

## Language documentation and verb inflection typology: the case of Northern Akhvakh (Nakh-Daghestanian)

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### 1. Introduction

Describing so far under-documented languages is crucial for a better understanding of linguistic diversity. In this paper, I examine the contribution of Northern Akhvakh to the typology of the distinctions expressed in verb inflection. This language provides particularly interesting data on the following two points: (a) finiteness and the *syntax-morphology* interface, and (b) evidentiality/mirativity.

The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 presents the basics of Northern Akhvakh morphosyntax. Section 3 deals with the participial clauses of Northern Akhvakh and their significance for a general definition of the notion of finiteness. Section 4 discusses an uncommon pattern of person variations found in Northern Akhvakh verb morphology.

### 2. The Akhvakh language

#### 2.1. Location, genetic affiliation, transcription

Akhvakh (*aš<sup>w</sup>aī mič<sup>i</sup>*, Russian *axvaxskij jazyk*) belongs to the Andic (sub-)branch of the Northeast Caucasian (or Nakh-Daghestanian) family. According to Magomedova & 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 on which this paper is based 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, and in Axaxdərə near Zaqatala (Azerbaijan).

Like the other Andic languages, Akhvakh has no writing tradition, but is now written by means of an adaptation of the Avar version of the Cyrillic alphabet. The transcription used in this paper 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 *ẓ̌* (voiced); lateral voiceless affricate *l̥*; the macron is used for long vowel and strong consonants.

## 2.2. Clause structure

Akhvakh clause structure is characterized by flexible constituent order. Case marking of core NPs and gender-number agreement of the verb are consistently ergative.

- (1) a. *waša w-oq'-ari.*  
 boy M-come-PF<sub>1</sub>  
 'The boy came.'
- b. *aḱ'a j-eq'-ari.*  
 woman F-come-PF<sub>1</sub>  
 'The woman came.'
- c. *imiχi b-eq'-ari.*  
 donkey N-come-PF<sub>1</sub>  
 'The donkey came.'
- d. *aḱ'a-ḱ-e imiχi b-eL-ari.*  
 woman-F<sub>o</sub>-ERG donkey N-bring-PF<sub>1</sub>  
 'The woman brought the donkey.'
- e. *aḱ'a-ḱ-e waša w-oL-ari.*  
 woman-F<sub>o</sub>-ERG boy M-bring-PF<sub>1</sub>  
 'The woman brought the boy.'
- f. *milica-ṣ<sup>w</sup>-e aḱ'a j-eL-ari.*  
 policeman-M<sub>o</sub>-ERG woman F-bring-PF<sub>1</sub>  
 'The policeman brought the woman.'

Arguments whose identity is recoverable from the context are not obligatorily expressed, and unexpressed arguments receiving an arbitrary interpretation are possible too. No syntactic constraint conditions the interpretation of null arguments, but in practice, arbitrary zeros are much more common in texts than anaphoric zeros; in dialog, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns are commonly omitted.

Causative is the only valency-changing mechanism systematically expressed via verb morphology or grammaticalized periphrases.

## 2.2 Nouns and noun phrases

Three semantically transparent agreement classes of nouns are distinguished in the singular: human masculine (M), human feminine (F), and non-human (N). In the plural, the distinction *masculine* vs. *feminine* is neutralized, resulting in a binary opposition *human plural* (H<sup>+</sup>) vs. *non-human plural* (N<sup>+</sup>).

In canonical NPs, the head noun is in final position and is inflected for number and case. In headless NPs (i.e., in NPs the interpretation of which requires retrieving

from the context a notion that could be expressed as the head of a canonical NP), class, number and case marks attach to the noun dependent that, in the absence of an overt head noun, constitutes the last word of the NP.

All noun dependents in canonical NPs optionally take class suffixes agreeing with the head noun, and some adjectives have obligatory class agreement prefixes. However, not all adjectives have class agreement prefixes, noun dependents other than adjectives very rarely occur with agreement suffixes in canonical NPs, and suffixal agreement of adjectives is usual only in the H' class. Akhvakh has no case agreement.

Number inflection of nouns is irregular and involves considerable free variation.

The 1st and 2nd person pronouns show irregularities in their case inflection, but they distinguish the same cases as nouns. They are not marked for gender. Akhvakh has an inclusive pronoun distinct from the 1<sup>st</sup> person plural pronoun, but no 3rd person pronoun proper; demonstratives are used in the discursive function fulfilled by dedicated 3rd person pronouns in other languages.

The nominative, used in the extra-syntactic function of quotation or designation and in S or P roles, has no overt mark. Case suffixes may attach to a stem identical with the nominative, or to a special *oblique stem*. In the singular, the formation of the oblique stem is very irregular and involves considerable free variation. The standard 'oblique stem markers' expressing class distinctions (M *-s̄u-*, F/N *-ī-*, HPL *-lo-*, NPL *-li-* or *-le-*) are more systematically used in the plural than in the singular. In headless NPs, the use of the standard oblique stem markers is systematic.

Case inflection includes the following cases:

- ERG (ergative): *-de*
- DAT (dative): *-La*
- GEN (genitive):  $\emptyset$  or *-ī*
- COM (comitative) *-k'ena*
- ESS (essive) *-te*
- MDT (mediative) *-gute*
- three spatial cases, LOC (locative) *-i* or *-e*, ALL (allative) *-a*, and ABL (ablative) *-u(ne)*; the spatial case markers are obligatorily preceded by orientation markers (OR) expressing types of spatial configurations (in, under, etc.).

### 2.3. Verb inflection

Akhvakh verbs always show an overt inflectional suffix, but with respect to prefixal inflection, verbs divide into two morphological classes: those who obligatorily include a prefixal slot, and those devoid of it.

Suffixal inflection is identical for all verbs and expresses TAM, evidentiality-mirativity, polarity, finiteness, and class agreement with the nominative argument. Person variations are found only in the perfective positive, and follow a typologically rare pattern that will be discussed in section 4.

The prefixal inflection of the verbs that take inflectional prefixes is entirely independent from the distinctions of TAM, evidentiality/mirativity, polarity or

finiteness expressed by suffixes, and invariably expresses class agreement with the nominative argument (S or P).

The synthetic verb forms that have the ability to head independent clauses are characterized by the following paradigm of suffixes (or combinations of suffixes):<sup>1</sup>

- perfective<sub>1</sub>: HPL *-iri*, other classes *-ari* or *-eri*
- perfective<sub>2</sub>: HPL *-idi*, other classes *-ada(-CL)*
- perfective negative: *-il-a(-CL)*
- perfective<sub>3</sub>: M *-u-wudi*, F *-i-wudi*, N *-a-wudi* or *-e-wudi*, NPL *-ari-wudi* or *-eri-wudi*
- perfective<sub>3</sub> negative: M *-il-u-wudi*, F *-il-i-wudi*, N *-il-a-wudi* or *-il-e-wudi*, NPL *-il-ari-wudi* or *-il-eri-wudi*
- perfective<sub>4</sub>: M *-u-wa*, F *-i-wa*, N *-a-wa*, HPL *-aji*, NPL *-ari-wa*
- perfective<sub>4</sub> negative: M *-uš-u-wa*, F *-uš-i-wa*, N *-uš-a-wa*, HPL *-uš-aji*, NPL *-uš-ari-wa*
- imperfective<sub>1</sub>: *-iri*
- imperfective<sub>2</sub>: *-ida(-CL)*
- imperfective<sub>1</sub> negative: *-iki*
- imperfective<sub>2</sub> negative: *-ika(-CL)*
- potential: M/N *-u-wa*, F *-i-wa*, HPL *-oji*, NPL *-uri-wa*
- imperative: *-a*
- prohibitive: *-uba*
- optative: *-a-l̄'a*
- optative negative: *-uba-l̄'a*

The two imperfectives are partially synonymous, and imperfective<sub>1</sub> tends to become obsolete, except in some modal uses in which it cannot be replaced by imperfective<sub>2</sub>.

The four perfectives do not differ in their TAM value, but only in their evidentiality/mirativity implications. Perfective<sub>1</sub> and perfective<sub>2</sub> imply that the speaker has a direct knowledge of the event (s)he is relating, perfective<sub>3</sub> implies indirect knowledge (inference or hearsay), and perfective<sub>4</sub> may encode either surprise, or a particular attitude of the speaker imposing him/herself as an epistemic authority. The distinction between perfective<sub>1</sub> and perfective<sub>2</sub> constitutes the topic of section 4.

Additional TAM values are expressed by analytic verb forms with the copula *godi*, the verb *bik'urula* 'be', or the verb *mičunula* 'be found' in auxiliary function.

Four of the independent verb forms listed above are also used as participles: perfective<sub>2</sub>, perfective negative, imperfective<sub>2</sub>, and imperfective negative<sub>2</sub>. This constitutes the topic of section 3.

Strictly dependent verb forms include a verbal noun (or *masdar*), an infinitive, a general converb, a progressive converb, and several specialized converbs expressing various semantic types of adverbial subordination.

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<sup>1</sup> In cases of allomorphic variation, whenever possible I have selected a single quotation form that can be analyzed as a relatively direct representation of the underlying form. Variants are however mentioned in cases of allomorphic variations whose analysis is still problematic at this stage of the investigation. (-CL) signals forms characterized by the optional addition of class agreement markers that may, either occur as separate suffixes, or merge with the last vowel of the preceding suffix.

### 3. Participles and finiteness

#### 3.1. Theoretical approaches to finiteness

The notion of finiteness originates in the traditional division found in Latin grammars between verbal forms inflected for person ('verba finita') and verbal forms devoid of person inflection ('verba infinita': infinitives, participles, gerunds, and supines).

According to what can be called the inflectional approach to finiteness, the *finite* vs. *nonfinite* distinction relies on the presence vs. absence of some inflectional characteristics, not necessarily person, as in traditional Latin grammar, but also tense, and sometimes others too. The importance given to the classification of verb forms according to the presence vs. absence of some inflectional distinctions reflects the widespread view that "only finite verbs are able to form an independent utterance and that each independent utterance must have one and only one finite verb." (Nikolaeva 2007a:3)

The limitations of this conception are well-known. The inflectional features posited as being responsible for finiteness are not universal, and counterexamples to the hypothesis of a universal correlation between reduced inflection and inability to head independent clauses are easy to find – see in particular (Nikolaeva 2007a), (Nikolaeva 2007b). This correlation is at best a tendency calling for functional explanations – see (Cristofaro 2007), (Bisang 2007).

Generative syntax developed a more abstract notion of finiteness viewed as a clausal category with the status of functional head, responsible for a variety of syntactic phenomena, in particular the presence of an overt subject in the nominative case in finite clauses, contrasting with its absence in nonfinite structures (control and raising structures, structures in which the subject of a dependent clause receives its Case from the main verb or from the complementizer). Generative syntax also developed the idea that finiteness is relevant to the distribution of referential expressions and anaphoric elements, in the sense that dependent finite clauses constitute opaque domains, not accessible to rules operating in the main clause, as opposed to the accessibility (or transparency) of nonfinite clauses.

However, until recently, the generative approach to finiteness maintained an essential element of the traditional approach, namely the hypothesis of a universal correlation between the syntactic properties of verb forms and the richness of specification of agreement and tense. Faced with data contradicting this assumption, some authors have explored solutions that make it possible to handle the individual cases without entirely dropping the basic tenets of the inflectional approach, but others, in line with the functional literature, have concluded that there is no universal correlation between finiteness as a clausal category and verbal morphology, although there are obvious cross-linguistic tendencies.

In the constructional approach to finiteness, developed in various non-transformational frameworks (Sells 2007), finiteness is a formal characterization of clauses accounting for their ability to constitute independent utterances with particular illocutionary forces and/or the way they can be inserted as constituents of

complex structures, but there is no a priori limitation on the possible manifestations of finiteness. Situations where finiteness as a grammatical feature of clauses straightforwardly correlates with the choice between different morphological types of verb forms are viewed as only one of the possible ways of encoding finiteness, and the recognition of the status of a clause with respect to finiteness may also rely on a particular combination of words that, taken individually, cannot be analyzed as bearing finiteness markers. Note also that, in this conception, finiteness must not necessarily be conceived as a binary feature.

### 3.2. The participial clauses of Akhvakh

In languages in which the inflectional approach to finiteness is not problematic, the forms traditionally labeled ‘participles’ have the following properties:

- participles are verb forms in the sense that, with respect to their ‘internal syntax’ (i.e., the internal structure of the phrases they head), they have the same properties as verb forms heading independent clauses;
- participles are non-finite verb forms, i.e., they cannot head independent clauses, and this inability is correlated with the lack of morphological distinctions characteristic of the independent verb forms of the same language;
- participles have the ‘external syntax’ of adjectives: taken as a whole, clauses headed by participles are syntactically equivalent to adjective phrases; they can fulfill the roles of noun dependent and non-verbal predicate, or undergo nominalization, in the same way as adjective phrases;
- in all of the roles accessible to adjective phrases, the verb form heading a participial clause shows the same behavior (in particular, the same inflectional characteristics) as the head of an adjective phrase fulfilling the same role;
- semantically, participial clauses modify the noun they depend on by identifying it to an unexpressed constituent of the participial clause; they can be viewed as a particular type of relativization strategy.<sup>2</sup>

Northern Akhvakh has four verb forms occurring in pre-nominal relative clauses in which they show the same characteristics as attributive adjectives with respect to their relation to the head noun.<sup>3</sup> Such relative clauses can be used in predicate function or nominalized in the same way as adjective phrases, and the verb forms that head them take agreement suffixes and case inflection exactly like adjectives. What is particular in the case of Akhvakh is that none of the verb forms found in participial relatives is specialized in this function. In Akhvakh, the set of verb forms occurring as heads of relative clauses with a typically participial behavior is a proper subset of the set of verb forms occurring as heads of independent clauses. However, *in constructional terms*, the participial relative clauses of Akhvakh are not entirely identical to independent clauses headed by the same verb forms. They may include the same NPs with the same case marking, and they show the same gender-number

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<sup>2</sup> On participial constructions as a relative clause formation strategy, see in particular (Comrie & Polinsky 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Akhvakh also has a correlative relative clause construction, but it is limited to generic relative clauses.

agreement mechanism as independent clauses, but they are strictly verb-final, whereas the verbal head of an independent clause has no fixed position.

Let us first examine the participial use of imperfective<sub>2</sub>. Verb forms marked by the imperfective<sub>2</sub> suffix *-ida* occur as heads not only of independent assertive clauses, as in ex. (2a), but also of relative clauses, as in ex. (2b). There is no overt mark of the dependent status of the relative clause, and there is no overt indication of the relativized role either. The only difference between such a relative clause and an independent clause with a missing term lending itself to an anaphorical or arbitrary reading is the obligatory final position of the verb in the relative clause, as illustrated by the fact that a sequence such as *du-la kw-ĩda b-eχ-urula* is acceptable as an independent clause with a missing argument anaphorically identified to a discursively salient entity – ex. (2c), but not as a relative clause – ex. (2d).

(2) a. *du-la kw-ĩda ha č'ili b-eχ-urula.*

2SG<sub>o</sub>-DAT want-IPF<sub>2</sub> PROX house N-buy-INF

'You want to buy this house.'

b. [*du-la b-eχ-urula kw-ĩda*] *č'ili rešeda g-o-di.*

2SG<sub>o</sub>-DAT N-buy-INF want-IPF<sub>2</sub> house nice COP-N-POS

'The house you want to buy is nice.'

c. *du-la kw-ĩda b-eχ-urula.*

2SG<sub>o</sub>-DAT want-IPF<sub>2</sub> N-buy-INF

'You want to buy it.'

d. \**[du-la kw-ĩda b-eχ-urula] č'ili ...*

intended: 'The house you want to buy ...'

Ex. (3) & (4) illustrate the corresponding free relatives. In ex. (3b), the free relative fulfills a role requiring the zero-marked nominative case, whereas in ex. (4b), it fulfills a role requiring an overt case mark. In both cases, the suffixes that attach to the verb form (a class suffix in (3b), an oblique stem marker followed by the case marker in (4b)) are identical to those attached to nominalized adjectives in the same contexts.

(3) a. [*du-la b-eχ-urula kw-ĩda*] *č'ili rešeda g-o-di.*

2SG<sub>o</sub>-DAT N-buy-INF want-IPF<sub>2</sub> house nice COP-N-POS

'The house you want to buy is nice.'

b. [*du-la b-eχ-urula kw-ĩda*]-*be rešeda g-o-di.*

2SG<sub>o</sub>-DAT N-buy-INF want-IPF<sub>2</sub>-N house nice COP-N-POS

'The one you want to buy is nice.'

(4) a. *eq̄-a [di-la b-eχ-urula kw-ĩda] č'ili-ĩ-g-a!*

look.at-IMP 1SG<sub>o</sub>-DAT N-buy-INF want-IPF<sub>2</sub> house-N<sub>o</sub>-OR<sub>1</sub>-ALL

'Look at the house I want to buy!'

- b. *eḡ-a* [di-La b-eḡ-urula kw-ĩda]-ĩ-g-a!  
 look.at-IMP 1SG<sub>o</sub>-DAT N-buy-INF want-IPF<sub>2</sub>-N<sub>o</sub>-OR<sub>1</sub>-ALL  
 ‘Look at the one I want to buy!’

As illustrated by ex. (5), the imperfective<sub>2</sub> negative shares this ability to occur both in independent clauses and in participial relatives in which it has the behavior of the head of an adjective phrase with respect to the head noun.

- (5) a. *mik’e-li heresi m-ač-ika.*  
 child-PL lie N-tell-IPF<sub>2</sub>.NEG  
 ‘Children do not tell lies.’

- b. *heresi m-ač-ika.*  
 lie N-tell-IPF<sub>2</sub>.NEG  
 ‘I don’t tell lies.’, ‘You don’t tell lies.’, ‘S/he doesn’t tell lies.’, etc.

- c. *di-La kw-ĩda [heresi m-ač-ika] mik’e-li.*  
 1SG<sub>o</sub>-DAT like-IPF<sub>2</sub> lie N-tell-IPF<sub>2</sub>.NEG child-PL  
 ‘I like children who do not tell lies.’

- d. *di-La kw-ĩda [heresi m-ač-iki]-ji.*  
 1SG<sub>o</sub>-DAT like-IPF<sub>2</sub> lie N-tell-IPF<sub>2</sub>.NEG-H<sup>+</sup>  
 ‘I like those who do not tell lies.’

- e. *dene buž-ida [heresi m-ač-ika] ād-o-lo-ga.*  
 1SG believe-IPF<sub>2</sub> lie N-tell-IPF<sub>2</sub>.NEG person-PL-H<sup>+</sup>-OR<sub>1</sub>-ALL  
 ‘I believe people who do not tell lies.’

- f. *dene buž-ida [heresi m-ač-iko]-lo-ga.*  
 1SG believe-IPF<sub>2</sub> lie N-tell-IPF<sub>2</sub>.NEG-H<sup>+</sup>-OR<sub>1</sub>-ALL  
 ‘I believe those who do not tell lies.’

Perfective<sub>2</sub> occurs in the relativization of clauses that, if realized as independent clauses, would be headed by a verb either in the perfective<sub>1</sub> or in the perfective<sub>2</sub>, because the distinction in assertor’s involvement expressed by the choice between these two forms (see section 4) is not relevant to relative clauses – ex. (6).

- (6) a. *de-de lāg-a r-eḡ-ada.*  
 1SG-ERG sheep-PL N<sup>+</sup>-buy-PF<sub>2</sub>  
 ‘I bought sheep.’

- b. *lāga r-eḡ-ada dene*  
 sheep-PL N<sup>+</sup>-buy-PF<sub>2</sub> 1SG  
 ‘I who bought sheep’



- c. *ek'wa-s<sup>w</sup>-e lāg-a r-eχ-ari.*  
 man-M<sub>o</sub>-ERG sheep-PL N<sup>+</sup>-buy-PF<sub>1</sub>  
 'The man bought sheep.'
- d. *lāg-a r-eχ-ada ek<sup>w</sup>a*  
 sheep-PL N<sup>+</sup>-buy-PF<sub>2</sub> man  
 'the man that bought sheep'
- e. *di-La harig<sup>w</sup>-iL-a [lāg-a r-eχ-ada] ek<sup>w</sup>a.*  
 1SG-DAT see-NEG-PF sheep-PL N<sup>+</sup>-buy-PF<sub>2</sub> man  
 'I did not see the man who bought sheep.'
- f. *di-La harig<sup>w</sup>-iL-a [lāga r-eχ-ada]-we.*  
 1SG-DAT see-NEG.PF sheep-PL N<sup>+</sup>-buy-PF<sub>1</sub>-M  
 'I did not see the one who bought sheep.'
- g. *eq̄-a [lāg-a r-eχ-ada] ek'wa-sū-g-a!*  
 look.at-IMP sheep-PL N<sup>+</sup>-buy-PF<sub>2</sub> man-M<sub>o</sub>-OR<sub>1</sub>-ALL  
 'Look at the man who bought sheep!'
- h. *eq̄-a [lāg-a r-eχ-ada]-sū-g-a!*  
 look.at-IMP sheep-PL N<sup>+</sup>-buy-PF<sub>2</sub>-M<sub>o</sub>-OR<sub>1</sub>-ALL  
 'Look at the one who bought sheep!'
- Finally, as illustrated by ex. (7), the situation with perfective negative *-iL-a* is exactly the same as with imperfective<sub>2</sub> positive *-ida* or imperfective<sub>2</sub> negative *-ika*.
- (7) a. *ha ek<sup>w</sup>a w-ošq̄-iL-a.*  
 PROX man M-work-NEG-PF  
 'This man did not work.'
- b. *[w-ošq̄-iL-a ek<sup>w</sup>a] du wači g-u-di.*  
 M-work-NEG-PF man 2SG<sub>o</sub>(GEN) brother COP-M-POS  
 'The man who did not work is your brother.'
- c. *[w-ošq̄-iL-a]-we du wači g-u-di.*  
 M-work-NEG-PF-M 2SG<sub>o</sub>(GEN) brother COP-M-POS  
 'The one who did not work is your brother.'
- d. *ači o-x-uba [w-ošq̄-iL-a] ek<sup>w</sup>a-sū-La!*  
 money N-give-PROH M-work-NEG-PF man-M<sub>o</sub>-DAT  
 'Don't give money to the man who did not work!'

- e. *ači*            *o-ḡ-uba*    [*w-ošq̄-īL-a*]-*ṣu-La!*  
 money            N-give-PROH    M-work-NEG-PF-M<sub>o</sub>-DAT  
 ‘Don’t give money to the one who did not work!’

### 3.3. Conclusion of section 3

To summarize, Akhvakh has participial clauses, i.e. phrases that (apart from the obligatory final position of the verb) have the same internal structure as independent clauses with respect to the relationship between the verb and argument or adjunct NPs, but behave like adjective phrases with respect to their insertion into a broader construction. Participial clauses differ from independent clauses by the obligatory final position of the verb and by the limited inventory of verb forms that can head them, but none of the forms found as heads of participial clauses is specialized in this function: all of them also occur in independent assertive or interrogative clauses.

In order to avoid contradictions and/or circularity in the description of such situations, it is crucial to admit that the definitions of *construction types* are logically anterior to the definitions of *form types*. Very often, the recognition of a type of construction is ensured by the morphological nature of its head, but the formal identification of a construction does not necessarily rely on the presence of a word belonging to a given morphological type. In Akhvakh the recognition of participial clauses in strictly constructional terms is not problematic, but defining them as clauses headed by a participle would not be correct, since Akhvakh has no form specialized in participle function.

There is nothing exceptional in the existence of verb forms fulfilling the predicate function both in independent assertive or interrogative clauses and in participial clauses, and the historical source of such situations is well-known. A well-attested scenario is that such forms originally were specialized participles. Given their adjectival nature, participles can be used in adjectival predication, but adjectival predications involving participles tend to undergo evolutions blurring the distinction with verbal predication: if a copula is originally present, it may be deleted, or fuse with the participle, becoming thus a TAM/agreement affix; if the case marking of the arguments of a participle used as an adjectival predicate differs from that found in verbal predication proper, it may be readjusted; a similar readjustment may concern constraints on constituent order too, if adjectival predication with a participle in predicate function originally involves constraints different from those observed in verbal predication proper, etc.

Nakh-Daghestanian languages provide ample evidence that such processes have been very active in the history of this language family. What makes the case of Akhvakh particularly interesting is that this language has no specialized participles at all, but at the same time unquestionably possesses a clause type identifiable as a participial clause and constituting therefore a clear case of a non-finite clause type headed by verb forms that cannot be classified in the absolute as non-finite.

## 4. Assertor's involvement marking

### 4.1. A terminological point

The term most commonly found in the literature for the phenomenon discussed in this section is *conjunct/disjunct system*. Terms such as *conjunct/disjunct*, *conjunctive/disjunctive* or *conjoint/disjoint* are used in different descriptive traditions to label morphosyntactic or phonological distinctions that have nothing in common apart from the fact that, in some way or another, the 'disjunct' term of the opposition is characterized by the absence of some link presupposed by the 'conjunct' term. As illustrated by ex. (8) & (9), what we have in Akhvakh is a *conjunct/disjunct system* in the sense originating from Austin Hale's study of person marking in Kathmandu Newari (Hale 1980), i.e., a binary contrast in verb morphology (or in auxiliary systems) with the following distribution:

- the *conjunct* forms occur in statements with the entailment that the speaker is involved in the event, and in questions with the entailment that the addressee is involved in the event;
- the *disjunct* forms occur in statements about events in which the speaker is not involved, or is involved in a way that, in the system of the language in question, is not considered relevant to the selection of a *conjunct* form; they also occur in questions about events in which the addressee is not involved, or is involved in a way that, in the system of the language in question, is not considered relevant to the selection of a *conjunct* form.

(8) a. *de-de kaʁa q̄ʰar-ada.*

1SG-ERG paper write-PF<sub>2</sub>  
'I wrote a letter.'

b. *me-de / hu-s̄ʰ-e / hu-ḥ̄-e kaʁa q̄ʰar-ari.*

2SG-ERG / DIST-M<sub>0</sub>-ERG / DIST-F<sub>0</sub>-ERG paper write-PF<sub>1</sub>  
'You / he / she wrote a letter.'

c. \**de-de kaʁa q̄ʰar-ari.*

d. \**me-de / \*hu-s̄ʰ-e / \*hu-ḥ̄-e kaʁa q̄ʰar-ada.*

(9) a. *me-de č̣ũda kaʁa q̄ʰar-ada?*

2SG-ERG when paper write-PF<sub>2</sub>  
'When did you write a letter?'

b. *de-de / hu-s̄ʰ-e / hu-ḥ̄-e č̣ũda kaʁa q̄ʰar-ari?*

1SG-ERG / DIST-M<sub>0</sub>-ERG / DIST-F<sub>0</sub>-ERG when paper write-PF<sub>1</sub>  
'When did I / he / she write a letter?'

c. \**me-de č̣ũda kaʁa q̄ʰar-ari?*

d. \**de-de* / \**hu-ṣ<sup>w</sup>-e* / \**hu-ṣ̄-e* čūda kawa q̄<sup>w</sup>ar-ada?

*Conjunct/disjunct* systems in this sense show variations in the particular type of involvement that may be directly relevant to the choice between *conjunct* and *disjunct* forms, ranging from the very broad notion of involvement underlying the *conjunct/disjunct* pattern of Awa Pit to the very restrictive notion of involvement found in Akhvakh and in Kathmandu Newari.

The existence of such systems raises the question of the recognition of a speech act role subsuming the speaker in statements and the addressee in questions. The obvious solution is that, in statements, the assertion of a propositional content is in charge of the speaker, whereas in questions, the addressee is asked to assume the responsibility of an assertion. In other words, **the general characteristic of so-called *conjunct/disjunct* systems is that they are sensitive to the fact that the speech act participant in charge of the assertion is involved or not in the event**, which pace Aikhenvald 2004 can be viewed as a particular variety of evidentiality marking.

Current terminology lacks a cover term for speaker in statements and addressee in questions. *Locutor* and *informant* have been used with this meaning, but are not really satisfying, since their etymology may suggest other interpretations. *Self person* vs. *other person* (Sun 1993) or *egophoric* (Tournadre) are unquestionably better, but are not entirely devoid of potential ambiguity either. Since the speaker in declarative clauses and the addressee in questions have in common that they are in charge of an assertion, the only fully transparent and unambiguous terminology consists in labeling this speech act role *assertor*, and in substituting *assertor's involvement marking* for *conjunct/disjunct* in the sense of Hale 1980.

The initial motivation of *conjunct/disjunct* comes from the use of the *conjunct* and *disjunct* verb forms of Kathmandu Newari in complement clauses of verbs of saying, where *conjunct* forms are used (with volitional verbs) when the subject of the main verb and the subject in the complement clause are coreferential, whereas *disjunct* forms imply disjoint reference, regardless of person – ex. (10). Similar examples from Akhvakh will be given below.

(10) Kathmandu Newari (Hargreaves 1991 quoted by DeLancey 1992)

a. wō:    lā    na-e    dhakā: dhāl-a.  
 he.ERG    meat eat-CONJ COMP    say-PST.DISJ  
 'He<sub>i</sub> said that he<sub>i</sub> will eat meat.'

b. wō:    lā    na-i    dhakā: dhāl-a.  
 he.ERG    meat eat-DISJ COMP    say-PST.DISJ  
 'He<sub>i</sub> said that he<sub>j</sub> will eat meat.'

Several scholars of Tibeto-Burman languages have expressed reservations about the terms *conjunct/disjunct* and their theoretical motivation. The point is that Hale did not consider the possibility of unifying the description of the contrast by

introducing the notion of assertor as a speech act role, and attempted to achieve a unified description by treating independent declarative clauses and questions as complement of abstract performative verbs. This treatment may have been inspired by the underlying structures postulated by theories that enjoyed some popularity in the seventies, such as Generative Semantics. However, it seems much more natural to consider the logophoricity effect in reported speech as a mere consequence of assertor's involvement marking in complex constructions in which an embedded statement may refer to an assertor different from the assertor of the main clause, irrespective of the fact that the relation between the two assertors may be blurred by the deictic shift characteristic of indirect speech.

#### 4.2. Assertor's involvement marking systems in the languages of the world

Assertor's involvement marking patterns have been first described in Tibetan, Newari, and a few other Tibeto-Burman languages closely related to Tibetan. Important references on the assertor's involvement marking systems of Tibetan and closely related languages include Hale 1980, Schöttelndreyer 1980, DeLancey 1986, DeLancey 1990, Hargreaves 1991, DeLancey 1992, Sun 1993, Genetti 1994, Tournadre 1996a, Tournadre 1996b, van Driem 1998, Haller 2000, Garrett 2001, Haller 2004, Hargreaves 2005, Bickel 2008, Tournadre 2008.

Assertor's involvement marking systems have also been signaled in Tibeto-Burman languages more distantly related to Tibetan. The Loloish language Akha is discussed by DeLancey 1992 (on Akha, see also Thurgood 1986, Hansson 2003), and Post 2007 describes such a system in the Tani language Galo. It is however difficult to evaluate the exact extent of assertor's involvement marking among Tibeto-Burman languages, because atypical person marking systems and complex systems of epistemic marking are particularly common in this language family, and it may be difficult to evaluate the exact role played by assertor's involvement in their organization, not to speak of documentation problems.

Outside Tibeto-Burman but in an area characterized by contact with Tibetan, assertor's involvement marking systems are found in Monguor, a group of Mongolic languages (Shira Yughur, Mongghul, Mangghuer, Bonan, and Santa) in which the development of such systems, traditionally described as expressing the category of *perspective*, is considered a consequence of Tibetan influence (Nugteren 2003, Georg 2003, Slater 2003, Hujiltu 2003, Kim 2003).

Assertor's involvement marking systems have also been signaled:

- in the Barbacoan languages (Colombia, Ecuador) – see Curnow 2002b, and on individual languages, Curnow 2002a on Awa Pit and Dickinson 2000 on Tsafiki),
- in the Papuan language Oksapmin (Loughnane 2007),
- in the Mehweb dialect of the Nakh-Daghestanian language Dargwa (Magometov 1982).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Northern Akhvakh and Mehweb Dargwa are spoken in different parts of Daghestan and belong to language/dialect groups (Andic and Dargwa respectively) that do not have a particularly close relationship within the Nakh-Daghestanian family. More information about person distinctions in the verbal morphology of the Avar dialect geographically located between Akhvakh and Dargwa would

### 4.3. The assertor's involvement marking pattern of Northern Akhvakh

#### 4.3.1. Introductory remarks

The assertor's involvement marking pattern described here has not been recognized in previous works on Northern Akhvakh (Magomedbekova 1967, Kibrik 1979, Kibrik 1985, Magomedova & Abdulaeva 2007). It occurs only in the perfective positive and involves the two forms labeled here perfective<sub>1</sub> and perfective<sub>2</sub>.

Both perfective<sub>1</sub> and perfective<sub>2</sub> normally imply a direct knowledge of the event.<sup>5</sup> They are consistently used in autobiographical narratives, but also occur, in competition with the perfect (an analytical tense) in reference to recent events clearly relevant to the present situation.

#### 4.3.2. Assertor's involvement marking in declarative and interrogative clauses

In contexts other than reported speech, the choice between *-ada* and *-ari* can be described as expressing a *1st person (-ada)* vs. *2nd/3rd person (-ari)* contrast in declarative clauses, but *2nd person (-ada)* vs. *1st/3rd person (-ari)* contrast in questions, and involving a split intransitive pattern.

Transitive verbs consistently encode the assertive status of the A argument as summarized in the following chart:

	statements	questions
1st person A	<b>-ada</b>	<i>-ari</i>
2nd person A	<i>-ari</i>	<b>-ada</b>
3rd person A	<i>-ari</i>	<i>-ari</i>

Ex. (11a-c) and (12a) illustrate the choice between *-ari* and *-ada* in declarative and interrogative transitive clauses in which the A argument of a transitive verb is a speech act participant, whereas ex. (12b) shows that *-ari* is invariably selected (in declarative clauses as well as in questions) if A is not a speech act participant.

- (11) a. *eĭ'-ada, di-la q'abuĭ-ere g-o-la, me-de-la eĭ'-ari, di-la-la*".  
 say-PF<sub>2</sub> 1SG-DAT agree-PROG COP-N-NEG 2SG-ERG-ADD say-PF<sub>1</sub> 1SG-DAT-ADD  
 'I said "I don't agree", and you said "Neither do I".'

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be necessary before evaluating the possibility of an areal phenomenon: binary person distinctions in verb morphology have been signaled in Southern Akhvakh dialects, but the available documentation is not sufficient to determine whether they are involved in mechanisms of person agreement or assertor's involvement marking.

<sup>5</sup> Note however that, in fiction narratives, forms implying indirect knowledge are consistently used in the first sentences only; once the nature of the narration can be considered as established, the speaker may switch to forms that, in other contexts, would imply direct knowledge. Note also that hearsay may also be encoded by adding a quotative particle to forms that otherwise would be interpreted as implying direct knowledge.

b. *de-de čůda eĹ'-ari ha-be?*  
 2SG-ERG when say-PF<sub>1</sub> PROX-N  
 'When **did I say** this?'

c. *me-de čugu eĹ'-ada ha-be?*  
 2SG-ERG why say-PF<sub>2</sub> PROX-N  
 'Why **did you say** this?'

(12) a. *me-de čůda b-eχ-ada ha řiřal'e? -řuni b-eχ-ada.*  
 2SG-ERG when N-buy-PF<sub>2</sub> PROX dress yesterday N-buy-PF<sub>2</sub>  
 'When **did you buy** this dress? –**I bought** it yesterday.'

b. *hu-ř<sup>w</sup>-e čůda b-eχ-ari hu mařina? -řuni b-eχ-ari.*  
 DIST-M<sub>o</sub>-ERG when N-buy-PF<sub>1</sub> DEM car yesterday N-buy-PF<sub>1</sub>  
 'When **did he buy** that car? –**He bought** it yesterday.'

Intransitive verbs divide into two classes: those that encode the assertive status of the S argument in the same way as transitive verbs encode the assertive status of A, as in ex. (13), and those that invariably select *-ari*, as in ex. (14).

(13) a. *mene čůda w-ořq-ada? -řuni w-ořq-ada.*  
 2SG when M-work-PF<sub>2</sub> yesterday M-work-PF<sub>2</sub>  
 'When **did you work**? –**I worked** yesterday.'

e. *hu-we čůda w-ořq-ari? -řuni w-ořq-ari.*  
 DIST-M when M-work-PF<sub>1</sub> yesterday N-buy-PF<sub>1</sub>  
 'When **did he work**? –**He worked** yesterday.'

(14) a. *mene čůda h-ēni? -řuni h-ēni.*  
 2SG when recover-PF<sub>1</sub> yesterday recover-PF<sub>1</sub>  
 'When **did you recover**? –**I recovered** yesterday.'

e. *hu-we čůda h-ēni? -řuni h-ēni.*  
 DIST-M when recover-PFV yesterday recover-PF<sub>1</sub>  
 'When **did he recover**? –**He recovered** yesterday.'

The relatively high degree of grammaticalization of this system is confirmed by the fact that, in questions, the use of *-ada* with 2nd person A / S arguments is not sensitive to the distinction between true and rhetorical questions, in spite of the fact that rhetorical questions are disguised assertions. Ex. (11b), reproduced here as (15), was in fact produced in a context in which it clearly constituted a rhetorical question, and the same formulation would have been used in a true question.

(15) *de-de čŭda eĭ'-ari ha-be?*

2SG-ERG when say-PF<sub>1</sub> PROX-N

1. 'When did I say this?' → I don't remember, perhaps you do (true question)
2. 'When did I say this?' → I never said this (rhetorical question)

#### 4.3.3. -ari vs. -ada in reported speech

The observation of reported speech shows that assertor's involvement marking is not just an exotic variety of person agreement, since in reported speech, the choice between *-ari* and *-ada* has no direct relation with the person value manifested by the NP in S or A role (which may depend on the deictic shifts occurring in reported speech), and exclusively depends on the fact that the A / S argument coincides or not with the assertor of the reported clause.

In ex. (16), (16a) reproduces the original formulation of the sentence reported in (16b). The use of a long-distance reflexive (the anaphoric pronoun *žiwe*, here in the ergative feminine form *ĩĕ*) in logophoric function does not affect the choice of *-ada*. What is crucial is the coincidence between the A argument of the reported clause and the person whose speech is reported.

(16) a. *ha ĭgora de-de magazi-g-une b-eχ-e j-eq'-ada.*

PROX bread 1SG-ERG shop-OR<sub>1</sub>-ABL N-buy-N(CVB) F-come-PF<sub>2</sub>

'I brought this bread from the shop.'

b. *ilo-de<sub>i</sub> eĭ'-a-wi waša-sū-g-a,*

mother<sub>o</sub>-ERG tell-N-PF<sub>3</sub> boy-M<sub>o</sub>-OR<sub>1</sub>-ALL

'The mother told the boy

*ha ĭgora ĩ-ĭ-e<sub>i</sub> magazi-g-une b-eχ-e j-eq'-ada.*

DEM bread ANA-F<sub>o</sub>-ERG shop-OR<sub>1</sub>-ABL N-buy- N(CVB) F-come-PF<sub>2</sub>

that **she had brought** this bread from the shop.'

Similarly, in ex. (17), (17a) reproduces possible formulations of the sentence reported in (17b). The use of a 1st person pronoun in (17b), triggered by the coreference of the A argument of the reported clause with the reporting assertor, does not affect the choice of *-ari*. What is crucial is not the person feature manifested by the A argument (which reflects its coincidence with the reporting assertor), but the fact that the A argument of 'offend' does not coincide with the assertor of the reported clause, designated as 'the man'.

(17) a. *me-de / hu-s̄w-e dene q̄'war-āri.*

2SG-ERG / DEM-M<sub>o</sub>-ERG 1SG offend-PF<sub>1</sub>

'You / he offended me.'

b. *ek'wa-s̄w-e eĭ'-ari, de-de ži-we q̄'war-āri eĭ'-e.*

man-M<sub>o</sub>-ERG say-PF<sub>1</sub> 1SG-ERG ANA-M offend-PF<sub>1</sub> say-CVB

'The man said that I **offended** him.'



#### 4.3.4. Intransitive verbs and assertor's involvement marking

As illustrated by examples (13) and (14) above, the S argument of some intransitive verbs triggers the choice of *-ada* in the same conditions as the A argument of transitive verbs, whereas others never take *-ada*. This division of intransitive verbs into two classes a sample of which is given in (18) below belongs to a well-known type of split intransitivity,<sup>6</sup> since it reflects the degree of control exerted by the participant encoded as S. In this respect, the assertor's involvement system of Akhvakh shows a particularly striking similarity with that of Kathmandu Newari (Hargreaves 2005).

##### (18) a. Intransitive verbs taking *-ada* in the same conditions as transitive verbs:

*badaʃurula* 'laugh', *baχwadurula* 'play', *baʃurula* 'speak', *beqʷurula* 'come', *beβurula* 'stand up', *bešqurula* 'work', *beturula* 'run', *bišurula* 'win', *bišurula* 'gather', *biturula* 'lose', *boβurula* 'walk', *buqurula* 'fight', *bužurula* 'believe', *cʷiriʃilōrula* 'get vexed', *čakʷurula* 'urinate', *čōrula* 'wash', *damaʃilōrula* 'wonder', *gočʷurula* 'reach', *(βa)dukʷurula* 'sit down', *hādaχurula* 'hold one's tongue, listen', *hečʷurula* 'get up', *hīkʷunula* 'hiccup', *ħarurula* 'defecate', *hečurula* 'sneeze', *ħulōrula* 'scream', *ičʷeβʷurula* 'dress', *kakibōrula* 'pray', *kasurula* 'jump', *kočilōrula* 'move house', *korurula* 'move', *kʷōnula* 'lie down', *kʷoturula* 'run', *kʷusurula* 'squat down', *lebatiłōrula* 'show courage', *lorurula* 'crawl', *lʷurula* 'dance', *maʃeqʷurula* 'get angry', *minadaʃurula* 'part', *mukʷuʃilōrula* 'accept', *mūnula* 'go', *mutʷuʃilōrula* 'obey', *naʃurula* 'insult', *nikuqurula* 'swear', *ohōrula* 'cough', *pašmaʃilōrula* 'regret', *qaqadurula* 'beg', *qinaʃurula* 'come near', *qʷinurula* 'stand up', *qʷwilurula* 'slip', *qʷwilurula* 'bend', *raziʃilōrula* 'accept', *rehēturula* 'learn', *βurula* 'speak', *šimalaχurula* 'get angry', *šorurula* 'turn around', *šinurula* 'hide oneself', *šitʷurula* 'whistle', *šulaburula* 'feel embarrassed', *šururula* 'whisper', *tʷiqʷurula* 'jump', *ūhunula* 'moan', *ūkunula* 'eat', *ūβilōrula* 'think', *χajunula* 'snore', *χerurula* 'climb', *χeχitʷurula* 'hurry', *ʃedeʃilōrula* 'hurry', *ʃōrula* 'cry'.

##### b. Intransitive verbs compatible with human S arguments, but invariably taking the ending *-ari* :

*āhunula* 'be audible', *āβaχurula* 'perspire', *aqʷuʃurula* 'suffocate', *bačurula* 'calm down', *bačʷaqʷurula* 'be late', *balʷaraʃurula* 'lose weight', *baqarotʷurula* 'become old', *baχitilōrula* 'get jealous', *baχurula* 'get puzzled', *bečōturula* 'get blind', *bečʷurula* 'get satisfied (of hunger)', *beguʃurula* 'get drunk', *beχurula* 'be glad', *bičurula* 'get wet', *bilʷurula* 'die', *buxurula* 'fall down', *buxurula* 'feel cold', *čakōnula* 'get sick', *čaraturula* 'get fat', *gočʷurula* 'wake', *gwāzeʃurula* 'get fat', *ħarigurula* 'be visible', *hūnula* 'recover', *ħeraʃilōrula* 'be amazed', *kʷorurula* 'fall', *lurula* 'be afraid', *lʷerurula* 'get startled', *lʷiʃurula* 'panic', *lʷikʷunula* 'sleep', *makwačunula* 'be hungry', *miβeχurula* 'feel drowsy', *miʃitilōrula* 'become poor', *raʃilōrula* 'have plenty of time', *šakiʃilōrula* 'suspect', *taʃurula* 'get tired', *ʃadataʃurula* 'lose weight', *ʃāqʷažurula* 'be thirsty'.

Among the components of the notion of prototypical agentivity, control is more important here than volition, since verbs describing involuntary bodily processes that however allow for some degree of control (such as *hīkʷunula* 'hiccup' or *ʃōrula* 'cry') belong to the first subset. The ambiguous status of such verbs from the point of view of agentivity is apparent in the fact that, out of context, their imperative

<sup>6</sup> See in particular Van Valin 1990, Mithun 1991.

positive (e.g., *Cry!*) sounds somewhat strange, whereas their imperative negative (e.g., *Don't cry!* or *Stop crying!*) sounds perfectly normal.

Consequently, the assertor's involvement marking pattern of Akhvakh reveals the existence of a class of verbs encoding *controllable events* including all transitive verbs. The verbs belonging to this class do not necessarily imply the intervention of a volitional participant, since the transitive verbs of Akhvakh are compatible with non-volitional A arguments, as in *twede ruša biq'wari* 'The wind cut the tree'. Rather, their general characteristic is that their argument structure includes an argument role that, when assumed by humans, allows for some degree of control.

#### 4.3.5. Fluctuations in assertor's involvement marking

I have observed no exception to the rule according to which *-ada* encoding the active involvement of the assertor can be used only with 1<sup>st</sup> person S/A arguments in declarative clauses, and with 2<sup>nd</sup> person S/A arguments in questions. By contrast, *-ari* sporadically occurs in contexts in which *-ada* would be expected according to the regularities formulated above, in particular, with transitive verbs having a 1<sup>st</sup> person agent. This is perceived by informants as a deviation from the norm that however does not result in agrammaticality, and rather produces a stylistic effect. According to Indira Abdulaeva (p.c.), by using *-ari* instead of *-ada* in declarative clauses headed by a verb encoding a controllable event and involving a 1st person A/S argument, the speaker "gives the impression that s/he observed the event from outside". The coincidence with the additional semantic overtones developed by evidentials in the context of 1st person participants, as described by Aikhenvald 2004:219-233, is striking. In particular, Indira Abdulaeva's comments on the marginal use of *-ari* in declarative clauses with a 1st person agent are virtually identical to Chirikba's comments on the use of non-firsthand evidential with 1st person in Abkhaz (Northwest Caucasian) – Chirikba 2003:251-2.

Note however that the mere substitution of *-ari* for *-ada* is not used as a strategy for encoding unconscious 1<sup>st</sup> person agents or 1<sup>st</sup> person non-volitional agents. In Akhvakh, in the same way as in other Daghestanian languages, the regular strategy in clauses referring to unconscious 1<sup>st</sup> person agents is the use of the tense more generally used for encoding indirect knowledge (perfective<sub>3</sub>), and non-volitional agents (including 1<sup>st</sup> person ones) are encoded in Akhvakh as ablative adjuncts in intransitive predications with the patient in S role. In ex. (19), the verb in sentence (a) is the causative verb derived from the strictly intransitive verb occurring in sentence (b). The presence of *-ari* in (19b) is the mere consequence of the fact that (19b) is an intransitive predication with *istaka* 'glass' in S role.

(19) a. *de-de istaka b-iq'w-āda.*

1SG-ERG glass N-break-CAUS.PF<sub>2</sub>

'I broke the glass.' (lit. 'I made the glass break.')

b. *di-g-une istaka b-iq'w-ari.*

1SG<sub>o</sub>-OR<sub>1</sub>-ABL glass N-break-PF<sub>1</sub>

'I broke the glass unintentionally.' (lit. 'The glass broke from me.')

#### 4.5. A possible scenario for the emergence of assertor's involvement marking

DeLancey (1992) discussed the emergence of assertor's involvement marking systems in Tibeto-Burman languages. His main conclusions are that Tibeto-Burman systems of assertor's involvement marking are recent innovations that developed on the basis of previous systems of mirativity marking as “the grammaticalization of a pragmatic association between mirativity and person”.

On the other hand, none of the languages in which assertor's involvement marking has been recognized provides evidence that such systems could result from the evolution of person agreement systems. In the case of Akhvakh, the mere fact that none of the close relatives of this language has morphological variations of verbs sensitive to person distinctions (either person agreement or assertor's involvement marking) leads to the conclusion that assertor's involvement marking is a recent innovation of Akhvakh, and that it did not develop from a more ancient person agreement system.

The historical explanation I propose for Akhvakh is in line with DeLancey's hypothesis. Evidence that such a scenario may have occurred in the history of Akhvakh follows from the comparison of the two endings of the perfective positive with identical or partially identical endings found in other verb forms in which they are not sensitive to assertor's involvement.

A first important observation is that the perfective form used in independent clauses to mark assertor's involvement (perfective<sub>2</sub>, with the suffix *-ada*) has participial uses, as illustrated in section 3.2 above. The fact that the imperfective form used in participial function (imperfective<sub>2</sub>) has the suffix *-ida*, and that most adjectives (including many of those that are not synchronically recognizable as derived from verbs) end with *da*, suggests that *-ada* was originally a complex suffix, consisting of a tense marker *-a-* and of a participle marker *-da*.

Another important observation is that Akhvakh also has two verb suffixes *-iri* and *-ida*. Synchronically, the parallelism between *-ari* vs. *-ada* and *-iri* vs. *-ida* is limited to form. Functionally, in independent clauses, the distinction between *-iri* and *-ida* has nothing to do with assertor's involvement, and consequently, within the frame of a synchronic morphological analysis, it would not be correct to consider the four suffixes *-ari*, *-ada*, *-iri*, and *-ida* as involving two binary choices *-i-* vs. *-a-* and *-ri* vs. *-da*. However, the form with the *-ida* ending is also found in participial clauses, which provides additional evidence that such a segmentation was probably correct at some stage in the history of Akhvakh.

A plausible explanation of this situation is that it resulted from divergent evolutions undergone by forms that originally were analyzable as combining two binary distinctions, *-a-* (perfective) vs. *-i-* (imperfective) and *-ri* (finite) vs. *-da* (participle). It is reasonable to suppose that, when forms with the *-da* ending began to be used as heads of independent clauses, the *-ri* vs. *-da* contrast involved TAM distinctions, not only in combination with *-i-*, but also in combination with *-a-*. More precisely, given the evidence that *-da* was originally a participle marker, a plausible hypothesis is that the independent use of forms showing this ending implied the kind of TAM values typically expressed by participles integrated to the paradigm of verb

forms heading independent sentences: perfect in the case of the perfective participle *-a-da*, progressive in the case of the imperfective participle *-i-da*.

The evolution leading to the destabilization of this system was probably the emergence of the two analytic forms that, in present-day Akhvakh, express the meanings of perfect (*general converb* + *copula*) and progressive (*progressive converb* + *copula*). Starting from that, the simple forms of the perfective and the imperfective were affected by divergent evolutions:

- the two simple forms of the imperfective (*-iri* and *-ida*) were maintained with different TAM values that however overlap to some extent;
- by contrast, the development of the analytic perfect resulted in blurring the TAM distinction originally expressed by the choice between *-ari* and *-ada*.

Most often, the loss of the semantic distinction between two grammatical forms belonging to the same paradigm results in the elimination of one of the two competing forms. But another possible evolution is a reanalysis leading to the maintenance of the formal distinction with a new function. This is precisely the hypothesis I propose to explain the emergence of assertor's involvement marking in Akhvakh: the participle originally used with a perfect meaning was retained in clauses involving the assertor in A/S role in the construction of verbs encoding controllable events, whereas the finite form of the perfective was retained in clauses with an A/S argument different from the assertor, and in clauses headed by verbs encoding non-controllable events.

This hypothesis may seem surprising, since in the domain of evidentiality-mirativity, perfects formed on resultative participles are rather known for their propensity to evolve towards a meaning of indirect or non-integrated knowledge – Guentchéva 1996. But the relationship between resultativity and indirect or non-integrated knowledge is natural only in clauses referring to past events in which the assertor was not involved. In assertive clauses referring to events in which the speaker has played an active role, and in questions referring to events in which the addressee has played an active role, the unmarked situation is that the speech act participant responsible for the assertion keeps the event in memory. At the same time, the meaning of present relevance characteristic of perfects may favor the use of perfect forms in reference to events in which the speaker was involved, even if they took place in the remote past, since from a subjective point of view they form part of his/her own personal experience. Consequently, the interaction between TAM and speech act roles may explain that an ancient perfect formed on a resultative participle specializes in situations characterized by the particular alignment between roles in the event and speech act roles encoded by *-ada*.

In addition to morphological evidence, the plausibility of this reanalysis scenario is reinforced by independent attestations of the fact that evolutions affecting perfects may be sensitive to speech act role distinctions. For example, the perfect auxiliary in some Central and Southern Italian dialects is *be* with 1st/2nd person subjects and *have* with 3rd person subjects, irrespective of the nature of the verb (Cocchi 1997, Manzini & Savoia 1998, Legendre 2006, D'Alessandro & Roberts To appear). Given the general semantic contrast between *be*-predication and *have*-predication, the fact

that those dialects have selected *be* when the subject is a speech act participant and *have* with 3rd person subjects (and not the other way round) is in accordance with the functional explanation of the scenario hypothesized here for the emergence of assertor's involvement marking in Akhvakh.

The Turkic language Azerbaijani is another case in point. There is evidence that Azerbaijani has undergone an evolution similar to that postulated here for Akhvakh, with however the difference that, in Azerbaijani, this evolution did not result in the emergence of person distinctions in verb morphology (since they already existed), and did not lead to the emergence of an assertor's marking pattern either, but only to a renewal of person agreement morphology.

Azerbaijani has two synonymous perfect markers, *-mİş* and *-(y)İb*,<sup>7</sup> with the following distribution: in the 1st person, *-mİş* is the only possibility; in the 2nd and 3rd persons, both *-mİş* and *-(y)İb* are possible, but in the 3rd person, there is a strong tendency to prefer *-(y)İb* :

(19) The Azerbaijani perfect

<i>bax-miş-am</i>	'I have looked'
<i>bax-miş-san</i> ~ <i>bax-ib-san</i>	'You (sing.) have looked'
<i>bax-ib</i> (~ <i>bax-miş-dir</i> )	'(S)he has looked'
<i>bax-miş-iq</i>	'We have looked'
<i>bax-miş-siniz</i> ~ <i>bax-ib-siniz</i>	'You (pl.) have looked'
<i>bax-ib-lar</i> (~ <i>bax-miş-lar</i> )	'They have looked'

This paradigm clearly results from the fusion of two originally distinct paradigms: in other Turkic languages, the choice between *-mİş* and *-(y)İb* does not involve person distinctions, and the verb forms in which these suffixes occur differ in their TAM meaning or syntactic distribution (for example, in Turkish, *-mİş* is a TAM marker encoding indirect or non-integrated knowledge, and *-(y)İb* is a converb marker). The situation of Azerbaijani is not entirely comparable to that of Akhvakh, since there seems to be no *declarative* vs. *interrogative* contrast in the use of the two variants of the perfect, but the fact that the suffix *-mİş* obligatory with 1st person subjects is also a participle marker (as in *mühazirəyə qulaq as-miş tələbələr* 'the students having listened to the lecture'), whereas the form preferred with 3rd person subjects has no participial use, is reminiscent of the situation observed in Akhvakh.

## 5. Conclusion

In this talk, I have tried to illustrate on the example of Akhvakh how the documentation of so far undescribed languages may improve our understanding of the distinctions that structure verb inflection systems. The contribution of Akhvakh is particularly interesting to examine with respect to the relation between finiteness as a clausal feature and finiteness as a morphological category, and with respect to the typology of epistemic marking and its possible relations with tense and aspect.

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<sup>7</sup> *I* represents an underspecified high vowel with 4 possible values (*i*, *ü*, *ı*, and *u*) determined by vowel harmony.

## Abbreviations

...<sub>o</sub> : oblique stem / ABL : ablative / ADD : additive / ALL : allative / COMP : complementizer / CONJ : conjunct / COP : copula / DISJ : disjunct / CVB : converb / DAT : dative / DIST : distal / ERG : ergative / F : feminine / GEN : genitive / H<sup>\*</sup> : human plural / IMP : imperative / INF : infinitive / IPF : imperfective / M : masculine / N : non-human (neuter) / N<sup>\*</sup> : non-human plural / NEG : negative / OR : orientation marker / PF : perfective / PL : plural / POS : positive / PROG : progressive converb / PROH : prohibitive / PROX : proximate / PST : past / SG : singular

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