The essive form of nouns in Akhvakh
and other Caucasian languages

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1. Introduction

In language descriptions, the term ‘essive’ is found with two different meanings. In its use as a synonym of ‘locative’, ‘essive’ is mainly found as the second formative of compound labels (inessive, superessive, etc.) for spatial forms of nouns expressing static location, the first formative of such terms referring to types of spatial configurations. In another use, mainly found in descriptions of Uralic languages, ‘essive’ is a label for cases carrying the meaning of a temporary state of being.

In descriptions of Caucasian languages, ‘essive’ is used exclusively as the second formative of compound labels for spatial cases encoding static location, and forms of nouns carrying the meaning of a temporary state of being are either described under other labels, or simply ignored in the discussion of noun inflection. The aim of this paper is to show that forms of nouns comparable to Uralic essives are common in the three families of indigenous languages of the Caucasus, and that Akhvakh and other Nakh-Daghestanian languages provide interesting data about the possible grammaticalization processes leading to the emergence of such forms.

2. Essive as the expression of a temporary state of being

In the literature, the existence of an essive (or predicative) case carrying the meaning of a temporary state of being, often equivalent to English ‘as N’, is mainly acknowledged in descriptions of Uralic languages. Ex. (1) and (2) illustrate the essive case of Hungarian and Finnish.

(1) Hungarian (Lelkes 1967: 558)

Öt év-ig mérnök-ként dolgoz-ott egy gyár-ban.
five year-TERM engineer-ESS work-PST[3SG] one factory-INESS
‘He worked five years as an engineer in a factory.’

(2) Finnish (Karlsson 1999: 123)

Heikki on Jämsä-ssä lääkäri-nä.
Heikki be.PRS.3SG Jämsä-INESS doctor-ESS
‘Heikki is (working as) a doctor in Jämsä.

In many languages the same cases or adpositions are used for predicative complements of verbs of change (a function for which Finnish and other Uralic languages have a special translative case). As illustrated by the essive postposition of Mandinka (a Mande language spoken in The Gambia, Senegal, and Guinea Bissao) – Ex. (3), cases or adpositions fulfilling the essive and translative functions are also often used to express comparison, and their use in nominal predication is not necessarily
restricted to temporary states. The essive-translative-instrumental syncretism, illustrated by Russian – Ex. (4), is also common. Basque – Ex. (5) – illustrates the use of bare NPs in essive and translative function.

(3) Mandinka (field notes)

a. Ťį ŋa até le lóŋ ū faamáa ti.
   1SG PF.POS 3SG:EMPH FOC know 1SG father:DEF ESS
   ‘It is him that I knew as my father.’

b. Jįyo yelemá-ta dolóo ti.
   water:DEF change-PF.POS wine:DEF ESS
   ‘The water changed into wine.

c. Sánoo kúlíýáa-ta kóðoo ti.
   gold:DEF be_heavy-PF.POS silver:DEF ESS
   ‘Gold is heavy in comparison with silver.

d. Íte mu musóo le ti.
   2SG:EMPH COP woman:DEF FOC ESS
   ‘You are a woman.’

(4) Russian

a. On rabotaet inžener-om.
   3SG:M work:PST:3SG engineer-SG.INSTR
   ‘He is working as an engineer.

b. On breet-sja èlektiričesk-oj britv-oj.
   3SG:M shave:PST:3SG-Refl electric-SG.F.INSTR rasor-SG.INSTR
   ‘He shaves with an electric razor.’

(5) Basque (Hualde & Ortiz de Urbina 2003: 133; Céline Mounole, p.c.)

a. Amerik-etara joan zen artzai.
   America-PL.ALL go:PF AUX:PST:3SG shepherd
   ‘He went to America as a shepherd.’

b. Printze-a igel bilakatu zen.
   prince-SG frog change:PF AUX:PS:3SG
   ‘The prince changed into a frog.’

3. Essive forms of nouns in South Caucasian languages

With the only exception of Laz, South Caucasian languages have inflected forms of nouns expressing the essive function, but the forms in question are traditionally labeled adverbial case, probably because the same suffix serves to form manner adverbs
from adjectives.\(^1\) Ex. (6) illustrates the Georgian suffix -ad in its essive / translatival function and in its manner adverb formative function.

(6) Georgian (Vogt 1971: 65)

   teacher-ADV work:PRS:3SG
   ‘He/she works as a teacher.’

b. *Ɣvino ʒmr-ad gadaikca.*
   wine vinegar-ADV change:PRF:3SG
   ‘The wine changed into vinegar.’

c. *Rusul-ad tavisupl-ad lap’arak’obs.*
   Russian-ADV free-ADV speak:PRF:3SG
   ‘He/she speaks Russian fluently.’

4. Essive forms of nouns in North West Caucasian languages

The existence of an essive form of nouns marked by a suffix also used to derive manner adverbs from adjectives is a feature common to South and North West Caucasian languages, and the label ‘adverbial case’ is used in descriptions of North West Caucasian languages too.

For example, as illustrated by Ex. (7), Adyghe has an ‘adverbial case’ -ew with a range of functions quite similar to that of the Georgian adverbial.


a. *Sjezdam ə djeljegat-ew wəqeqʷəxeš’tən.*
   to_the_meeting delegate-ADV you_probably_came
   ‘You probably came to the meeting as a delegate.’

b. *Aš’ əš-ew se səχʷəə.*
   his_brother-ADV I I became
   ‘I became his brother.’

c. *Dax-ew matxe.*
   beautiful-ADV he_writes
   ‘He writes beautifully.’

5. (Lack of) essive forms of nouns in North East Caucasian languages?

Cases functionally similar to the ‘adverbial’ cases of South and North West Caucasian languages are never mentioned in the case inventories of North East Caucasian languages, and the possible existence of cases fulfilling the essive function as defined above is not even discussed in Daniel and Ganenkov’s recent survey of Daghestanian case systems (Daniel & Ganenkov 2009). However, suffixed forms of

\(^1\) As discussed by Harris 1991: 23-26, the adverbial case suffix *-d reconstructed for Common Kartvelian has obvious reflexes in Georgian, Mingrelian, and Svan, and there is evidence that Laz had an adverbial case too, which was subsequently lost.
nouns equivalent to English ‘as N’ are clearly present at least in Lezgi and in Avar-Andi-Tsez languages. The only question is whether they are part of the case inflection of nouns, or have another status in the morphosyntax of the languages in which such forms are found.

Before turning to the essive forms of nouns in Avar-Andi-Tsez, which will be discussed in Sections 6 & 7, it is interesting to quote a passage from Haspelmath’s description of Lezgi about a derivational suffix -wal forming abstract nouns:

“The suffix -wal on nouns denoting a profession or function is also so regular and common that it could perhaps be regarded as an inflectional suffix. In order to express ‘work as an X’, one has to use it: X-wal awun (lit. ‘do X-hood’), or X-wile k’walaxun (lit. ‘work in X-hood’), e.g. muallimwal awun ‘work as a teacher’, reğuxbanwile k’walaxun ‘work as a miller’. That -wile in such constructions is a sort of “functive case” suffix can be seen in examples like (230), where -wile is added to a plural noun.”

(Haspelmath 1993: 105)

The example mentioned in this quote includes a form sopresedatel-ar-wil-e ‘as co-chairmen’ in which the plural suffix -ar- precedes -wil- (allomorph of the suffix of abstract nouns -wal) and -e (inessive), which can be viewed as evidence that -wile has been reanalyzed as a case suffix.

Haspelmath’s observation about the emerging ‘functive’ case of Lezgi suggests that the lack of any mention of cases similar to Uralic essives or South and North West Caucasian ‘adverbials’ in descriptions of Nakh-Daghestanian languages, rather than really reflecting the situation of North East Caucasian, may simply be due to a descriptive tradition that does not include them among the cases whose existence is expected in the languages of this family. This will be corroborated by the data analyzed in Section 6, which will show that similar observations can be made about languages belonging to another branch of the North East Caucasian family.

6. The essive form of nouns in Northern Akhvakh

Example (8) illustrates the essive form of Northern Akhvakh nouns, formed by adding to the nominative a complex ending consisting of an invariable element -ɬ- glossed ESS and an agreement marker showing the following forms:

- masculine -ō(he)
- feminine and neuter -ē(he)
- human plural -i(hi)
- neuter plural -erē(he)

The second formative of the essive ending expresses agreement with the nominative argument of the clause representing the entity a property of which is predicated by the noun in the essive case. It is glossed ADV for ‘adverbial agreement’ because the same set of agreement marks is found in other adverbial forms: the general converb, the progressive converb, the mediative case of nouns (historically derived from the ablative), plus isolated adverbs such as huštē(he) ‘thus’.

(8)  Northern Akhvakh (Magomedova & Abdulaeva 2007 and field notes)

   gardener-ESS-ADV.M  M-work-PROG  COP₁,M  DIST-SL-M
   ‘He works as a gardener.’
girl father-CFG-ALL shepherd-ESS-ADV.F F-work-INF F-go-ADV.F COP₁,F
‘The girl went to her father’s to work as a shepherd.’

c. Du dada čʷi-ɬ̄ ī-w-oša-q-er- ţ gʷida?
2 SG, father what-ESS-ADV.M M-work-PROG-ADV.M COP₂,M
‘What is your father’s profession?’ lit. ‘Your father works as what?’

1 SG, [GEN]-N joke real-ESS-ADV.N N-occur-PF₁ DIST-SL-M,,-DAT
‘He took my joke seriously.’ lit. ‘My joke occurred to him as real.’

e. Di-la hu-be čaka ğīra dadi-t-ē harigʷ-ari.
1 SG, -DAT DIST-N very dear custom-ESS-ADV.N see-PF₁
‘I considered this (lit. I saw this as) a very good custom.’

As already mentioned above, the second formative of the essive ending is the adverbial agreement marker, which also constitutes the ending of the general converb (compare for example ṭoχtoro-ɬ̄ ēhe ‘as a doctor’, essive of ṭoχtoro ‘doctor’ with masculine agreement, with w-oq‘-ōhe ‘having come (M)’, masculine form of the general converb of -eq‘- ‘come’). Moreover, the first formative of the essive ending -ɬ̄ coincides with a derivative suffix productively used to derive verbs from adjectives, as illustrated by ĩk’a ‘large’ > ĩk’a-ɬ̄uru-ɬ̄a ‘enlarge’ (-uru-ɬ̄a is the infinitive suffix).

There are also a few verbs derived from nouns by means of the same derivative suffix -ɬ̄. Of course, if the ending analyzed here as an essive case were only found with such nouns, if it were incompatible with plural inflection and with the presence of noun dependents, and if such forms were found exclusively in adjunct role, the notion of essive case could be dispensed with, and the forms under consideration should be identified as the converbial form of verbs derived from nouns. The recognition of -ɬ̄ followed by adverbial agreement as a case form of nouns relies on the following three pieces of evidence:

(a) The essive ending is used productively with nominals for which the derivation of a verb by means of the suffix -ɬ̄ is not possible. For example, as illustrated by Ex. (8c) above, the interrogative pronoun čʷi is compatible with the essive ending, whereas the possibility to derive a verb whose meaning would be ‘become what’ is categorically rejected by speakers.

(b) As illustrated by Ex. (9a-c), the essive ending is found attached to nouns in the plural, and nouns in the essive can combine with noun dependents.

(c) Nouns with the essive ending are not only found in adjunct role: the essive is also used to encode predicative arguments of the following verbs: bošuruwa ‘become’ – Ex. (9a-b), buxuruwa ‘fall’ in the sense of ‘happen to be’, bišiloruwa ‘choose, elect’, bešuruwa ‘leave’ in the sense of ‘nominate’; the essive is even found instead of the nominative in the construction of bik’uruwa ‘be’ – Ex. (9d).

(9)  Northern Akhvakh (Magomedova & Abdulaeva 2007 and field notes)

DIST all boy-PL H’-become-ADV.H’ COP₁,H’ learn-PF₂,H’ person-PL-ESS-ADV.H’
‘All these boys became learned men.’
   DIST-LL-Mₙ-ERG  child-H’₉-M  doctor-ESS-ADV.M M-become-INF dream DO-N-PROG COP₁,N
   ‘He dreams of becoming a pediatrician (lit. children’s doctor).’

c. *Di-ta hu-we di-da ʰima-l-ə ʰaɾiɡʷ-er-ə gudi.
   1SG₉-DAT DIST-M  1SG₉-[GEN]-INT father-ESS-ADV.M see-PROG-ADV.M COP₁,M
   ‘I consider him as my father.’

d. *Ič’a-l-ɛ j-ikʷ-ari hu-du-je.
   stone-ESS-ADV.N  F-be-PF₁ DIST-SL-F
   lit. ‘She was a stone.’ → ‘She obstinately refused.’

In addition to its transparent etymology, the main obstacle to the recognition of the
essive as a case is its morphology, which departs from that of the forms traditionally
recognized as cases in grammars of North-East Caucasian languages. As a rule, with
nouns that have an oblique stem distinct from the nominative form, the stem to which
North East Caucasian case markers attach is not the nominative form, but the oblique
stem. In the examples above, this is illustrated by imo-ʰiɾ-a ‘to (her) father’s’, in which
the complex case ending -ʰiɾ-a² attaches to imo-, oblique stem of ʰima ‘father’. By
contrast, the stem to which the essive ending attaches is always identical to the
nominative form, as illustrated by (di-da) ʰima-l-ə ‘as (my own) father’ in Ex. (9c).

This however should not hinder the recognition of the essive as a case. Variations in
the morphophonological properties of markers belonging to the same paradigm are
common in the languages of the world, and they reflect the fact that the individual
markers that constitute a paradigm may have grammaticalized at different periods in
the history of the language.³ The fact that the essive marker of Northern Akhvakh
attaches to a stem coinciding with the nominative form can be viewed as evidence of
its relatively recent grammaticalization in a construction whose original meaning was
‘having become X’ in which a noun in the nominative preceded the converbial form of
a verb *ɬ- ‘become’. This verb has ceased existing as an autonomous word but still
subsists as a derivative converting adjectives into verbs expressing change of state.

7. Essive forms of nouns in other Avar-Andi-Tsez languages

The reconstruction of a verb *ɬ- ‘become’ whose converb may have grammaticalized
into an essive marker is confirmed by data from the other Avar-Andi-Tsez languages.

The existence of a suffix -hun functionally similar to the essive suffix of Akhvakh and
lending itself to the same decomposition is acknowledged in some descriptions of
Avar, although this suffix is never included in the inventory of Avar cases. According
to Ebeling 1966: 72, Čikobava & Cercvadze 1962: 166f. mention it as a ‘case-like’
‘predicative’ form of nouns, with the following illustration:

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² This ending consists of the configuration marker -ʰiɾ- ‘in the vicinity of’ and the allative marker -a.
³ See for example Creissels 2006 for a discussion of the morphophonological heterogeneity of Hungarian
case markers.
Avar (Čikobava & Cercvadze 1962, quoted by Ebeling 1966: 72)

Do-w  bet’ér-ɬun  w-thouse.
DEM-M  head-ESS  M-elect-PF
‘He was elected head.’

The descriptions of Avar mentioning this suffix decompose it as -ɬ-un, where -ɬ- is a suffix used to derive verbs from nouns or adjectives, and -un is the past converb (or ‘past gerund’) suffix, and Alekseev 1988: 35 explicitly states that this ‘predicative’ suffix of nouns originates from a formerly independent verb *-ɬ-ize ‘become’ (-ize is the infinitive suffix of Avar verbs).

A similar suffix is briefly signaled in Bagvalal (Andic) by Daniel & al. 2001: 193. This suffix is illustrated by hak’u-ɬi-ɬ-o ‘as (his) wife’, and the ending of this form is decomposed as follows: -li- is a derivative suffix with the same function as -ɬ- in Akhvakh, -j- marks feminine agreement, and -o is the converbial ending. However, as discussed above for Akhvakh, the mere possibility of this segmentation does not ensure that hak’u-ɬi-ɬ-o can really be analyzed as the converbial form of a verb derived from a noun, since this analysis also implies that such forms exist only for nouns from which a verb can be derived, are incompatible with plural marking and noun dependents, and are not found in predicative argument function. Unfortunately, these questions are not discussed in the Bagvalal grammar.

I have not found explicit mentions of similar suffixes in other descriptions of Andic or Tsezic languages, but they sporadically occur in sentences illustrating other grammatical phenomena, and in dictionary examples. In most cases, they lend themselves to an obvious decomposition into a first formative -ɬ- also found with the derivative function mentioned above for Akhvakh and Avar -ɬ-, and a second formative identical with a converbial ending of the language in question: Karata (Andic) axiɣan-ɬe ‘as a gardener’, uʃter-ɬe ‘as a teacher’ (Magomedova & Xalidova 2001: 27 & 78), Godoberi (Andic) savetiɬi pirsidatel-ɬu ‘as the president of the Council’ (Saidova 2006), Khwarshi (Tsezic) dibir-ɬin ‘as a mullah’ (Khalilova 2009: 76), etc. Note that, in the Godoberi example, the genitive dependent provides decisive evidence that pirsidatel-ɬu is a case form of pirsidatel rather than the converbial form of a derived verb.

We can therefore safely conclude that a verb root *-ɬ- ‘become’ can be reconstructed at least at Proto-Avar-Andi-Tsez level, and that the converbial form of this verb has grammaticalized into an essive case ending at least in Northern Akhvakh, and probably in several other languages of this branch of East Caucasian.4

4 I have not tried to find cognates of Proto-Avar-Andi-Tsez *-ɬ- ‘become’ in other branches of North East Caucasian, because this would necessitate solving first a question I am not in a position to solve. The point is that, in addition to grammaticalized reflexes of an old root *-ɬ- ‘become’, Andic languages also have verbs with lateral consonants in their roots and ‘become’ among their possible meanings, like Akhvakh b-oč-uru a (see Ex. (9a-b) above). Any attempt at enlarging the comparative data summarized here should therefore be very careful with phonetic correspondences involving Andic laterals. For example, Bagvalal has a verb b-udu-la including ‘become’ among its possible meanings, but Bagvalal t regularly corresponds to i in other Andic languages, whereas t in other Andic languages regularly corresponds to Bagvalal l(h), and the derivative suffix attested as ɬ in other languages is in Bagvalal -l(h)i; consequently, Bagvalal b-udu-la ‘become’ is probably not a reflex of *-ɬ- and is rather cognate with Akhvakh b-oč-uru a, Tindi b-ʊɬ-ɬha, Karata b-oč-aɬa, or Godoberi b-ʊɬ-i.
8. Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to show that, in spite of a descriptive tradition that marginalizes or even ignores them, case suffixes comparable to Uralic ‘essives’ or South and North West Caucasian ‘adverbials’ can be identified in some North East Caucasian languages. Moreover, even on the basis of the existing documentation, it is possible to find in North East Caucasian languages interesting data about the possible emergence of essive cases as the result of the grammaticalization of a construction meaning ‘in X-hood’, as in Lezgi, or of a construction meaning ‘having become X’, as in Avar-Andi-Tsez languages. One may therefore suspect that a systematic inquiry about the expression of essive and related meanings in North East Caucasian might give interesting insights into this question.

Abbreviations


References