

# The Semantics of Verbal Categories in Nakh-Daghestanian Languages

*Tense, Aspect, Evidentiality, Mood and Modality*

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# Perfective Tenses and Epistemic Modality in Northern Akhvakh

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## 1 Introduction

Akhvakh is a group of four closely related languages included in the Andic sub-branch of the Avar-Andic(-Tsezic) branch of the Nakh-Daghestanian (or East Caucasian) family. The most important of them is designated as Northern Akhvakh, whereas the other three (traditionally viewed as ‘dialects’) are grouped under the label of Southern Akhvakh.

Northern Akhvakh is spoken in four villages of the Axvaxskij district in the western part of Daghestan (Tadmagitl’, Lologonitl’, Kudijab-Roso, and Izani), in recent settlements in the lowlands of Daghestan (Kamyškutan, Sovetskoe), and in Axaxdərə near Zaqatala (Azerbaijan). The number of speakers is estimated at 20,000 by Magomedova & Abdulaeva (2007).

The analysis proposed in this paper is based on a corpus of texts I collected myself in Axaxdərə between 2005 and 2008, and on another corpus I collected in various Daghestanian villages (mainly Tadmagitl’ and Lologonitl’) between 2008 and 2010 with the help of Indira Abdulaeva.

The verbal inflection of Northern Akhvakh includes five synthetic tenses that equally describe events as having occurred before the time of utterance or some other reference point on the time scale, and consequently share an aspectual value of the type commonly labeled ‘completive’ or ‘perfective’.<sup>1</sup> These five perfective tenses do not differ in terms of distance in time, current relevance, or aspect, but only in their epistemic implications (including – but not limited to – evidentiality distinctions of the type commonly found in Caucasian languages).

After an overview of the verbal inflection of Northern Akhvakh, this paper describes the semantic distinctions carried by the choice between the five perfective tenses.

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1 As illustrated by Ex. (1b) below, in Northern Akhvakh, the meaning of imperfective past (reference to events still uncompleted at some reference point in the past) is carried by analytic verb forms.

## 2 An Overview of the Verbal Inflection of Northern Akhvakh

### 2.1 *The Morphological Structure of Synthetic Verb Forms*

Akhvakh verb forms always include an overt inflectional ending, but with respect to prefixal inflection, they divide into two morphological classes: those including a prefixal slot that cannot be left empty, and those that cannot take prefixes. The prefixal inflection of the verbs that take inflectional prefixes is limited to the expression of gender-number agreement with the nominative argument (S or P), with five possible values: M (human masculine singular), F (human feminine singular), N (non-human singular), HPL (human plural) and NPL (non-human plural).

Suffixal inflection is identical for all verbs and expresses TAM, epistemic modality, polarity, finiteness, and gender-number agreement. There is no person agreement proper, although person distinctions are involved in the contrast between the *-ari* Perfective and the *-ade* Perfective – see Section 4.

Morphologically, the suffixal inflection of verbs is predominantly agglutinative, with endings beginning with a vowel added to stems ending with a consonant, and no phonological interaction at the stem-suffix junction, but there is a class of verb stems ending with an ‘unstable consonant’ whose deletion triggers fusion of the preceding vowel with the first vowel of the ending. For example, the *j* of |eqeda(j)| ‘look for’ is maintained in contact with the imperative ending (*eqedaj-a!* ‘look for it!’), whereas the combination of |eqeda(j)-| ‘look for’ with the Infinitive suffix |-urula| gives the form *eqedōrula*, in which the long *ō* results from the fusion of the *a* and the *u* brought into contact by the deletion of *j*. Similarly, the *b* of |ča(b)| ‘wash’ is apparent in the imperative form *čab-a!* ‘wash!’, whereas the combination of |ča(b)-| ‘wash’ with the prohibitive suffix |-uba| gives the form *čōba*, in which the long *ō* results from the fusion of the *a* and the *u* brought into contact by the deletion of *b*. For more details on this phenomenon (in particular, the inventory of verbs with unstable consonants and the conditions in which the unstable consonants are maintained or deleted), see Creissels (2009a).

### 2.2 *The Suffixal Inflection of Verbs Heading Independent Clauses*

The synthetic verb forms that can head independent clauses are characterized by the paradigm of suffixes (or combinations of suffixes) listed in the following chart. In this chart, the first column gives the labels used in this paper for each of these forms, and the second column gives a brief description of their characteristic endings, without going into the details of morphophonological variation (in case of variation, the chart gives only the form of the ending that can be viewed as directly reflecting its underlying form). More details about

the morphological characteristics of the perfective tenses that constitute the main topic of this paper are given in Section 3. AGR stands for ‘gender-number agreement marker’.

- <i>ari</i> Perfective	HPL - <i>iri</i> , other classes - <i>ari</i>
- <i>wudi</i> Perfective	- <i>AGR-w(ud)i</i>
- <i>wa</i> Perfective	HPL - <i>aji</i> , other classes - <i>AGR-wa</i>
- <i>ada</i> Perfective	HPL - <i>idi</i> , other classes - <i>ada</i>
- <i>ade</i> Perfective	HPL - <i>idi</i> , other classes - <i>ad-AGR</i>
- <i>ila</i> Perfective Negative	- <i>il-a</i> or <i>il(a)-AGR</i>
- <i>ilawudi</i> Perfective Negative	- <i>il-AGR-w(ud)i</i>
- <i>ušawa</i> Perfective Negative	- <i>uš-AGR-wa</i>
- <i>iri</i> Imperfective	- <i>iri</i>
- <i>ida</i> Imperfective <sup>2</sup>	- <i>ida</i> or - <i>id(a)-AGR</i>
- <i>iki</i> Imperfective negative	- <i>iki</i>
- <i>ika</i> Imperfective negative <sup>3</sup>	- <i>ika</i> or - <i>ik(a)-AGR</i>
Potential	HPL - <i>oji</i> , other classes - <i>AGR-wa</i>
Imperative	- <i>a</i>
Prohibitive	- <i>uba</i>
General optative	- <i>a-l'a</i> <sup>4</sup>
- <i>ada</i> Optative <sup>5</sup>	- <i>ad-AGR</i>
Optative Negative	- <i>uba-l'a</i> <sup>6</sup>
Apprehensive	- <i>ala-gole</i> <sup>7</sup>
Apprehensive Negative	- <i>il-ala-gole</i>

2 The two imperfectives are used interchangeably in assertive or interrogative clauses referring to habitual or permanent events, and the -*ida* Imperfective tends to be more frequent in this use, but the -*iri* Imperfective also has modal uses in which it cannot be replaced by the -*ida* Imperfective.

3 The -*iki* Imperfective is the negative counterpart of the -*iri* Imperfective, whereas the -*ika* Imperfective is the negative counterpart of the -*ida* Imperfective.

4 The first element of the Optative ending *a-l'a* can be analyzed as the Imperative ending -*a*.

5 The -*ada* Optative is restricted to wishes that specifically involve the addressee, and the gender-number suffix included in its ending expresses agreement with the addressee irrespective of the syntactic role of the 2nd person pronoun in the clause.

6 The first element of the Optative Negative ending *uba-l'a* can be analyzed as the Prohibitive ending -*uba*.

7 The first element of the Apprehensive ending can be analysed as the Conditional Converb ending -*ala*. The Conditional Converb is a dependent verb form, but the Apprehensive derived from it via the addition of -*gole* may head independent as well as subordinate clauses.

This chart makes apparent the heterogeneity of verb inflection as regards agreement with the nominative argument. A suffixed gender-number agreement marker is found in some forms only. It is sometimes optional, and sometimes obligatory, but this variation has no obvious interpretation in terms of finiteness, since it does not correlate with differences in the status of the clause. There are several sets of suffixed agreement markers whose distribution lends itself to no generalization either. Note also that, in several tenses, the agreement suffix is found between the verb stem and another suffix. This situation can be explained as resulting from the univerbation of analytic tenses in which a dependent form of the auxiliated verb was followed by the auxiliary: In this process, the root of the former auxiliary becomes a final suffix, whereas the fusion of the suffix of the auxiliated verb with the agreement prefix of the auxiliary results in an agreement marker trapped between the verb stem and the final suffix.

This chart also makes apparent that, in the verb inflection of Northern Akhvakh, the symmetry between positive and negative forms is not perfect. In particular, the potential lacks a negative counterpart. As regards the perfective tenses, the correspondence between the five positive forms and the three negative forms is as follows:

- the *-ilawudi* Perfective Negative is the negative counterpart of the *-wudi* Perfective,
- the *-ušawa* Perfective Negative is the negative counterpart of the *-wa* Perfective,
- the *-ila* Perfective Negative neutralizes the distinctions expressed in positive clauses by the choice between the *-ari* Perfective, the *-ada* Perfective, and the *-ade* Perfective.

### 2.3 Analytic Verb Forms

In addition to the synthetic tenses listed in Section 2.2, Northern Akhvakh also has analytic verb forms with the copula *godi*, the verb *bik'uruLa* 'be', or the verb *mičunuLa* 'be found' in auxiliary function. In particular, progressive tenses are formed by means of the progressive converb, as illustrated by Ex. (1), and perfect tenses are formed by means of the general converb, as illustrated by Ex. (2). In both cases, the use of the copula in auxiliary function implies present time reference, whereas the use of the perfective forms of *bik'uruLa* 'be' in auxiliary function implies past time reference, plus the epistemic nuances expressed by the choice between the different perfective forms.

- (1) a. *Hudu-ṣ<sup>w</sup>-e*    *ʔuda*    *b-uq̄'-ere*    *godi.*  
 DIST-M-ERG    wood    N-cut-PROG    COP.N  
 'He is cutting firewood.'
- b. *Hudu-ṣ<sup>w</sup>-e*    *ʔuda*    *b-uq̄'-ere*    *b-ik<sup>w</sup>-ari.*  
 DIST-M-ERG    wood    N-cut-PROG    N-be-PFV<sub>ari</sub>  
 'He was cutting firewood.'
- c. *Hudu-ṣ<sup>w</sup>-e*    *ʔuda*    *b-uq̄'-ere*    *b-ik<sup>w</sup>-awudi.*  
 DIST-M-ERG    wood    N-cut-PROG    N-be-N.PFV<sub>wudi</sub>  
 'He was (reportedly) cutting firewood.'
- (2) a. *Iṣ<sup>w</sup>ada-ṣ<sup>w</sup>-e*    *lāgi*    *b-iq̄<sup>w</sup>-e*    *godi.*  
 shepherd-M-ERG    sheep    N-kill-CVB.N    COP.N  
 'The shepherd has killed a sheep.'
- b. *Iṣ<sup>w</sup>ada-ṣ<sup>w</sup>-e*    *lāgi*    *b-iq̄<sup>w</sup>-e*    *b-ik<sup>w</sup>-ari.*  
 shepherd-M-ERG    sheep    N-kill-CVB.N    N-be-PFV<sub>ari</sub>  
 'The shepherd had killed a sheep.'
- c. *Iṣ<sup>w</sup>ada-ṣ<sup>w</sup>-e*    *lāgi*    *b-iq̄<sup>w</sup>-e*    *b-ik<sup>w</sup>-awudi.*  
 shepherd-M-ERG    sheep    N-kill-CVB.N    N-be-N.PFV<sub>wudi</sub>  
 'The shepherd (reportedly) had killed a sheep.'

#### 2.4 *Dependent Verb Forms*

Northern Akhvakh has no form specialized in participial function, but four of the independent verb forms listed above are also used as participles, i.e. as heads of noun-modifying clauses: *-ada* Perfective, *-ila* Perfective Negative, *-ida* Imperfective, and *-ika* Imperfective Negative. The participial use of the *-ada* Perfective is illustrated in Ex. (4) and (11) below.<sup>8</sup>

Strictly dependent verb forms include the Verbal Noun or Masdar (*-e*), the Infinitive (*-urula*), the Spatial Form (*-iṭ-i/a/u(ne)* 'at/to/from the place where ...'), the General Converb, the Progressive Converb (*-ere*), and several specialized converbs expressing various semantic types of adverbial subordination.<sup>9</sup> Note that the General Converb has no marker of its own. It is formed by adding to the verb stem a complex suffix that can be designated

8 On the participles of Northern Akhvakh, see Creissels (2009b).

9 On the converbs of Northern Akhvakh, see Creissels (2010 and 2012).

as *adverbial agreement*, consisting of a special set of gender-number markers followed by a formative *-he*. Adverbial agreement characterizes not only a converbial form of the verb, but also the Factive-Transformative form of nouns,<sup>10</sup> and many adverbial forms which may have a historical link with converbs but cannot be analyzed synchronically as including a verbal lexeme.

### 3 Morphological Characteristics of the Perfective Tenses

#### 3.1 *The Variants -eri, -eda, and -ede of the -ari, -ada, and -ade Perfectives*

The ending *-ari* has a variant *-eri* which tends to become obsolete, and a similar variation between *a* and *e* is observed in other verbal suffixes, in particular *-ada* ~ *-eda* and *-ade* ~ *-ede*. This variation between *a* and *e* is the vestige of an ancient distinction between two morphological classes of verbs which is better maintained in the other Andic languages, cf. Magomedbekova (1967: 86). A situation similar to that found in other Andic languages was still preserved in Northern Akhvakh (at least to some extent) in the 1940s–1950s, when Magomedbekova collected the data for her description of Akhvakh, but in the forms that originally had this *a* vs. *e* distinction, present-day speakers tend to generalize the use of one of the variants (in the particular case or the *-ari* ~ *-eri*, *-ada* ~ *-eda*, and *-ade* ~ *-ede* Perfectives, the variant with *a*), whereas the other variant occurs only sporadically as a free variant (as in Ex. (3) below).

Note that the distinction between the tenses I call ‘*ada*-Perfective’ and ‘*ade*-Perfective’ has nothing to do with this variation. The term ‘*ade*-Perfective’ is a conventional label for a tense whose ending varies between *-ado*, *-ade*, and *-idi*, depending on the gender-number of the nominative argument – see Section 3.3, whereas the *a* ~ *e* variation evoked in this section affects the initial vowel of verbal endings.

#### 3.2 *The Short Form of the -ada Perfective*

With verbs whose stem ends with a stable consonant, the ending *-ada* has a short allomorph *-a* (*-i* with HPL agreement) used when the verb is followed by an enclitic particle. For example, the addition of the interrogative particle *-č̣i* to *w-oq’-ada* (*-ada* Perfective of *b-eq’-urula* ‘come’ with M agreement expressed by the prefix *w-*) gives *w-oq’-a-č̣i*. Similarly, the addition of the interrogative particle *-č̣i* to *b-eq’-idi* (*-ada* Perfective of *b-eq’-urula* ‘come’ with HPL agreement) gives *b-eq’-i-č̣i*.

10 For more details on this form, see Creissels (2014).



However, *-ada* is among the verbal suffixes that trigger the deletion of unstable consonants (see Section 2.1 above), and no reduction of the *-ada* suffix is observed when the deletion of an unstable consonant at the end of the verbal lexeme triggers the fusion of a vowel belonging to the stem with the first *a* of *-ada*. For example, the stem of *žōrula* ‘study’ is |ža(b)|, with an unstable *b*. The *-ada* Perfective of this verb is *žāda* < |ža(b)-ada|, and this form is not affected by the addition of the interrogative particle: *žāda-či*.

### 3.3 *The Morphological Distinction between the -ada Perfective and the -ade Perfective*

The *-ada* Perfective and the *-ade* Perfective have the same form when they agree with a human plural S/P argument: *-idi*, but differ in combination with S/P arguments other than human plural. The *-ada* Perfective has a single form (*-ada*) neutralizing the distinction between M, F, N, and NPL agreement, whereas the *-ade* Perfective has two distinct forms *-ado* (expressing agreement with a masculine singular S/P argument) and *-ade* (expressing agreement with feminine singular, non-human singular or non-human plural S/P arguments):

	<i>-ada</i> Perf.	<i>-ade</i> Perf.
M	<i>-ada</i>	<i>-ado</i>
F	<i>-ada</i>	<i>-ade</i>
N	<i>-ada</i>	<i>-ade</i>
HPL	<i>-idi</i>	
NPL	<i>-ada</i>	<i>-ade</i>

### 3.4 *The -wudi Perfective and HPL Agreement*

The *-wudi* Perfective (or Unwitnessed Past) has no form expressing HPL agreement. In contexts in which the *-wudi* Perfective is expected (typically, in the narration of events not witnessed by the speaker), the presence of a HPL nominative argument triggers the use of the Perfect (an analytic tense consisting of the general converb of the auxiliated verb, and the copula in auxiliary function). Note that the other forms of the Perfect are not used as narrative forms.

Consequently, the HPL form of the Perfect (but not the other forms of this tense) has two types of uses. In reference to the situation in which the sentence is uttered, like the other forms of the Perfect, the HPL form of the Perfect has the meaning typical for perfects and carries no evidentiality implication, whereas in reference to past situations, it takes the place of the missing HPL form of the *-wudi* Perfective.

For example, with *k̄ʷet-urula* ‘run’:

	-wudi Perfective	Perfect
M	<i>k̄ʷet-u-wudi</i>	<i>k̄ʷet-ōhe gudi</i>
F	<i>k̄ʷet-i-wudi</i>	<i>k̄ʷet-ēhe gidi</i>
N	<i>k̄ʷet-e-wudi</i>	<i>k̄ʷet-ēhe godi</i>
HPL		<i>k̄ʷet-īhi goli</i>
NPL	<i>k̄ʷet-ere-wudi</i>	<i>k̄ʷet-erēhe gedi</i>

### 3.5 *The Morphological Distinction between -wa Perfective and Potential*

At first sight, a puzzling aspect of the verbal inflection of Northern Akhvakh is the formal similarity between the *-wa* Perfective and the Potential, which share the same ending *-wa*. However, these two tenses do not have the same accentual properties, and use two partially different sets of agreement markers. For example, with *b-éq'-urula* ‘come’:<sup>11</sup>

	-wa Perfective	Potential
M	<i>w-óq'-u-wa</i>	<i>w-oq'-ú-wa</i>
F	<i>j-éq'-i-wa</i>	<i>j-eq'-í-wa</i>
N	<i>b-éq'-a-wa</i>	<i>b-eq'-ú-wa</i>
HPL	<i>b-eq'-áji</i>	<i>b-eq'-óji</i>
NPL	<i>r-éq'-ari-wa</i>	<i>r-eq'-úri-wa</i>

### 3.6 *A Note about Human Plural Agreement*

At this point, the reader may have observed that, in the paradigms of agreement marks of Northern Akhvakh, human plural behaves differently from the other four values expressed by agreement paradigms: human plural forms are not always segmentable like the other forms of the paradigm, the agreement paradigm is sometimes reduced to a binary contrast ‘HPL vs. others’, and in the *-wudi* Perfective, the form expressing HPL agreement is borrowed from another tense. There must be some historical explanation, but unfortunately, I have nothing precise to propose with respect to this point.

11 Note that, in the HPL form, it is impossible to separate two elements that are clearly segmentable in the M, F, N, and NPL forms. The same phenomenon is observed in several other paradigms.

## 4 Perfective Tenses and Epistemic Marking in the Daghestanian Variety of Northern Akhvakh

### 4.1 *Introductory Remarks*

In my 2008 paper, I described the conjunct/disjunct (or egophoric) system in which perfective tenses are involved in the speech of the Akhvakh consultants with whom I carried out fieldwork in Axaxdərə (Azerbaijan). When I wrote this paper, I had no direct experience of the variety of Northern Akhvakh spoken in Daghestan, and the degree of explicitness and precision of the only available description (Magomedbekova 1967) was not sufficient to judge whether the conjunct/disjunct system I had found in Axaxdərə was representative of Northern Akhvakh in general or not. However, when I had the opportunity to carry out field work in Daghestan, I discovered a very different distribution of the perfective forms involved in this mechanism, and returning to Magomedbekova (1967), I came to the conclusion that, although she did not put forward a precise and explicit description of the distribution of the perfective tenses, the examples she provided were consistent with my observations on the distribution of the perfective tenses in the Daghestanian variety of Northern Akhvakh.

Consequently, in this presentation of the epistemic implications of the perfective tenses of Northern Akhvakh, I shall describe the two systems separately. The remainder of this section is specifically about the Daghestanian system.

### 4.2 *Perfective Tenses in Assertive and Interrogative Clauses*

In my corpus of the Daghestanian variety of Northern Akhvakh, the *-wa* Perfective (Section 4.7) is the only perfective tense regularly found in both assertive and interrogative clauses. As shown in the following chart, with statistically marginal exceptions (signaled in the chart by a question mark), the other four perfective tenses are found either exclusively in assertive clauses (the *-ari* Perfective, the *-wudi* Perfective, and the *-ade* Perfective), or exclusively in interrogative clauses (the *-ada* Perfective).

	assertive clauses	interrogative clauses
<i>-ari</i> Perfective	+	?
<i>-wudi</i> Perfective	+	–
<i>-ade</i> Perfective	+	?
<i>-wa</i> Perfective	+	+
<i>-ada</i> Perfective	–	+

### 4.3 *The -wudi Perfective*

The *-wudi* Perfective, found exclusively in assertive clauses, can be straightforwardly characterized as encoding indirect evidence (inference or hearsay). It is the tense normally used in assertive clauses referring to past events for which the speaker has no direct evidence, unless the speaker wants to insist on his/her own epistemic authority, in which case the *-wa* Perfective can be used (see Section 4.7).

- (3) *Ak̄'o-de šišal'e b-eχ-e-wudi.*  
 woman-ERG dress N-buy-N-PFV<sub>wudi</sub>  
 '(I have evidence that / I was told that) the woman bought a dress.'

### 4.4 *The -ari Perfective and the -wudi Perfective in Assertive Clauses*

In assertive clauses, the choice between the *-ari* Perfective and the *-wudi* Perfective expresses a distinction between witnessed and unwitnessed events of the type commonly found in Daghestanian languages (cf. Forker, this volume). Unless when the conditions that license the use of the *-ade* Perfective are met (see Section 4.5), the *-ari* Perfective is the default choice if the speaker has witnessed the event he/she is referring to, whereas the *-wudi* Perfective is the default choice in case of indirect evidence (inference or hearsay).

Ex. (4) is extracted from a story in which the narrator relates events that occurred in his childhood. The events witnessed by the narrator are consistently encoded by means of the *-ari* Perfective, and the two occurrences of the *-wudi* Perfective found in this extract carry their usual implications: inference and hearsay.<sup>12</sup>

- (4) *Ŷerapula-di-la r-eq'-ari.*  
 plane-PL-ADD NPL-come-PFV<sub>ari</sub>  
 'Then some planes came.  
*Di ik'a ima-šū-de eĹ'-eri, "Q'ira heč'-u-wudi."*  
 ISG(GEN) great father-M-ERG say-PF<sub>ari</sub> king arise-M-PFV<sub>wudi</sub>  
 My grandfather said, "A king has arisen."  
*Hu žo b-ik<sup>w</sup>-a-wudi raši b-uχ-ada žo.*  
 DIST day N-be-N-PFV<sub>wudi</sub> war N-appear-PFV<sub>ada</sub> day  
 The day in question happened to be the day when war broke out.

12 This extract also includes an occurrence of the *-ada* Perfective, but it acts as a participle, and the conditions regulating the use of this form as head of independent clauses are consequently not relevant here.

*Zama-da-la m-ūl-īhi ʔoloq̄a-di armija-ī-ga*  
 time-INT-ADD N-go.NEG-HPL.CVB young-PL army-N-ALL  
*žab-iri.*  
 call-HPL.PFV<sub>ari</sub>  
 After that the young men were called to the army.'

#### 4.5 *The -ade Perfective*

In assertive clauses describing events as having occurred before the time of utterance or some other reference point on the time scale, the *-ade* Perfective is in competition with the *-ari* Perfective for the encoding of events witnessed by the speaker:

- with two exceptions that will be mentioned below, in independent assertive clauses referring to events witnessed by the speaker, but in which the speaker coincides neither with the ergative argument of a transitive verb nor the nominative argument of an intransitive verb referring to a controllable event, the *-ari* Perfective is the only possible choice;
- if the speaker coincides with the ergative argument of a transitive verb or the nominative argument of an intransitive verb referring to a controllable event, the *-ade* Perfective is normally used, but the *-ari* Perfective remains a possible choice.

For example, depending on the person of the agent, an event lexicalized as *šišal'e beχurula* 'buy a dress' that occurred in the past and was witnessed by the speaker is asserted as indicated in (5).

- (5) *dede šišal'e b-eχ-ade (~b-eχ-ari)* 'I bought a dress.'  
*mede šišal'e b-eχ-ari* 'You (sing.) bought a dress.'  
*huš<sup>w</sup>e / huṭe šišal'e b-eχ-ari* 'He / she bought a dress.'  
*iše šišal'e b-eχ-ade (~b-eχ-ari)* 'We (excl.) bought a dress.'  
*īe šišal'e b-eχ-ade (~b-eχ-ari)* 'We (incl.) bought a dress.'  
*ušte šišal'e b-eχ-ari* 'You (pl.) bought a dress.'  
*hudode šišal'e b-eχ-ari* 'They bought a dress.'

Although coincidence between the speaker and the S/A argument is crucial in the use of the *-ade* Perfective, the choice between the *-ari* Perfective and the *-ade* Perfective cannot be analyzed as a mechanism of person agreement. Crucially, in reported speech, the *-ade* Perfective cannot be used in the configuration illustrated by Ex. (6a). In this example, the ergative argument of the embedded clause is the first person pronoun, but the use of the *-ade* Perfective

would nevertheless not be correct, because this first person pronoun does not represent the original speaker, whereas the *-ade* Perfective is normal in the independent clause (6b).

- (6) a. *Hu-ṣ<sup>w</sup>-e eḷ'-ari, de-de ṭ-ṣu ači*  
 DIST-M-ERG say-PFV<sub>1</sub> 1SG-ERG REFL-M(GEN) money  
*m-iṣ<sup>w</sup>-ari eḷ'-e.*<sup>13</sup>  
 N-steal-PFV<sub>ari</sub> say-CVB  
 'He said that I stole his money.'
- b. *De-de hu-ṣu ači m-iṣ<sup>w</sup>-ade.*  
 1SG-ERG DIST-M(GEN) money N-steal-PFV<sub>ade</sub>  
 'I stole his money.'

Moreover, as apparent in the chart above, although the *-ade* Perfective is undoubtedly the expected choice in independent assertive clauses in which the ergative argument of a transitive verb or the nominative argument of an intransitive verb referring to a controllable event coincides with the speaker, the use of the *-ari* Perfective is always possible, as illustrated by Ex. (7). In this example, the *-ade* forms *o-t-ade* (instead of *o-t-ari*) and *b-iq<sup>w</sup>-ade* (instead of *b-iq<sup>w</sup>-ari*) would be perfectly possible without any change in the denotative meaning.

- (7) *Češe āti di-da dada-ṣ<sup>w</sup>-a o-t-ari, češe-be de-de-da*  
 one ram 1SG-INT father-M-DAT N-leave-PFV<sub>ari</sub> one-N 1SG-ERG-INT  
*b-iq<sup>w</sup>-ari.*  
 N-slaughter-PFV<sub>ari</sub>  
 'I left one of the rams for my father, and I slaughtered the other myself.'

This was already observed by Magomedbekova (1967), who analyzed the use of the *-ade* Perfective as optional 1st person agreement. In the discussions I had with Indira Abdulaeva about the use of the *-ade* Perfective, she confirmed that the use of the *-ari* Perfective is a possible (although marked) choice in sentences such as (7), and does not affect the denotative meaning, but according to her native speaker intuition, this choice has nevertheless semantic implications. Whenever the *-ade* Perfective is possible (i.e., in assertive clauses in which the ergative argument of a transitive verb or the nominative argument of an intransitive verb referring to a controllable event coincides with the speaker), it

13 *m-iṣ<sup>w</sup>-ari* is the realization of the underlying form  $|b-iṣ<sup>w</sup>-ari|$ ; the nasalization of the affixes is triggered by the nasal vowel of the root.

constitutes the less marked choice, and by using the *-ari* Perfective in a context in which the *-ade* Perfective is expected, the speaker “gives the impression that s/he observed the event from outside”.

Let us turn now to the two intransitive verbs that, within the limits of the data I have collected, seem to constitute exceptions to the rule according to which the *-ade* Perfective can only be found with intransitive verbs whose nominative argument shows some degree of agentivity: *bužuruła* ‘be born’ and *bik’uruła* ‘be’, both illustrated in Ex. (8) (extracted from the same text as Ex. (4) above).

- (8) *Dene w-už-ado*                      *1933–liž’a reše-īi*,              *di-we*              *ima*  
 1SG M-be\_born-PF<sub>ade</sub>.M 1933–ORD year-N.LOC 1SG(GEN)-M father  
*w-uk’-ado*                      *Nurmuhamad, Salihila-šu*              *waša.*  
 M-be-PF<sub>ade</sub>.M Nurmuhamad Salihila-M(GEN) son  
 ‘I was born in 1933, my father was Nurmuhammad, Salihila’s son.’

Neither the occurrences of the *-ade* Perfective found in my corpus with other verbs nor the consultants’ comments suggest a possible explanation of the particular behavior of ‘be’ and ‘be born’. Interestingly, something similar is mentioned by Loughnane (2007) for the Papuan language Oksapmin, in which “participatory / factual” past tenses are used not only with reference to actions which the speaker consciously and deliberately performed, but also for “uncontested facts for which the speaker has accumulated various types of evidence throughout his/her life which is also available to others, facts known to everybody and which are above question”. To what extent such an explanation could account for the use of the *-ade* Perfective illustrated by Ex. (8) remains however an open question, since similar examples with other verbs would be necessary before concluding on this point.

#### 4.6 *The -ada Perfective*

In the Daghestanian variety of Northern Akhvakh, apart from its use as a participle, the *-ada* Perfective is found exclusively in interrogative clauses (either polar questions or content questions), and constitutes the semantically less marked way of questioning about past events.

In contrast to the Axaxdərə system that will be presented in Section 5, in which the use of the *-ada* Perfective in interrogative clauses implies a 2nd person S/A argument, it is important to observe that no such restriction on the person of the S/A argument is observed in Daghestanian Akhvakh, as illustrated by Ex. (9a) from a text I collected in Tadmagit’, and by Ex. (9b) from Magomedbekova (1967).

- (9) a. *Hage j-āda jaše?*<sup>14</sup>  
 where.ALL F-go.PFV<sub>ada</sub> girl  
 'Where has the girl gone?'  
 b. *Du waša uškuṭi-ge žāda-či?*<sup>15</sup>  
 2sg(GEN) son school-LOC learn.PF<sub>ada</sub>-Q  
 'Did your son go to school?'

#### 4.7 The -wa Perfective

The -wa Perfective can be found in two types of contexts which have in common the notion of surprise, but are very different in many other respects. Crucially, in the use of the -wa Perfective in interrogative clauses, it is the speaker who expresses his/her own surprise, whereas in assertive clauses, the -wa Perfective presents the event as potentially surprising for the addressee.

##### 4.7.1 The -wa Perfective in Interrogative Clauses

Content questions constitute the first type of context in which the -wa Perfective is found.<sup>16</sup> Its use is never obligatory, but it indicates that the question is about an event considered surprising by the speaker. Interestingly, the -wa Perfective is particularly frequent in *why* questions, which typically express reaction to an unexpected event. It is, however, also found in content questions including other interrogative words – Ex. (10).

- (10) a. *Me-de čugu č'ar-uš-e-wa?*  
 2SG-ERG why drink-NEG-N-PFV<sub>wa</sub>  
 'Why didn't you drink that?'  
 b. *Du-la ha č'ila čugu hažaṭilāri-wa?*<sup>17</sup>  
 2SG-DAT PROX house.PL why be\_necessary.NPL-PFV<sub>wa</sub>  
 'Why did you need these houses?'  
 c. *Haḡīi mene j-ik'<sup>w</sup>-i-wa?*  
 where.LOC 2SG F-be-F-PFV<sub>wa</sub>  
 'Where have you been?'

14 *j-āda* is the realization of the underlying form |*j-ā?ada*|.

15 *žāda* is the realization of the underlying form |*žabada*|.

16 Note that the interrogative particle mentioned in Section 3.2 marks polar questions only, and is not used in content questions.

17 *hažaṭilāri-wa* is the realization of the underlying form |*hažaṭila(j)-ari-wa*|.



In content questions about past events, the choice is consequently between the *-ada* Perfective and the *-wa* Perfective. In this choice, the *-ada* Perfective can be analyzed as the semantically unmarked form, whereas the *-wa* Perfective adds the marked epistemic value of reaction to an unexpected or surprising event.

#### 4.7.2 The *-wa* Perfective in Narration

In addition to its use in content questions, the *-wa* Perfective also occurs in narrations. In my corpus, it is found in contexts in which the use of the *-wudi* Perfective would be appropriate too, and would not change the denotative meaning. According to Indira Abdulaeva (pers.com.), the use of the *-wa* Perfective instead of the *-wudi* Perfective to report past events is purely a matter of expressing epistemic nuances in speaker/addressee interaction. The use of the *-wa* Perfective as a narrative tense implies that the speaker considers him/herself in a position of authority. For example, in parent/child interaction, it cannot be used by children. The use of the *-wa* Perfective as a narrative tense also implies that the event being reported can cause surprise. By selecting the *-wa* Perfective instead of the *-wudi* Perfective, the speaker imposes him/herself as an epistemic authority and prevents possible contradictions: you may have difficulties in believing what I am telling you, but I am the one who knows, and you must trust me.

Ex. (11) is the first sentence of a text about Gožo, an Akhvakh hero who lived in the 19th century. The narrator used the *-wa* Perfective throughout this text instead of the *-wudi* Perfective which is more commonly used in this kind of historical text. By using the *-wa* Perfective instead of the *-wudi* Perfective, the narrator emphasized both the extraordinary nature of Gožo's exploits and the fact that, as an old man who (contrary to the hearers) was born and raised in Gožo's native village, he was particularly competent about Gožo's story.<sup>18</sup>

- (11) *Gožo w-uk'-u-wa Q'ũgune-la w-õhe*  
 Gožo M-be-M-PFV<sub>wa</sub> Lologonit'.ABL-ADD M-go.M.CVB  
*Axaxɬara-ĩ-ge w-ov-eda ek'wa.*  
 Axaxdərə-N-LOC M-remain-PFV<sub>ada</sub> man  
 'Gožo was a man who had left Lologonit' and settled in Axaxdərə.'

18 This sentence also includes an occurrence of the *-ada* Perfective (in 'a man who had settled in Axaxdərə'), but it acts as a participle, which excludes any possible contrast with the other perfective forms.

#### 4.8 *Exceptional Occurrences of Assertive Tenses in Interrogative Contexts*

##### 4.8.1 The *-ari* Perfective in Interrogative Contexts

In interrogative contexts, the *-ari* Perfective is rare (just one occurrence in my corpus of texts), but nevertheless acceptable, judging from the Akhvakh-Russian dictionary, in which several examples of interrogative clauses include a verb in the *-ari* Perfective. Ex. (12), to be compared with (9) above, comes from the Akhvakh-Russian dictionary.

- (12) *Hage-ša*      *j-āni*      *jaše?*<sup>19</sup>  
 where.ALL-Q    F-go.PFV<sub>ari</sub>    girl  
 'Where has the girl gone?'

I have no evidence of a possible semantic motivation for this sporadic use of the *-ari* Perfective in interrogative clauses. A possible explanation is a tendency to generalize the use of this form as the less marked perfective tense. It is symptomatic that, in elicitation, in the absence of a context imposing the use of another form, the *-ari* Perfective is the form spontaneously given by Akhvakh speakers as the equivalent of the Russian Past tense.

##### 4.8.2 The *-ade* Perfective in Interrogative Contexts

In my corpus of texts of the Daghestanian variety of Northern Akhvakh, the *-ade* Perfective is exclusively found in assertive clauses, and according to Indira Abdulaeva (pers.com.), this form is correct in assertive clauses only. The only attestation I have of the *-ade* Perfective in an interrogative clause (Ex. (13), with the *-ede* variant of the suffix *-ade*) comes from the Akhvakh-Russian dictionary.

- (13) *Haqīlu*      *me-de*      *ha-be*      *b-eχ-ede?*  
 where.ABL    2SG-ERG    PROX-N    N-take-PFV<sub>ade</sub>  
 'From where did you take this?'

Interestingly, in this example, the *-ade* Perfective of a transitive verb does not combine with a first person agent, but with a second person agent. This would be consistent with a conjunct/disjunct (or egophoric) system similar to that evoked in Section 5 for the Axaxdərə variety of Northern Akhvakh. It is however difficult to draw conclusions from a single example that might well be accidental.

19 *j-āni* is the realization of the underlying form  $[j-āʔ-ari]$ .

## 5 Perfective Tenses and Epistemic Marking in the Axaxdərə Variety of Northern Akhvakh

A crucial contrast between the system presented in Section 4 and the system used by my consultants in Axaxdərə is the lack of the distinction between the *-ada* Perfective and the *-ade* Perfective. In their speech, the *-ada* Perfective occurs not only in interrogative clauses (as in Daghestanian Akhvakh), but also in assertive clauses. The *-ade* form occurs very rarely, if ever, and when questioned about it, their judgment is that it is an optional variant of the *-ada* form.

Another important contrast between the two systems is that, for my consultants in Axaxdərə, the *-ari* Perfective is commonly used not only in assertive clauses, but also in interrogative clauses.

Whereas the system of perfective tenses presented in Section 4 consists of two distinct subsystems (the assertive subsystem and the interrogative subsystem), the system underlying the use of the *-ada* and *-ari* Perfectives in the speech of my Axaxdərə consultants is characterized by the particular type of symmetry between the assertive and interrogative subsystems for which Hale (1980) coined the term *conjunct/disjunct systems*, more commonly designated as *egophoric systems* in recent literature.<sup>20</sup>

The general characteristic of conjunct/disjunct (or egophoric) 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, hence the term *participatory evidentiality* put forward by San Roque and Loughnane (2012).

In the speech of the consultants with whom I worked in Axaxdərə, the choice between the *-ada* Perfective and the *-ari* Perfective is possible, both in assertive and interrogative clauses, with all transitive verbs and with a subclass of intransitive verbs, whereas the other intransitive verbs can only be used in the *-ari* Perfective. This division of intransitive verbs into two classes reflects the degree of control of the participant encoded as the nominative argument: the intransitive verbs with a nominative argument representing a relatively active participant are found in the *-ada* Perfective in the same conditions as transitive verbs, whereas those with a clearly patient-like nominative argument are never found in this form.

20 Systems of this type have been first described for Tibetan, Newari, and a few other Tibeto-Burman languages (Hale 1980, DeLancey 1986, DeLancey 1990, DeLancey 1992, Genetti 1994, Hargreaves 2005, Bickel 2008, Tournadre 2008). Similar patterns have also been found in the Mehweb dialect of the Dargwa (Magometov 1982), in Awa Pit, a Barbacoan language spoken in Colombia and Ecuador (Curnow 2002), and in the Papuan language Oksapmin (Loughnane 2007).

With the verbs for which the *-ada* Perfective is a possible option, the choice between the *-ada* Perfective and the *-ari* Perfective expresses a 1st *person vs.* 2nd/3rd *person* contrast in independent declarative clauses, but a 2nd *person vs.* 1st/3rd *person* contrast in independent interrogative clauses. In reported speech, the *-ada* Perfective can be used in the reported clause if and only if the S/A argument of the reported clause coincides with the original speaker (i.e. the person whose speech is reported).

Ex. (14a-d) illustrates the choice between *-ari* and *-ada* in assertive and interrogative transitive clauses in which the agent of a transitive verb is a speech act participant, and ex. (14e) shows that *-ari* is invariably selected (in declarative clauses as well as in questions) if the agent of a transitive verb is not a speech act participant.

- (14) a. *EĹ'-ada* "Di-La q'abuġ-ere gola", me-de-la  
 say-PFV<sub>ada</sub> 1SG-DAT agree-PROG COP.NEG.N 2SG-ERG-ADD  
*eĹ'-ari* "Di-La-la."  
 say-PFV<sub>ari</sub> 1SG-DAT-ADD  
 'I said "I don't agree", and you said "Neither do I."'
- b. *De-de* čũda eĹ'-ari ha-be?  
 1SG-ERG when say-PFV<sub>ari</sub> PROX-N  
 'When did I say that?'
- c. *Me-de* čugu eĹ'-ada ha-be?  
 2SG-ERG why say-PFV<sub>ada</sub> PROX-N  
 'Why did you say this?'
- d. *Me-de* čũda b-eġ-ada hu šãL'e? – Šuni  
 2SG-ERG when N-buy-PFV<sub>ada</sub> DIST dress yesterday  
*b-eġ-ada*.  
 N-buy-PFV<sub>ada</sub>  
 'When did you buy that dress? – I bought it yesterday.'
- e. *Hu-š<sup>w</sup>-e* čũda b-eġ-ari hu mašina? – Šuni  
 DIST-M-ERG when N-buy-PFV<sub>ari</sub> DIST car yesterday  
*b-eġ-ari*.  
 N-buy-PFV<sub>ari</sub>  
 'When did he buy that car? – He bought it yesterday.'

Transitive verbs always follow this pattern, whereas intransitive verbs divide in two classes. Ex. (15) illustrates the behavior of an intransitive verb taking the *-ada* ending in the same conditions as transitive verbs, whereas (16) illustrates the case of an intransitive verb invariably taking the *-ari* ending.

- (15) a. *Mene čūda w-ošq̄-ada?* – *Šuni w-ošq̄-ada.*  
 2SG when M-work-PFV<sub>ada</sub> yesterday M-work-PFV<sub>ada</sub>  
 ‘When did you work? – I worked yesterday.’
- b. *Hu-we čūda w-ošq̄-ari?* – *Šuni w-ošq̄-ari.*  
 DIST-M when M-work-PFV<sub>ari</sub> yesterday M-work-PFV<sub>ari</sub>  
 ‘When did he work? – He worked yesterday.’
- (16) a. *Mene čūda hēni?* – *Šuni hēni.*  
 2SG when recover.PFV<sub>ari</sub> yesterday recover.PFV<sub>ari</sub>  
 ‘When did you recover? – I recovered yesterday.’
- b. *Hu-we čūda hēni?* – *Šuni hēni.*  
 DIST-M when recover.PFV<sub>ari</sub> yesterday recover.PFV<sub>ari</sub>  
 ‘When did he recover? – He recovered yesterday.’

In the system described in this section, if the verb is among those for which the *-ada* Perfective is possible, the use of this form is compulsory with 1st person S/A arguments in assertive clauses, and with 2nd person S/A arguments in interrogative clauses. As in the Daghestanian system, reported speech is crucial to rule out a description in terms of person agreement, since in reported speech, the choice between *-ari* and *-ada* has no direct relationship 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 S/A argument coincides or not with the person that asserted the reported clause.

In Ex. (17), (17a) reproduces the original formulation of the sentence reported in (17b). The use of a long-distance reflexive in logophoric function does not affect the choice of *-ada*. What is crucial is the coincidence between the agent of the reported clause and the person whose speech is reported.

- (17) a. *Ha ĭgora de-de magazi-gune b-eχ-e j-eq'-ada.*  
 PROX bread 1SG-ERG shop-ABL N-buy-CVB F-come-PFV<sub>ada</sub>  
 ‘I brought this bread from the shop.’

- b. *Ilo-de<sub>i</sub>*      *eĭ'-i-wi*      *waša-šū-ga, ha*      *ĩgora*      *ĩ-ĭ-e<sub>i</sub>*  
 mother-ERG tell-F-PFV<sub>wudi</sub> boy-M-ALL PROX bread REFL-F-ERG  
*magazi-gune*      *b-eχ-e*      *j-eq'-ada*.  
 shop-ABL      N-buy-CVB      F-come-PFV<sub>ada</sub>  
 'The mother told the boy that she had brought this bread from the shop.'

## 6 Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to show that epistemic marking in the perfective tenses of Northern Akhvakh includes not only the expression of evidentiality distinctions commonly grammaticalized in Nakh-Daghestanian languages, but also less common types of epistemic marking. In the Daghestanian variety of Northern Akhvakh, the five forms involved in this system of epistemic marking are:

- the *-ari* Perfective, which constitutes the unmarked way to describe past events witnessed by the speaker,
- the *-wudi* Perfective, which constitutes the unmarked way to describe past events not witnessed by the speaker,
- the *-ade* Perfective, used in assertive clauses to emphasize the fact that the speaker not only witnessed the event, but also played an active role in it.
- the *-ada* Perfective, which constitutes the unmarked way to question about past events,
- the *-wa* Perfective, used in interrogative clauses to mark the reaction of the speaker about the unexpectedness of the event referred to (and consequently, particularly frequent in *why* questions), and in assertive clauses to emphasize the epistemic authority of the speaker.

In the speech of my Axaxdərə consultants, the *-ade* Perfective is very rare, if not completely absent, and the distribution of the *-ari* Perfective and the *-ada* Perfective is that characteristic of conjoint-disjoint (or 'egophoric') systems.

The contrast between the system of Perfective tenses found in the Daghestanian variety of Northern Akhvakh and the system used by my consultants in Axaxdərə is intriguing. Generally speaking, Axaxdərə Akhvakh is characterized by a very high degree of variability, both between and within idiolects, that sharply contrasts with the stability observed in Daghestanian Akhvakh. However, according to my observations, the subsystem of perfective

tenses is the only domain in which the system of Northern Akhvakh is deeply affected by the variation observed in Axaxdərə.

Since the speakers of Axaxdərə Akhvakh are traditionally bilingual in Zaqatala Avar, and Zaqatala Avar is known for having morphological distinctions in verb inflection related to the 1st vs. 2nd/3rd person contrast (Saidova 2007), contact with Zaqatala Avar would be a plausible explanation of this peculiarity of Axaxdərə Akhvakh. Unfortunately, no precise description of the use of verb forms in Zaqatala Avar is available, and systematic field work in the Avar villages that surround Axaxdərə would be necessary before trying to evaluate the impact the contact situation may have had on the development of a conjunct/disjunct system in Axaxdərə Akhvakh. Moreover, an alternative scenario according to which the system described in Section 4 would be (at least in some aspects) more innovative than that described in Section 5 cannot be excluded either. The problem is that nothing reminiscent of the *-ari* vs. *-ade* or *-ari* vs. *-ada* contrast seems to exist in Southern Akhvakh varieties (Magomedbekova 1967) or in the other Andic languages, so that comparative data do not provide clear evidence that could help to reconstitute the history of the emergence of this distinction in Northern Akhvakh.

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