplication, are described in more detail.

1. Introduction

Akhvakh (*aš^waġi miċ'i*, Russian *axvaxskij jazyk*) is one of the Andic languages, spoken in the western part of Daghestan and included in the Avar-Andic-Tsezic branch of the Northeast Caucasian (or Nakh-Daghestanian) family. Akhvakh does not seem to have a particularly close relationship with any of the other Andic languages.

According to Magomedova and Abdulaeva (2007), Akhvakh has approximately 20,000 speakers. Four dialects are traditionally recognized. One of them is designated as Northern Akhvakh, whereas the other three are grouped under the label of Southern Akhvakh. The variety of Akhvakh described in this article is Northern Akhvakh, spoken in four villages of the Axvaxskij Rajon in the western part of Daghestan (Tadmagitl', Lologonitl', Kudijab-Roso, and Izani), in recent settlements in the lowlands of Daghestan (Sovetskoe, Kamyškutan), and in Axaxdərə near Zaqatala (Azerbaijan).

Like the other Andic languages, Akhvakh has no written tradition, but is now written by means of an adaptation of the Avar version of the Cyrillic alphabet. The transcription used in this article departs from the IPA conventions on the following points: alveolar voiceless affricate *c*; palato-alveolar fricatives *š* (voiceless) and *ž* (voiced); palato-alveolar affricates *č* (voiceless) and *ž* (voiced); lateral voiceless affricate *ɬ*; the macron is used for long vowel and strong consonants.

Knowledge of Avar is traditionally widespread among the speakers of Akhvakh, and the Akhvakh-Avar bilingualism has been reinforced by the Soviet policy. The importance of Avar as a lingua franca is however rapidly declining, although Avar is still used as the medium of instruction during the first years in rural schools.

The available literature on Akhvakh is very limited, and includes no work dealing specifically with word-formation. The only relevant references are Magomedbekova's monograph (Magomedbekova 1967) and the Akhvakh-Russian dictionary (Magomedova and Abdulaeva 2007). Magomedbekova (1967) is an overall presentation of Akhvakh which however focuses on phonology and inflectional morphology, and gives very few details on word-formation. The Akhvakh-Russian dictionary (Magomedova and Abdulaeva 2007) provides a rich corpus for the study of word-formation, and has constituted the main source for this study. The grammatical sketch appended to the dictionary also includes relatively detailed sections about word-formation, but the recognition and classification of the word-formation types are not very consistent, and many details of the analysis are questionable.

2. General overview

Word-formation in Akhvakh may involve composition, derivational suffixes, and reduplication.

In Akhvakh, the demarcation between composition and syntax is problematic in the sense that lexicalized combinations of words are most of the time not different from phrases constructed according to the productive rules of syntax. For example, in *ič'e-ġi koq'o* 'tortoise; lit. stone.GEN frog', or *e'ada-ġi imiçi* 'snail; lit. rain.GEN donkey', *-ġi* is the genitive suffix, and nothing distinguishes such compounds from regular constructions involving a head noun and a genitival modifier. Sometimes, the semantic drift is such

that an analysis in terms of compounding is clearly the only possibility, but this is not always the case.

Akhvakh has sandhi phenomena at word boundaries. As can be expected, sandhi is particularly frequent at the junction between words forming lexicalized combinations, but there is no strict rule, just tendencies. Moreover, sandhi is bound to phonological conditions. Consequently, word sandhi may provide evidence of compounding, but the absence of sandhi is not conclusive. For more details on word sandhi in Akhvakh, see Creissels (2011).

Several of the derivational suffixes of Akhvakh can be suspected of being cognate with a lexeme still attested in the language, or of being the reflex of a lexeme reconstructible on the basis of comparative data.

Before presenting the patterns of word-formation, some clarifications are in order about the citation forms of Akhvakh lexemes and the inflectional morphemes they include.

Nouns are quoted in the nominative (alias absolute) singular form, which includes no overt inflectional morpheme.

Adjectives are quoted in a form devoid of the gender-number agreement suffixes they may take in syntactic contexts. The stem of most Akhvakh adjectives and numerals has an ending *-da*. No particular function can be attributed to this ending, which disappears when derivational suffixes are added to adjectival or numeral stems. In addition, some adjectives have an obligatory gender-number agreement prefix. Such adjectives are conventionally quoted in the neuter singular form, characterized by a prefix *b-* (*m-* in nasal contexts).

The infinitive is used as the citation form of verbs. The infinitive suffix is *-urula* (*-unula* in nasal contexts). Infinitive endings *-ōrula*, *-ōnula*, *-ūrula*, and *-ūnula*, result from the interaction between the infinitive suffix and the verb stem. They are characteristic of verb stems whose final consonant is deleted before some suffixes. For example, the underlying form of the infinitive *χōrula* quoted in section 3.3 is $|\chi^{\nu}a(b)\text{-urula}|$, and the underlying form of the infinitive *bačarōrula* quoted in section 4.3.2 is $|b\text{-ača-r-a(j)\text{-urula}|$ (*b-* is a gender-number agreement prefix, *-r-* and *-a(j)-* are derivative suffixes whose nature will be explained in the relevant sections). The stem of such verbs is realized without any modification in the imperative form, as in *bača-r-aj-a!* ‘shorten (it)!’, but in the infinitive, the consonant noted between brackets is deleted, and the preceding vowel fuses with the first *u* of the infinitive suffix. For more details on the morphophonological processes involved, see Creissels (2009).

As just illustrated by *bačarōrula*, some verbs have an obligatory gender-number agreement prefix identical to that found in some adjectives, and are conventionally quoted in the neuter singular form, characterized by a prefix *b-* (*m-* in nasal context, *o-* before consonants).

3. Composition

3.1. Nominal compounds

As already mentioned, most combinations of words that can be considered as nominal compounds on the basis of their non-compositional meaning have an internal structure identical to that of regular noun phrases.

The only pattern dedicated to the formation of nominal compounds is the juxtaposition of nouns forming copulative compounds (dvandvas) such as *ĩk'u-rel'a* 'limbs' (← *ĩk'u* 'leg' + *rel'a* 'arm'). This pattern is very productive.

Interestingly, Akhvakh has many nouns that at first sight look like copulative compounds of this type, but in which the second element is attested only in combination with a particular noun with which it forms a pseudo-compound whose meaning is somehow an extension of the meaning of the noun in question. For example, the second element *χaxu* of the pseudo-copulative compound *ĩk'ot'i-χaxu* 'rodents' (← *ĩk'ot'i* 'mouse') exists only in combination with *ĩk'ot'i*, and similarly, the second element *k'ači* of *miša-k'ači* 'face' (← *miša* 'nose'), is attested only in combination with *miša*. No correlation can be found between the phonological shape of such elements and that of the nouns with which they form pseudo-compounds of this type.

3.2. Adjectival compounds

Adjectives can combine into compounds such as *hiri-bašida* 'red and white' (← *hirida* 'red' + *bašida* 'white'), or *ĩk'wək'a* 'not very important' (← *ĩk'wa* 'small' + *ĩk'a* 'large').

Comparative compounds such as *āžiku-bašida* 'snow-white' (← *āži* 'snow' + *bašida* 'white') are typically formed from color adjectives.

The pattern numeral + noun → adjective (*bahuvrīhi*), illustrated by *boq'wēk'uda* 'square' (← *boq'oda* 'four' + *mek'u* 'corner'), is not very productive.

3.3. Verbal compounds

Akhvakh has many lexicalized combinations noun + verb or adverb + verb which are difficult to distinguish from the combination of a verb with a noun in object function or with an adverbial modifier.

By contrast, verbs formed according to the compounding pattern verb + verb → verb are easy to identify. This pattern produces copulative compounds such as *oχ-e-beχ-urula* 'to trade' (← *oχ-urula* 'to sell' + *beχ-urula* 'to buy'). In such compounds, the second element bears verb inflection, whereas the first one is invariably in a form characterized by a suffix *-e*. This suffix is identified by Magomedova and Abdulaeva (2007) as the masdar suffix, but this analysis relies on no evidence other than the mere formal coincidence, and it is contradicted by comparative evidence. The point is that this type of compounds is attested in other Andic languages and in Avar, and the coincidence between the suffix marking the first element and the masdar suffix is observed only in Akhvakh. Interestingly, in Avar, the first element of such compounds occurs in a form different from all the other forms of the verb, which suggests a very ancient formation involving a marker whose original nature has ceased to be apparent.

It is also interesting to observe that, exactly as in the case of nominal compounds of the copulative type, Akhvakh has many verbs which look like verbal compounds of this type, but in which the second element (i.e. the element bearing verb inflection) has no independent existence. For example, the second element of *šor-e-χōrula* 'to stroll' exists only in combination with *šor-urula* 'to turn'.

4. Derivation

4.1. Nominal derivation

4.1.1. Denominal nouns

Two suffixes are used with a relative productivity to form nouns from nouns: *-le* and *-qa*.

The suffix *-le* is used to form abstract nouns such as *aṣi-le* ‘testimony’ (← *aṣi* ‘witness’). This suffix is etymologically the masdar of a verb **l-* ‘to become’ reconstructible at the Proto-Avar-Andic-Tsezic level, whose direct reflex is the suffix *-l-* used to derive verbs from adjectives (see section 4.3.2).

The suffix *-qa* (probably borrowed from Avar) is found in nouns of persons characterized by their occupation, such as *g^wami-qa* ‘drummer’ (← *g^wama* ‘drum’). The productivity of *-qa* is however limited, and professions are more usually designated by means of constructions in which a participial clause modifies a noun, for example *ĩg^wara bižida ek^wa* ‘baker; lit. bread-baking man’.

Magomedova and Abdulaeva (2007) give a much longer list of “suffixes” used to derive nouns from nouns, but with the only exception of *-le* and *-qa*, they cannot be found in more than two or three nouns each.

Akhvakh also has a relatively important inventory of genitive forms that have lexicalized and are now used as nouns with a meaning clearly related to that of the noun from which they originate, although not entirely predictable, for example *ṣet^we-li* ‘cold in the head’ (*ṣet^we* ‘nasal mucus’). The recognition of a derivational suffix homonymous (and cognate) with the genitive suffix is however problematic, since there is no regularity in the meaning expressed by lexicalized genitive forms.

In this connection it is interesting to observe that for several nouns ending in *-li* which seem to originate from the lexicalization of genitive forms, the original stem is not attested in Akhvakh, but can be traced back to cognates in related languages. For example, the stem from which *miṣili* ‘hoe’ has been derived is not attested in Akhvakh, but this noun is probably cognate with Avar *maṣ* ‘iron’.

4.1.2. Deadjectival nouns

The abstraction suffix mentioned in section 4.1.1 as a suffix used to form nouns from nouns is also used to derive abstract nouns from adjectives, for example, *baṣa-le* ‘length’ (← *baṣada* ‘long’). In this use, it can be decomposed into *-l-* deriving intransitive verbs from adjectives (see section 4.3.2) and *-e* (masdar suffix, see section 4.1.3).

4.1.3. Deverbal nouns

The only productive suffix used to form deverbal nouns is the masdar suffix *-e*, as in *baqarol-e* ‘being old’ (← *baqarol-urula* ‘to grow old’).

A suffix *-aro* ~ *-ero* can be isolated in deverbal nouns denoting either persons characterized by some activity, or instruments, for example, *beč'-aro* 'glutton' (← *beč'-urula* 'to become full'), *q̄wāt'-ero* 'scraper' (← *q̄wāt'-urula* 'to scrape'). However, this suffix is not very productive, and the meanings it expresses are more commonly expressed analytically.

4.1.4. Denumeral nouns

Akhvakh has a productive suffix *-ča* used to derive nouns from numerals. Depending on the context, the nouns formed by means of this suffix can denote any entity that can be characterized by the number in question: number, size, mark, playing-card, busline, etc., for example, *k'e-ča* 'number two, size two, etc.' (← *k'eda* 'two').

4.2. Adjectival derivation

4.2.1. Denominal adjectives

The privative suffix *-q̄'eda* is used to form denominal adjectives such as *t'āḥa-q̄'eda* 'uncomfortable' (← *t'āḥa* 'comfort').

The ornative suffix *-χada* ~ *-χwada* is used to form denominal adjectives such as *κizi-χada* 'dirty' (← *κizi* 'dirt'). This suffix, which probably results from the grammaticalization of the participle *b-iχw-ada* (from *b-iχ-urula* 'to remain'), is not very productive.

Adjectives with the meaning 'similar to N' can be derived from nouns by means of the suffix *-gula*, for example, *ič'a-gula* 'as hard as stone' (← *ič'a* 'stone').

Akhvakh makes productive use of the genitive form of nouns in the function fulfilled in other languages by relational adjectives. For example, the Akhvakh equivalent of 'medicinal' is *daru-Ḓi*, genitive of the noun *daru* 'medicine'. Some of the genitive forms used as adjectives have lexicalized, for example, *žomo-Ḓi* 'green' (*žomi* 'grass').

4.2.2. Deadjectival adjectives

Three suffixes are used to modify the meaning of color adjectives without changing their grammatical properties:

- *-xoda* ~ *-xwada*, as in *baši-xoda* 'whitish' (← *bašida* 'white');
- *-k'onada*, as in *baši-k'onada* 'multicolored with white spots' (← *bašida* 'white');
- *-k'irada*, as in *baši-k'irada*, 'multicolored with a predominance of white' (← *bašida* 'white').

-xoda ~ *-xwada* may originate from the grammaticalization of the perfective participle of the verb *bixurula* 'to seize, hold'. I have no etymological hypothesis to put forward for the other two.

4.2.3. Deverbal adjectives

Akhvakh has four participles: perfective positive, perfective negative, imperfective positive, imperfective negative. Some of them, also used with a purely stative meaning, are described as adjectives derived from verbs in the Akhvakh-Russian dictionary. For example, *baqarot-ada* (*baqarot-urula* ‘to grow old’) as a participle expresses the resultative meaning ‘grown old’, but this form is also the only possible equivalent of English ‘old’.

4.2.4. Denumeral adjectives

Akhvakh has a suffix *-biliṛ'ida* used to derive ordinals, for example, *k'e-biliṛ'ida* ‘second’ (← *k'eda* ‘two’).

The suffix *-liṛi* is used to derive adjectives such as *ištu-liṛi* (← *ištuda* ‘five’), with meanings such as ‘*x* years old’, ‘of size *x*’, etc.

4.2.5. Deadverbial adjectives

One of the striking characteristics of Akhvakh syntax is a very strict distinction between words or phrases used to modify verbs and words or phrases used to modify nouns. This constraint is compensated by the existence of a very productive suffix *-ṣe* converting adverbs into adjectives. This suffix operates not only at word level, but also at phrase level, converting phrases headed by nouns in the dative case, in the comitative case or in spatial cases into phrases having the ability to modify nouns. For example, *qala* ‘early’ is used exclusively as an adverb, and the corresponding adjective is *qala-ṣe*. Similarly, *du-la* ‘to/for you’, dative of *mene* ‘you’, cannot be used as a noun modifier, but *du-la-ṣe* ‘designed for you’ has this ability.

4.3. Verbal derivation

4.3.1. Denominal verbs

The only suffix available to derive verbs from nouns is *-ḡ-*, as in *tati-ḡ-urula* ‘to get dusty’ (← *tata* ‘dust’). This suffix probably results from the grammaticalization of the verb *b-iḡ-urula*, already mentioned above as the probable source of the ornative suffix *-ḡada* ~ *-ḡ^wada*.

4.3.2. Deadjectival verbs

The suffix *-t-* derives intransitive verbs from adjectives, for example, *šo-t-urula* ‘to become good’ (← *šoda* ‘good’). This suffix, historically the reflex of an Avar-Andic-

Tsezic verb not attested in the modern languages but reconstructible as **l-* ‘to become’, is fully productive.

The complex suffix *-r-a(j)-* derives transitive verbs from adjectives, for example *bač̣a-r-ōruḷa* ‘to shorten’ (← *bač̣ada* ‘short’). The second formative of this complex suffix is the causative suffix *-a(j)-* (see section 4.3.3), and therefore the first formative can be analyzed as an allomorph of the suffix *-l-* just mentioned as used in the derivation of intransitive verbs from adjectives.

4.3.3. Deverbal verbs

Akhvakh has two causative suffixes productively used to derive transitive verbs from intransitive ones. They are very rarely used with transitive verbs.

The causative suffix *-a(j)-*, as in *beč̣'-ōruḷa* ‘to fill’, underlyingly $|\text{beč̣}'\text{-a(j)-uruḷa}|$ (*beč̣'-uruḷa* ‘to become full’), is the reflex of an Andic suffix whose reflexes can be found in all the other languages of the family. It can be used with all intransitive verbs whose stem does not end with *-a(j)*.

The causative suffix *-ut'-* is used with intransitive verbs whose stem ends with *-a(j)*, as for example, *ḡ^wadel-ōt'-uruḷa* ‘to make walk’, underlyingly $|\text{ḡ}^{\text{w}}\text{adela(j)-ut'-uruḷa}|$ (*ḡ^wadel-ōruḷa* ‘to walk’, underlyingly $|\text{ḡ}^{\text{w}}\text{adela(j)-uruḷa}|$).

Contrary to *-a(j)-*, the causative suffix *-ut'-* is a young suffix, since the analytic causative construction whose univerbation has resulted in the emergence of this causative suffix is still attested, with the verb *b-it'-uruḷa* ‘to straighten, direct’ in causative auxiliary function.

4.3.4. The “naturalizing” suffix *-la(j)-*

Akhvakh has a very productive suffix *-la(j)-* exclusively found in verbs borrowed from Avar. The stem to which this suffix is added is the Avar masdar. For example, in *ḡerēli-lōruḷa* ‘to become tender’, underlyingly $|\text{ḡerēli-l}\text{-a(j)-uruḷa}|$, this suffix is added to *ḡerēnti* ‘tenderness’, masdar of the Avar verb *ḡerēntize* ‘to become tender’.

Etymologically, this suffix probably includes a reflex of an ancient verb ‘to do’ (possibly cognate with Avar *habize* ‘to do’) as its second element, since there is evidence that the Akhvakh verbs whose stem ends with *-a(j)-* (including the causative verbs mentioned in section 4.3.3) might result from the univerbation of *do*-compounds. Unfortunately, I am not aware of any possible etymology for the *l* that constitutes the initial element of this suffix.

4.4. Adverbial derivation

Akhvakh has a number of adverbs probably cognate with nouns, verbs or adjectives, or with other adverbs, but no productive derivation pattern can be recognized.

In particular, the derivation of manner adverbs from adjectives does not exist in Akhvakh. The converbs of deadjectival verbs provide a functional equivalent. For exam-

ple, *koša-l-ēhe*, converb of *koša-l-urula* ‘to become bad’ (*koša* ‘bad’) is the usual equivalent of English *badly*, as in *koša-l-ēhe gūrula* ‘to do (something) badly’ (← *gūrula* ‘to do’).

Akhvakh has three suffixes deriving adverbs from numerals:

- *-biliē’u*, as in *k’e-biliē’u* ‘for the second time’ (← *k’eda* ‘two’);
- *-li*, as in *k’e-li* ‘in two parts’ (← *k’eda* ‘two’);
- *-če*, as in *k’e-če* ‘two times’ (← *k’eda* ‘two’).

4.5. Numeral derivation

Akhvakh has a suffix with the allomorphs *-midala* ~ *-midila* ~ *-dala* ~ *-midi* ~ *-di* that can be used to derive collective numerals, as in *k’e-midala* ‘both’ (← *k’eda* ‘two’).

5. Conversion

In Akhvakh, the conversion of nouns or adjectives into verbs, or of verbs into nouns or adjectives, is excluded for phonological and morphological reasons. Akhvakh words obligatorily end with a vowel. This is also the case for nominal and adjectival stems, which can be used as words without any overt inflectional ending. By contrast, all verb stems end with a consonant. Consequently, they cannot be used by themselves as words, and they exist only in combination with overt inflectional endings.

The conversion of adjectives into nouns, of nouns into adverbs, and of adjectives into adverbs, is not productive. It can however be illustrated by *bačida* ‘mourning’ (← *bačida* ‘black’), *rala* ‘at night’ (← *rala* ‘night’), and *baṭigoda* ‘secretly’ (← *baṭigoda* ‘secret (adj.)’).

6. Reduplication

Akhvakh has a productive pattern of noun reduplication which generally conveys a meaning of intensification, as in *χaba-č’aba* ‘long conversation’ (← *χaba* ‘conversation’). As can be seen from this example, the reduplicant follows the reduplicated stem and differs from it by its initial consonant. This consonant change is not predictable.

The same pattern, with a meaning of approximation, is also found with adjectives, as illustrated by *ṭema-χemada* ‘more or less liquid’ (← *ṭemada* ‘liquid’).

The pattern of reduplication with initial consonant change is also found with verbs, with a meaning of intensification and/or iteration. It is however almost exclusively found with verbs borrowed from Avar. The reduplicant copies only the first two syllables of the stem, and it is inserted immediately after the syllables it copies, as in *c’eṣe<reṣe>lō-rula* ‘to ask with insistence’ (← *c’eṣelōrula* ‘to ask’).

Full reduplication of VC verb stems and partial reduplication of CVC verb stems is productive with a meaning of intensification and/or iteration, as illustrated by *b-oī-oī-urula* (← *b-oī-urula* ‘to walk’) and *da-dan-urula* (← *dan-urula* ‘to pull’).

Numeral reduplication expresses distributivity, as in *k'e-k'eda* 'two each' (← *k'eda* 'two').

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Abstract

This article describes various means of word-formation in Avar. Among them are compounding, derivation, conversion, reduplication, and the formation of complex nominals based on two processes, compounding and derivation. Avar, as a language with a rich history of language contacts, has borrowed derivational suffixes from Turkic and Persian languages.