

## Remarks on so-called “conjunct/disjunct” systems

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### 1. Introduction

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. In other words, reference to the etymology of such terms is generally of very limited help in understanding their uses.

I refer here to the use of *conjunct/disjunct* originating from Austin Hale’s study of person marking in Kathmandu Newari (Hale 1980), i.e., as a label for contrasts in verb morphology (or in auxiliary systems) that treat the *1st vs. 2nd/3rd person* distinction in statements in the same way as the *2nd vs. 1st/3rd person* distinction in questions, as illustrated by ex. (1) & (2) for the Nakh-Daghestanian language Akhvakh.

(1) a. *de-de kaʁa qwar-ada.*

NA<sup>1</sup> 1SG-ERG paper write-PFV<sub>ASSINV</sub>  
‘I wrote a letter.’

b. *me-de / hu-šw-e / hu-λ-e kaʁa qwar-ari.*

2SG-ERG / DEM-O<sub>M</sub>-ERG / DEM-O<sub>F</sub>-ERG paper write-PFV  
‘You / he / she wrote a letter.’

c. \**de-de kaʁa qwar-ari.*

d. \**me-de / \*hu-šw-e / \*hu-λ-e kaʁa qwar-ada.*

(2) a. *me-de čūda kaʁa qwar-ada?*

NA 2SG-ERG when paper write-PFV<sub>ASSINV</sub>  
‘When did you write a letter?’

b. *de-de / hu-šw-e / hu-λ-e čūda kaʁa qwar-ari?*

1SG-ERG / DEM-O<sub>M</sub>-ERG / DEM-O<sub>F</sub>-ERG when paper write-PFV  
‘When did I / he / she write a letter?’

c. \**me-de čūda kaʁa qwar-ari?*

d. \**de-de / \*hu-šw-e / \*hu-λ-e čūda kaʁa qwar-ada?*

A general characteristic of *conjunct/disjunct* systems in this sense is a morphological distinction with the following distribution:

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<sup>1</sup> Examples from my own field notes on Northern Akhvakh are identified by NA under the number of the example. Other examples are identified according to the usual conventions.

- 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.

This definition leaves open the possibility of 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. However, the speech act role that has a direct impact on so-called *conjunct/disjunct* systems is not difficult to define: 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.**

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 tends to suggest other interpretations. Terms such as *self person* vs. *other person* (Sun 1993) or *egophoric* (Tournadre) are unquestionably better, but they 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 talk is organized as follows. Section 2 consists of preliminary remarks on the distribution of assertor's involvement marking systems in the world's languages, and on the *conjunct/disjunct* terminology commonly used to describe them. In section 3, I will present the assertor's involvement marking pattern I have discovered in Northern Akhvakh (a language belonging to the Andic branch of the Nakh-Daghestanian family).<sup>2</sup> Section 4 will address some general issues concerning the status and organization of assertor's involvement marking systems. In section 5, devoted to the emergence of assertor's involvement marking systems, I will present what seems to me the most plausible explanation of the emergence of the assertor's involvement marking pattern of Akhvakh.

## 2. Preliminary remarks

### 2.1. *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 case of the Loloish language Akha is discussed by DeLancey

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<sup>2</sup> Creissels 2008 represents a first elaboration of the Akhvakh data analyzed here.

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, since atypical person marking systems as well as 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, Hugjiltu 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).

Consequently, Northern Akhvakh, whose assertor's involvement marking system will be presented in section 3, is the second Nakh-Daghestanian language in which such a system is identified. Note that 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. The possibility of an areal phenomenon will however be discussed in section 5.3.

## 2.2. Terminological issues

As already explained, *assertor's involvement marking* is substituted here for *conjunct/disjunct*, which since Hale 1980 are the terms most commonly used in the description of such systems. 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. (3). Similar examples from Akhvakh will be given in section 3.5.

### (3) 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 terms 'conjunct' and 'disjunct' are, incidentally, utterly unrevealing ... Since the distinction involves more than mere structural co-reference, more self-evident labels should be sought...

The motivation for the terms conjunct/disjunct followed from the coreference properties of the morphology in certain logophoric contexts, in particular, reported speech. With some reluctance, I have chosen to continue using the terms conjunct/disjunct since they are the most widely used terms in the English language scholarship.

Hargreaves 2005:5

For a detailed and systematic critical assessment of *conjunct/disjunct* and of the underlying notions, see in particular Tournadre 2008.

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 illustrated by ex. (3) 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.

### 3. The assertor’s involvement marking pattern of Northern Akhvakh

#### 3.1. Some basic information about the Akhvakh language and Akhvakh morphosyntax

Akhvakh (*ašoxi miç’i*, Russian *axvaxskij jazyk*) belongs to the Andic (sub-)branch of the Northeast Caucasian (or Nakh-Daghestanian) family.<sup>3</sup> Like the other Andic languages, Akhvakh has no writing tradition. 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.

Northern Akhvakh is spoken in four villages of the Axvaxskij Rajon in the western part of Daghestan (Tadmagitl’, Lologonitl’, Kudijab-Roso, and Izani), and in Axaxdərə near Zaqatala (Azerbaijan), where I carried field work on Akhvakh.<sup>4</sup> The Southern Akhvakh dialects are spoken in one village each (Cegob, Tljanub and Ratlub), all situated in the Šamil’skij Rajon of Daghestan.

Akhvakh clause structure is characterized by flexible constituent order and ergative alignment, in case marking as well as in gender-number agreement between the verb and its core arguments.

Akhvakh distinguishes three genders in the singular: human masculine (M), human feminine (F), and non-human (N). In the plural, the *masculine* vs. *feminine* distinction is neutralized, resulting in a binary opposition between human plural (HPL) and non-human plural (NPL).

Noun morphology involves number inflection and case inflection. Except for 1st and 2nd person singular pronouns, in which an absolute suffix (*-ne*) can be isolated, the absolute form of nouns (used in the extra-syntactic function of quotation or designation and in S/P roles) has no overt mark. Case suffixes may attach to a stem identical to the absolute form, or to a special *oblique stem*

<sup>3</sup> The other Andic languages are Andi, Bagvala, Botlikh, Chamala, Godoberi, Karata, and Tindi. None of them has a particularly close relationship to Akhvakh. Andic languages are traditionally grouped with Avar and Tsezic languages into a single branch of the Northeast Caucasian family. The other branches of the Northeast Caucasian family are Lak, Dargi (or Dargwa), Lezgi, Khinalug (sometimes considered a marginal member of the Lezgi branch), and Nakh.

<sup>4</sup> Judging from Magomedbekova 1967 and Magomedova & Abdulaeva 2007, the variety of Akhvakh spoken in Axaxdərə does not differ significantly from the varieties of Northern Akhvakh spoken in the Axvaxskij Rajon, and this judgment was confirmed without any reservation by Indira Abdulaeva, co-author of the Akhvakh-Russian dictionary and a native speaker of Northern Akhvakh herself, who spent one week in Axaxdərə while I was carrying field-work there in April 2008. I have been able to find no precision about the time when Akhvakh migrants began to settle in Axaxdərə, but there are still in Axaxdərə old people who were born in Daghestan, and whose parents migrated to Azerbaijan at the end of the second world war, when the economic situation in Daghestan was particularly difficult.

the formation of which may involve synchronically unpredictable changes in the ending of the noun stem, or the addition of a formative *-su-* (M) / *-λi-* (F/N) / *-lo-* (HPL) / *-le-* (NPL).

Independent verb forms are inflected for TAM, polarity and gender-number agreement. 1st and 2nd person pronouns are not marked for gender, but verb agreement expresses the gender of their referent. The same mechanism of gender-number agreement operates in all tenses; there are variations in the possibility to have prefixed or suffixed gender-number marks in verb forms, depending on a complex combination of lexical and grammatical factors, but the rule of agreement itself is invariably that, when gender-number marks are present in a verb form, their value is always determined by the S/P argument, represented by an NP in the absolute case.

The assertor's involvement marking pattern that constitutes the main topic of this talk has not been recognized in previous works on Akhvakh (Magomedbekova 1967, Kibrik 1979, Kibrik 1985, Magomedova & Abdulaeva 2007).<sup>5</sup> It occurs only in the positive form of one of the past tenses.

### 3.2. *The past tenses of Akhvakh*

Akhvakh has four basic tenses available for describing past events, and each of them has its negative counterpart. In addition to that, analytic tenses with the copula in auxiliary function can be transposed to the past by substituting a past form of *⟨b⟩ik'uruλa* 'be' for the copula.

Three of the four basic past tenses are synthetic tenses. They are enumerated here with the basic allomorphs of their characteristic suffixes:

- perfective positive (*-ari* or *-ada*),
- perfective negative (*-iλa*),
- irrealis positive (*-iri*),
- irrealis negative (*-iki*),
- indirective past positive (M *-uwi*, F *-iwi*, N/NPL *-awi*),
- indirective past negative (M *-iλ-uwi*, F *-iλ-iwi*, N/NPL *-iλ-awi*).

The fourth basic past tense, labeled *perfect*, is an analytic tense consisting of a converbal form of the auxiliated verb and the copula in auxiliary function.

The perfective implies a direct knowledge of the event, whereas the indirective past implies indirect knowledge. The perfective is typically used by the speakers of Northern Akhvakh in autobiographical narratives, but it is also used, in competition with the perfect, with reference to recent events clearly relevant to the present situation. For example, light cuts (an extremely common event in Axaxdərə) regularly meet with exclamations *koni māni!*, lit. 'The light went away', with the verb in the perfective positive.

The irrealis is an old present still productively used with reference to habitual events in other varieties of Northern Akhvakh, but which in Axaxdərə tends to be restricted to a range of uses that can be subsumed under the label *irrealis*. In addition to modal uses, it is productively used as a narrative tense in fiction narratives (but not in reporting real events).

Contrary to the perfective and the indirective past, the perfect has no straightforward relationship with the *direct* vs. *indirect knowledge* distinction. In contexts implying indirect knowledge, apart from very special contexts such as the introductory sentences of tales, the perfect

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<sup>5</sup> Magomedbekova 1967 describes an 'optional' 1st vs. 2nd/3rd person contrast, but does not provide examples of interrogative clauses that could reveal the existence of an assertor's involvement marking pattern. In the grammatical sketch included in the Akhvakh-Russian dictionary, the two verbal endings expressing distinctions in assertor's involvement are just mentioned as two possible marks of the same tense (*prošedšee očevidnoe*, i.e. 'past of direct knowledge'), without any indication about their distribution or difference in meaning. However, the dictionary itself includes many examples suggesting a pattern similar to that of Axaxdərə Akhvakh, and this was confirmed by the discussions I had with Indira Abdulaeva, who added interesting precisions to my own observations on Axaxdərə Akhvakh – see section 3.7 below.

is in fact more widely used than the dedicated indirective past, and it is worth noting that the indirective past has no HPL form, the perfect being used instead. But the perfect also occurs with a resultative meaning in contexts in which it is clear that the speaker has a direct knowledge of the event, and the fact that the perfect (contrary to the perfective and the indirective past) carries no entailment of direct/indirect knowledge by itself is confirmed by the speakers’ judgments.

### 3.3. The assertor’s involvement marking pattern of Northern Akhvakh: the morphological material

In Northern Akhvakh, the perfective positive is the only tense in which, in addition to gender-number agreement with their S/P argument, verbs show variations sensitive to person distinctions, reflected in the choice between the two possible endings *-ada* (glossed PFV<sub>ASSINV</sub>) and *-ari* (glossed PFV). The details of the rule accounting for this choice will be described in section 3.4, but note immediately that the glossing of *-ari* as PFV and of *-ada* as PFV<sub>ASSINV</sub> reflects a difference in markedness: *-ada* necessarily implies that the assertor is involved in the event, but the possibility to use *-ada* is conditioned by the way the assertor is involved, and there is a class of intransitive verbs that invariably take the *-ari* ending, irrespective of the fact that the assertor is involved or not.

A segmentation of these suffixes as *-a-da* and *-a-ri*, with a common element *-a-* as the tense marker proper, is probably justified in a diachronic perspective (we will return to this issue in section 5.2), but in a synchronic morphological analysis, it is not confirmed by the possibility to isolate the same formatives with the same meaning in other forms.

Morphologically, the two suffixes of the perfective positive show the following variations:

- the initial *a* of these two endings may merge with an underlying *i* belonging to the stem according to the rule  $a + i \rightarrow \bar{e}$  (for example, the perfective positive of *gūruḷa* ‘do’, whose root has the underlying form  $|gwi(j)|$ , is *gw-ēri* ~ *gw-ēda*);<sup>6</sup>
- with stems that select nasalized variants of affixes, the perfective positive endings occur as *-ani* and *-āda*;
- if the S/P argument is human plural, the obligatory merging of a gender-number agreement mark results in the variants *-iri* and *-idi*;<sup>7</sup>
- *-ari* never shows variations due to gender-number agreement with S/P arguments other than HPL; by contrast, with S/P arguments other than HPL, *-ada* has the optional variants *-ado* (M) and *-ade* (F, N, or NPL) resulting from the optional merging of a gender-number suffix.

In addition to that, with verbs that have stem allomorphy,<sup>8</sup> agreement with a human plural S/P argument triggers not only the choice of the *-iri* and *-idi* variants of the suffixes, but also the choice of the long allomorph of the stem.

In ex. (4), the forms of the first column illustrate the variations of *-ari*, whereas those in the second column illustrate the variations of *-ada*. In ex. (4a), *ḃixuruḷa* ‘grasp’ illustrates the case of a verb whose stem  $|-iḡ-|$  undergoes only phonologically conditioned changes triggered by prefixes. Ex. (4b) and (4c) illustrate the behavior of two verbs with stem allomorphy, *čōruḷa* (stem  $|ča(b)-|$ ) and *gūruḷa* ‘do’ (stem  $|gwi(j)-|$ ). Occurrences of the long allomorph of the stem are in bold print.

<sup>6</sup> The underlying *i* responsible for this variation is apparent in the imperative form *gwiḡ-a*.

<sup>7</sup> When realized as a distinct segment, the suffix ‘human plural’ appears as *-ji*.

<sup>8</sup> In Akhvakh, all verb forms without exception end with a non-void inflectional suffix, and most verbs build all of their forms from a unique stem invariably ending with a consonant. There is however a set of non-derived verbs characterized by an alternation between a *long* stem ending with a consonant and a *short* stem characterized by the loss of the final consonant, and the same kind of alternation affects the derived transitive verbs formed by means of a causative suffix whose underlying form is  $|-a(j)-|$ . Since all of the verb suffixes of Akhvakh begin with a vowel, the selection of the short form of such verb stems implies interaction between the last vowel of the stem and the initial vowel of the suffixes attached to it. The division of verb suffixes into those selecting the long form of alternating verb stems, and those selecting the short form, is not correlated with any phonological or semantic property, and must be considered as synchronically arbitrary.

(4) *The two endings of the perfective positive in Northern Akhvakh*

a.   <i>-iχ-</i>		-ari	-ada
	M	<i>w-uχ-ari</i>	<i>w-uχ-ada</i> ~ <i>w-uχ-ada-we</i> ~ <i>w-uχ-ado</i>
	F	<i>j-iχ-ari</i>	<i>j-iχ-ada</i> ~ <i>j-iχ-ada-je</i> ~ <i>j-iχ-ade</i>
	N	<i>b-iχ-ari</i>	<i>b-iχ-ada</i> ~ <i>b-iχ-ada-be</i> ~ <i>b-iχ-ade</i>
	HPL	<i>ba-χ-iri</i>	<i>ba-χ-idi</i>
	NPL	<i>r-iχ-ari</i>	<i>r-iχ-ada</i> ~ <i>r-iχ-ada-re</i> ~ <i>r-iχ-ade</i>
b.   <i>ča(b)-</i>		-ari	-ada
	M	<i>č-āri</i>	<i>č-āda</i> ~ <i>č-āda-we</i> ~ <i>č-ādo</i>
	F	<i>č-āri</i>	<i>č-āda</i> ~ <i>č-āda-je</i> ~ <i>č-āde</i>
	N	<i>č-āri</i>	<i>č-āda</i> ~ <i>č-āda-be</i> ~ <i>č-āde</i>
	HPL	<i>čab-iri</i>	<i>čab-idi</i>
	NPL	<i>č-āri</i>	<i>č-āda</i> ~ <i>č-āda-re</i> ~ <i>č-āde</i>
c.   <i>gwi(j)-</i>		-ari	-ada
	M	<i>gw-ēri</i>	<i>gw-ēda</i> ~ <i>gw-ēda-we</i> ~ <i>gwē-do</i>
	F	<i>gw-ēri</i>	<i>gw-ēda</i> ~ <i>gw-ēda-je</i> ~ <i>gw-ēde</i>
	N	<i>gw-ēri</i>	<i>gw-ēda</i> ~ <i>gw-ēda-be</i> ~ <i>gw-ēde</i>
	HPL	<i>guj-iri</i>	<i>guj-idi</i>
	NPL	<i>gw-ēri</i>	<i>gw-ēda</i> ~ <i>gw-ēda-re</i> ~ <i>gw-ēde</i>

3.4. *The choice between the two forms of the perfective positive*

In contexts other than reported speech, the choice between *-ada* and *-ari* expresses 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 follows a split intransitive pattern. In the following chart,  $S_A$  stands for ‘S argument of an intransitive verb triggering the choice of *-ada* in the same way as the A argument of a transitive verb’:

	statements	questions
1st person A / $S_A$	<b><i>-ada</i></b>	<i>-ari</i>
2nd person A / $S_A$	<i>-ari</i>	<b><i>-ada</i></b>
3rd person A / $S_A$	<i>-ari</i>	<i>-ari</i>
no A / $S_A$	<i>-ari</i>	<i>-ari</i>

Transitive verbs invariably encode the assertive status of the A argument (*-ada* with 1st person A and *-ari* with 2nd/3rd person A in statements, *-ada* with 2nd person A and *-ari* with 1st/3rd person A in questions). Ex. (5a-c) and (6a) 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. (6b) shows that *-ari* is invariably selected (in declarative clauses as well as in questions) if A is not a speech act participant.

- (5) a. ***eχ'-ada*** “*di-χa q'abuλ-ere goχa*”, *me-de-la*      ***eχ'-ari*** “*di-χa-la*”.  
 NA      say-PFV<sub>ASSINV</sub> 1SG-DAT agree-PROG COPNEG<sub>N</sub> 2SG-ERG-ADD      say-PFV      1SG-DAT-ADD  
 ‘I said “I don’t agree”, and you said “Neither do I”.’

b. *de-de čūda eχ’-ari ha-be?*  
 2SG-ERG when say-PFV DEM-N  
 ‘When **did I** say that?’

c. *me-de čugu eχ’-ada ha-be?*  
 2SG-ERG why say-PFV<sub>ASSINV</sub> DEM-N  
 ‘Why **did you** say that?’

(6) a. *me-de čūda b-eχ-ada hu šāλ’e? –šuni b-eχ-ada.*  
 NA 2SG-ERG when N-buy-PFV<sub>ASSINV</sub> DEM dress yesterday N-buy-PFV<sub>ASSINV</sub>  
 ‘When **did you** buy this dress? –**I** bought it yesterday.’

b. *hu-šw-e čūda b-eχ-ari hu mašina? –šuni b-eχ-ari.*  
 DEM-O<sub>M</sub>-ERG when N-buy-PFV DEM car yesterday N-buy-PFV  
 ‘When **did he** buy this car? –**He** bought it yesterday.’

Intransitive verbs divide into two semantically motivated classes: S<sub>A</sub> verbs encode the assertive status of the S argument in the same way as transitive verbs encode the assertive status of A (accusative alignment), whereas S<sub>P</sub> verbs invariably select *-ari*, which can be viewed as an instance of ergative alignment, since the S argument of such verbs shares with P its inability to trigger the choice of *-ada*. Ex. (7) illustrates the case of an intransitive verb encoding the assertive status of S in the same way as transitive verbs encode the assertive status of A.

(7) a. *mene čūda w-ošq-ada? –šuni w-ošq-ada.*  
 NA 2SG-ABS when M-work-PFV<sub>ASSINV</sub> yesterday M-work-PFV<sub>ASSINV</sub>  
 ‘When **did you** work? –**I** worked yesterday.’

e. *hu-we čūda w-ošq-ari? –šuni w-ošq-ari.*  
 DEM-M when M-work-PFV yesterday N-buy-PFV<sub>ASSINV</sub>  
 ‘When **did he** work? –**He** worked yesterday.’

Ex. (8) illustrates the case of an intransitive verb invariably selecting *-ari* irrespective of the assertive status of S. Note that the *-ēni* variant of *-ari* results from morphophonological processes: the underlying form of *hēni* is |*hī(j)-ari*|.

(8) a. *mene čūda h-ēni? –šuni h-ēni.*  
 NA 2SG-ABS when recover-PFV yesterday recover-PFV  
 ‘When **did you** recover? –**I** recovered yesterday.’

e. *hu-we čūda h-ēni? –šuni h-ēni.*  
 DEM-M when recover-PFV yesterday recover-PFV  
 ‘When **did he** recover? –**He** recovered yesterday.’

### 3.5. *-ari* vs. *-ada* in reported speech

Reported speech is crucial to convincing oneself that assertor’s involvement marking is not just an exotic variety of person agreement. 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<sub>A</sub> argument coincides or not with the assertor of the reported clause.

In ex. (9), (9a) reproduces the original formulation of the sentence reported in (9b). The use of a long-distance reflexive (the anaphoric pronoun *žiw>e*, here in the ergative feminine form *īle*) 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.

(9) a. *ha īgora de-de magazi-gune b-eχ-e j-eq'-ada.*  
 NA DEM bread 1SG-ERG shop-EL N-buy-CVB F-come-PFV<sub>ASSINV</sub>  
 'I brought this bread from the shop.'

b. *ilo-de<sub>i</sub> eχ'-iri waša-su-ga,*  
 mother<sub>O</sub>-ERG tell-IRR boy-O<sub>M</sub>-LAT  
 'The mother told the boy

*ha īgora ī-λ-e<sub>i</sub> magazi-gune b-eχ-e j-eq'-ada.*  
 DEM bread ANA-O<sub>F</sub>-ERG shop-EL N-buy-CVB F-come-PFV<sub>ASSINV</sub>  
 that she had brought this bread from the shop.'

Similarly, in ex. (10), (10a) reproduces possible formulations of the sentence reported in (10b). The use of a 1st person pronoun in (10b), 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 it does not coincide with the assertor of the reported clause.

(10) a. *me-de / hu-šw-e de-ne q'war-āri.*<sup>9</sup>  
 NA 2SG-ERG / DEM-O<sub>M</sub>-ERG 1SG-ABS offend-PFV  
 'You / he offended me.'

b. *ek'wa-šw-e eχ'-ari, de-de ži-we q'war-āri eχ'-e.*  
 man-O<sub>M</sub>-ERG say-PFV 1SG-ERG ANA-M offend-PFV say-CVB  
 'The man said that I offended him.'

### 3.6. The two classes of intransitive verbs

As illustrated by examples (7) and (8) 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 belongs to a well-known type of split intransitivity,<sup>10</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). The sample of intransitive verbs given in (11) shows that intransitive verbs with S representing a relatively active participant mark the assertive status of the S argument in the same way as transitive verbs mark the assertive status of their A argument, whereas those with a clearly patient-like S argument do not show such variations.

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

*badaluruλa* 'laugh', *baχwaduruλa* 'play', *baλuruλa* 'speak', *beq'uruλa* 'come', *beχuruλa* 'stand up', *bešquruλa* 'work', *beturuλa* 'run', *bišuruλa* 'win', *bišuruλa* 'gather', *bituruλa* 'lose', *boλuruλa* 'walk', *buquruλa* 'fight', *bužuruλa* 'believe', *c'irililōruλa* 'get vexed',

<sup>9</sup> The underlying form of *q'war-āri* | *q'wara(j)-ari*].

<sup>10</sup> See in particular Van Valin 1990, Mithun 1991.

*čaḱ'uruḷa* ‘urinate’, *čōruḷa* ‘wash’, *damalilōruḷa* ‘wonder’, *goč'uruḷa* ‘reach’, *(ba)duk'uruḷa* ‘sit down’, *hādaḡuruḷa* ‘hold one’s tongue, listen’, *heč'uruḷa* ‘get up’, *hīk'unuḷa* ‘hiccup’, *ḡaruruḷa* ‘defecate’, *ḡečuruḷa* ‘sneeze’, *ḡulōruḷa* ‘scream’, *ič'eḡ'uruḷa* ‘dress’, *kakibōruḷa* ‘pray’, *kasuruḷa* ‘jump’, *kočilōruḷa* ‘move house’, *koruruḷa* ‘move’, *k'ōnuḷa* ‘lie down’, *k'oturuḷa* ‘run’, *k'usuruḷa* ‘squat down’, *lebalilōruḷa* ‘show courage’, *ḡoruruḷa* ‘crawl’, *ḡūruḷa* ‘dance’, *maḡeq'uruḷa* ‘get angry’, *minadaluruḷa* ‘part’, *muk'ulilōruḷa* ‘accept’, *mūnuḷa* ‘go’, *mut'uḡililōruḷa* ‘obey’, *naluruḷa* ‘insult’, *nikuquruḷa* ‘swear’, *oḡōruḷa* ‘cough’, *pašmalilōruḷa* ‘regret’, *qaqaduruḷa* ‘beg’, *qīnaluruḷa* ‘come near’, *q'inuruḷa* ‘stand up’, *q'wiluruḷa* ‘slip’, *q'wiluruḷa* ‘bend’, *razililōruḷa* ‘accept’, *rehēluruḷa* ‘learn’, *vūruḷa* ‘speak’, *šimalaḡuruḷa* ‘get angry’, *šoruruḷa* ‘turn around’, *šinuruḷa* ‘hide oneself’, *šit'uruḷa* ‘whistle’, *šulavuruḷa* ‘feel embarrassed’, *šuruḷa* ‘whisper’, *t'iq'uruḷa* ‘jump’, *ūhunuḷa* ‘moan’, *ūkunuḷa* ‘eat’, *ūvilōruḷa* ‘think’, *ḡajunuḷa* ‘snore’, *ḡeruruḷa* ‘climb’, *ḡeḡiluruḷa* ‘hurry’, *ḡedesilōruḷa* ‘hurry’, *ḡōruḷa* ‘cry’.

- b. Intransitive verbs compatible with human S arguments, but whose perfective positive invariably ends with *-ari*:

*ālunuḷa* ‘be audible’,<sup>11</sup> *āḡ'aḡuruḷa* ‘perspire’, *aq'uḡuruḷa* ‘suffocate’, *bačuruḷa* ‘calm down’, *bač'aq'uruḷa* ‘be late’, *baḡ'araluruḷa* ‘lose weight’, *baqaroluruḷa* ‘become old’, *baḡililōruḷa* ‘get jealous’, *baḡuruḷa* ‘get puzzled’, *beçoluruḷa* ‘get blind’, *beč'uruḷa* ‘get satisfied (of hunger)’, *beguluruḷa* ‘get drunk’, *beḡuruḷa* ‘be glad’, *biçuruḷa* ‘get wet’, *biḡ'uruḷa* ‘die’, *buxuruḷa* ‘fall down’, *buxuruḷa* ‘feel cold’, *čakōnuḷa* ‘get sick’, *čaraluruḷa* ‘get fat’, *goč'uruḷa* ‘wake’, *gwāzeluruḷa* ‘get fat’, *hariguruḷa* ‘be visible’,<sup>12</sup> *hūnuḷa* ‘recover’, *ḡeralilōruḷa* ‘be amazed’, *k'oruruḷa* ‘fall’, *ḡūruḷa* ‘be afraid’, *ḡ'eruruḷa* ‘get startled’, *ḡ'iḡuruḷa* ‘panic’, *ḡ'ūk'unuḷa* ‘sleep’, *makwačunuḷa* ‘be hungry’, *miḡ'eḡuruḷa* ‘feel drowsy’, *mištīlilōruḷa* ‘become poor’, *raḡilōruḷa* ‘have plenty of time’, *šakīlilōruḷa* ‘suspect’, *taluruḷa* ‘get tired’, *ḡadataaluruḷa* ‘lose weight’, *ḡāq'aḡuruḷa* ‘be thirsty’.

Note that, 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 *hīk'unuḷa* ‘hiccup’ or *ḡōruḷa* ‘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 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, in sentences such as *ḡwede 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.

The few cases of hesitation or fluctuation I have observed confirm the semantic motivation of these two classes of intransitive verbs. For example, according to the judgment of my main informant, *ḡ'ūk'unuḷa* ‘sleep’ may take the *-ada* ending in the perfective positive, but *dene ḡ'ūk'ada* tends to be interpreted as ‘I lay down in order to sleep’, whereas *dene ḡ'ūk'ani* (with the *-ari* ending) must be used if the intended meaning is ‘I dozed off unwillingly’.

<sup>11</sup> In Akhvakh, ‘hear’ is expressed by the combination of this verb with a dative-marked experiencer.

<sup>12</sup> In Akhvakh, ‘see’ is expressed by the combination of this verb with a dative-marked experiencer.

### 3.7. Asserter's involvement marking and agreement

As just mentioned, the data I collected in Axaxdərə include hesitations about the behavior of some intransitive verbs, but I came across no exception to the rule according to which, with transitive verbs in the perfective positive, coincidence between the A argument and the asserter triggers the choice of *-ada*, and whenever I checked occurrences of *-ada* in spontaneously produced texts, my main informant consistently refused to substitute *-ari* for them.

In particular, the mere substitution of *-ari* for *-ada* is not available as a strategy for encoding non-volitional agents. Non-volitional agents are encoded in Akhvakh as ablative adjuncts in intransitive predications with the patient in S role. In ex. (12), the verb in sentence (a) is the causative verb derived from the strictly intransitive verb occurring in sentence (b). Consequently, the choice of *-ari* in (12b) is not an exception to the rule of asserter's involvement marking: it is the mere consequence of the fact that (12b) is an intransitive predication with *istaka* 'glass' in S role.

(12) a. *de-de istaka b-iq'w-āda*.<sup>13</sup>  
 NA 1SG-ERG glass N-break-CAUS.PFV<sub>ASSINV</sub>  
 'I broke the glass.' (lit. 'I made the glass break.')

b. *di-gune istaka b-iq'w-ari*.  
 1SG<sub>O</sub>-ABL glass N-break-PFV  
 'I broke the glass unintentionally.' (lit. 'The glass broke from me.')

The relatively high degree of syntacticization of the asserter's involvement marking system of Akhvakh is confirmed by the fact that, in questions, the use of *-ada* with 2nd person A / S<sub>A</sub> arguments is not sensitive to the distinction between true questions and rhetorical questions. Ex. (5b), reproduced here as (13), was in fact produced in a context in which it clearly constituted a rhetorical question, but the same formulation can be used as a true question.

(13) *de-de čūda eχ'-ari ha-be?*  
 NA 2SG-ERG when say-PFV DEM-N  
 1. 'When did I say that?' – I don't remember, perhaps you do (true question)  
 2. 'When did I say that?' – You should know that I never did (rhetorical question)

Consequently, in Northern Akhvakh, at least in the idiolects of my informants, asserter's involvement marking is syntacticized to such a degree that it is possible to describe it as a particular type of agreement, for which the term *assertive agreement* can be proposed. The difference with person agreement is that, in person agreement, verb morphology reflects the coincidence between particular argument roles and the speech act roles *speaker* vs. *addressee* vs. *non-SAP*, whereas in assertive agreement, verb morphology (or the morphology of a subclass of verbs) reflects the coincidence between a particular argument role and the speech act role of *asserter*. In Akhvakh, the argument role relevant to assertive agreement can be characterized as A/S, and assertive agreement is limited to verbs that can be characterized as encoding controllable events.

As already mentioned, my corpus includes no exception to the rule of assertive agreement. However, according to Indira Abdulaeva (p.c.), exceptions to the assertive agreement rule are marginally possible, with what seems to be a mirativity effect: by using *-ari* instead of *-ada* in declarative clauses including a verb encoding a controllable event and 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

<sup>13</sup> *b-iq'w-āda* is the realization of |*b-iq'w-a(j)-ada*|, where |*-a(j)-*| is the underlying form of the causative suffix.

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.

#### 4. Issues in the study of assertor’s involvement marking systems

##### 4.1. Variations in assertor’s involvement marking patterns

The systems of assertor’s involvement marking documented so far show the following variations:

- the inventory of verb tenses affected by assertor’s involvement marking,
- possible restrictions on the argument roles whose coincidence with the assertor triggers assertor’s involvement marking, and on the semantic nature of verbal lexemes affected by assertor’s involvement marking,
- the degree of syntacticization of assertor’s involvement marking.

##### 4.1.1. Assertor’s involvement marking and TAM

Northern Akhvakh represents the extreme case of a language in which assertor’s involvement marking is found only in one tense. Interestingly, in languages which have assertor’s involvement marking in a wider range of tenses, the way it interacts with other semantic distinctions may be different in the perfective and imperfective subsystems. This is in particular the case of Standard Tibetan (DeLancey 1986).

##### 4.1.2. Assertor’s involvement marking, argument roles, and semantic classes of verbal lexemes

Akhvakh illustrates the case of a system of assertor’s involvement marking limited to active involvement in controllable events, which means that verb forms marking assertor’s involvement can be used only if the assertor coincides with the A argument of transitive verbs or the S argument of a subclass of intransitive verbs. Similar restrictions are common in Himalayan systems of assertor’s involvement marking.

By contrast, Awa Pit illustrates the possibility of an assertor’s involvement marking system that totally ignores such restrictions. In Awa Pit, the verb is marked for assertor’s involvement regardless of the role fulfilled by the assertor in the event. Consequently, in Awa Pit, any verb can be marked for assertor’s involvement, and the assertor may fulfill any role in the event.

In Awa Pit, however, elements such as control, volition, intention and so on do not seem to be factors in the use of the conjunct/disjunct system... Furthermore, while, in Kathmandu Newari and Tsafiki, to the extent that person is relevant, it is the person of the subject of the clause, in Awa Pit, it is any entity affected by the action in the clause.

Curnow 2002a:616

In Awa Pit, verb forms marked for assertor’s involvement do not even imply that the assertor fulfills an argument role in the strict sense of this term. Assertor’s involvement marking in Awa Pit may thus be semantically similar to the “ethical dative” of Romance languages, with however the difference that only an affected assertor can be indicated in this way. For example, ‘I found the bag heavy’ can be expressed by marking the copula for assertor’s involvement in a sentence that otherwise would mean ‘The bag was heavy’, but it is impossible to express for example ‘He found the bag heavy’ in a similar way (Curnow 2002a:620).

##### 4.1.3. More or less syntacticized systems of assertor’s involvement marking

As explained in section 3.7, Northern Akhvakh is a nearly perfect example of a fully syntacticized system of assertor’s involvement marking, in the sense that, when the assertor of a clause in the perfective positive coincides with the A/S argument of a verb encoding a controllable event, the

omission of assertor's involvement marking is very exceptional. The assertor's involvement marking system of Kathmandu Newari, which in other respects is very similar to that of Akhvakh, is less syntacticized in the sense that it leaves more room for semantically motivated omission of assertor's involvement marking (Hargreaves 2005:23-6).

#### 4.2. *Assertor's involvement marking, evidentiality and mirativity*

There has been much discussion in the literature of the issue of distinguishing evidentiality (i.e., the grammatical marking of information source) from mirativity (i.e. "the linguistic marking of an utterance as conveying information which is new or unexpected to the speaker" – DeLancey 2001 369-70), and there has also been a lot of debate on the issue of distinguishing assertor's involvement marking from both evidentiality and mirativity. Aikhenvald 2004 repeatedly argues in favor of the autonomy of assertor's involvement marking, whereas many (most?) linguists describing languages with assertor's involvement marking systems implicitly or explicitly treat assertor's involvement marking as a particular case of evidentiality or mirativity marking.

I would like to argue here that both standpoints contain part of the truth. On the one hand, a broad definition of assertor's involvement marking abstracting from its possible codifications in individual languages leaves us with a notion that clearly cannot be viewed as a particular type of either evidentiality or mirativity. But on the other hand, individual languages very often codify assertor's involvement marking in such a way that their particular patterns of assertor's involvement marking fall under the definition of evidentiality or mirativity.

For example, utterances such as *Mary criticized me yesterday* or *John came to my place* describe events involving the assertor, if assertor's involvement is conceived in the broadest possible sense, and at the same time carry no evidentiality or mirativity entailment: none of these utterances suggests anything about the *direct vs. indirect evidence* or *new vs. integrated knowledge*. Consequently, in a language like Awa Pit, whose assertor's involvement marking system relies on the broadest possible conception of involvement, there would be no justification in treating assertor's involvement marking as part of an evidentiality or mirativity system.

However, unrestricted assertor's involvement marking systems are not particularly common, and the relationship between assertor's involvement marking, evidentiality and mirativity is entirely different in the type illustrated by Kathmandu Newari and Akhvakh, characterized by restriction of assertor's involvement marking to assertors fulfilling the A/S role in the construction of verbs encoding controllable events. Once restricted in this way, assertor's involvement marking unquestionably falls under the definition of both evidentiality and mirativity, since active involvement implies direct knowledge (evidentiality) and active involvement in a past event implies integrated knowledge (mirativity). This constitutes the functional motivation of systems such as that of Standard Tibetan, in which assertor's involvement marking is intertwined with the marking of (other aspects of) evidentiality and/or mirativity.

The Papuan language Oksapmin provides a particularly clear illustration of the possibility to treat assertor's active involvement as a particular case of a mirativity distinction. According to Loughnane 2007, Oksapmin has "participatory/factual" past tenses with the following uses:

- 1st person statements about events which the speaker consciously and deliberately performed,
- 2nd person questions about events which the speaker anticipates that the addressee consciously and deliberately performed,
- 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.

In their first two uses, the "participatory/factual" tenses of Oksapmin mark active involvement of the assertor. The use of the same forms in utterances that could be glossed as 'Everybody knows

that ...’ clearly reflects the fact that active involvement and received opinion have in common the property of being undebatable cases of integrated knowledge.

## 5. Assertor’s involvement marking systems in a historical perspective

### 5.1. General remarks

DeLancey 1992 discussed the emergence of assertor’s involvement marking systems in Tibeto-Burman languages. When he wrote this article, DeLancey was not aware of the existence of similar systems outside the Tibeto-Burman family, but his conclusions about the connection with mirativity marking are supported by the discovery of unrelated languages sharing a tendency to restrict assertor’s involvement marking to *active* involvement, i.e., a type of involvement that has clear implications for mirativity.

The main conclusions of DeLancey 1992 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”. This view has been challenged by Curnow 2002b, whose argumentation against the grammaticalization path proposed by DeLancey is however not very convincing. In addition to that, Curnow fails to provide alternative hypotheses about possible evolutions leading to the emergence of assertor’s involvement marking systems. His negative assessment of DeLancey’s hypothesis was probably influenced by his own work on the relatively exceptional case of a language (Awa Pit) whose assertor’s involvement marking system has no obvious connection with mirativity.

Most systems of assertor’s involvement marking show no evidence of having developed from previous systems of person marking, and there is no clear evidence of person marking systems originating from assertor’s involvement marking systems either. The only evidence of a possible connection between assertor’s involvement marking and person marking comes from Mehweb Dargwa, which marks assertor’s involvement by means of a suffix *-ra* homonymous with a clitic that, in other varieties of Dargwa, has the status of person marker. However, the person marking systems found in Dargwa dialects other than Mehweb are complex hierarchical systems, atypical in several respects, and their evolutions are still poorly understood. Consequently, as discussed by Sumbatova 2008, it is difficult to reconstruct a proto-system whose evolution could have led, on the one hand to the assertor’s involvement marking system of Mehweb, and on the other hand to the complex and atypical person marking systems of other Dargwa varieties.

### 5.2. The emergence of the assertor’s involvement marking pattern of Akhvakh

In this section, I propose a possible scenario accounting for the emergence of the system of assertor’s involvement marking of Northern Akhvakh, elaborated on the basis of an internal reconstruction. Although the details are different, there is some similarity with the scenario proposed by DeLancey for Tibeto-Burman languages in the sense that the scenario I propose for Akhvakh also involves the grammaticalization of mirativity entailments.

As already indicated in section 5.1, generally speaking, the evolution of person agreement systems does not seem to constitute a plausible source of assertor’s involvement marking systems. In addition to that, none of the close relatives of Akhvakh has morphological variations of verbs sensitive to person distinctions (either person agreement or assertor’s involvement marking). Consequently, it is reasonable to conclude 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 relies on 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 form of the perfective positive used in independent clauses to mark assertor's involvement is homonymous with the perfective positive participle. In other words, as illustrated by ex. (14), *-ada* has two possible values:

- in verb forms heading independent declarative or interrogative clauses, in addition to the TAM value (perfective positive) it shares with *-ari*, it encodes that an A or S<sub>A</sub> argument is identical to the assertor, contrasting with *-ari*, used if an A or S<sub>A</sub> argument is different from the assertor, and in intransitive constructions involving an S<sub>P</sub> argument – (14a-b);
- but the same *-ada* ending also characterizes the participial form of the perfective positive, independently of any speech act role distinction – (14c-d).

(14) a. *ek'wa-šw-e kitabi ž-āri.*<sup>14</sup>  
 NA man-O<sub>M</sub>-ERG book read-PFV  
 'The man read the book.'

b. *de-de kitabi ž-āda.*<sup>15</sup>  
 1SG-ERG book read-PFV<sub>ASSINV</sub>  
 'I read the book.'

c. *ek'wa-šw-e ž-āda kitabi*  
 man-O<sub>M</sub>-ERG read-PFV<sub>PTCP</sub> book  
 'the book read by the man'

d. *de-de ž-āda kitabi*  
 1SG-ERG read-PFV<sub>PTCP</sub> book  
 'the book read by me'

The fact that the suffix of the imperfective positive participle is *-ida* (see below), 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 with *-ari* and *-ada* is limited to form. Functionally, in independent clauses, *-iri* and *-ida* mark two different tenses, irrespective of speech act role distinctions:

- the form with the *-ida* ending (glossed IPFV) is an imperfective form referring to habitual events, or permanent facts, or events obligatorily occurring under certain conditions; this is in particular the verb form commonly used in proverbs and riddles – ex. (15);<sup>16</sup>

(15) a. *rač'jxe č'-ēda č'-ēda č'or-ida.*  
 NA iron burn-IPFV<sub>PTCP</sub> burn-IPFV<sub>PTCP</sub> strike-IPFV  
 'One strikes the iron when it is hot.'

b. *bek-oqe xwaj-ida, xwan-oqe ūk-ida. (qaliça)*  
 snake-like crawl-IPFV horse-like eat-IPFV scythe  
 'It crawls like a snake, it eats like a horse.' (the scythe)

<sup>14</sup> The underlying form of *ž-āri* is |ža(b)-ari|.

<sup>15</sup> The underlying form of *ž-āda* is |ža(b)-ada|.

<sup>16</sup> Note that, in ex. (15a), the same imperfective form occurs also in a participial use; the underlying form of *č'-ēda* is |č'a(b)-ida|.

- as already mentioned in section 3.2, the form with the *-iri* ending (glossed IRR for ‘irrealis’) is an old present which in Axaxdərə Akhvakh tends to be restricted to two types of uses difficult to relate in a strictly synchronic perspective, but which can be subsumed under the label *irrealis*: it is mainly found in fiction narratives, as illustrated by an extract from the anecdote ‘The duck soup’ reproduced in (16), but also has modal uses, in particular in the type of questions illustrated by ex. (17).<sup>17</sup>

(16) ... *miq'o-ge bał'i-qe če ihwara harigw-iri*,  
 NA road<sub>O</sub>-ESS side<sub>O</sub>-ESS one lake see-IRR  
 ‘...Near the road he saw a lake,

*ihwara geł-i šodak'a harigw-iri*.  
 lake inside-ESS duck<sub>PL</sub> see-IRR  
 in the lake he saw ducks.

*hu-re harigw-ełi, če-be b-ił-urułā ł'e ihwara geł-a kas-iri*.  
 DEM-NPL see-POST one-N N-catch-INF say-CVB<sub>N</sub> lake inside-LAT jump-IRR  
 As he saw the ducks, he jumped into the lake to catch one of them...

(17) a. *me-de čı eł'-ełi iš-e ič'o ał-iri?*  
 NA 2SG-ERG what say-POST 1PLE-ERG door open-IRR  
 lit. ‘We must open the door when you say what?’

b. *du miqadi čuge q'el-ēri?*  
 2SG<sub>O</sub> moustache<sub>PL</sub> how dress-IRR<sup>18</sup>  
 (a barber to his customer) ‘How must I dress your moustache?’

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, *-ida* is also the suffix of the imperfective participle (in which case I gloss it IPFV<sub>PTCP</sub>) – ex. (18), which provides additional evidence that such a segmentation was probably correct at some stage in the history of Akhvakh.

(18) *de-de ruša b-uq'-ida šāžite*  
 NA 1SG-ERG tree N-cut-IPFV<sub>PTCP</sub> axe  
 ‘the axe with which I am cutting the tree’

We must therefore explain the lack of semantic parallelism between the two apparently parallel couples of verbal endings *-ari* / *-ada* and *-iri* / *-ida*. A plausible explanation of this mismatch 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, originally, when forms with the *-da* ending were 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

<sup>17</sup> This restriction of *-iri* to ‘irrealis’ contexts is not general in Northern Akhvakh. The Russian-Akhvakh dictionary (Magomedova & Abdulaeva 2007) includes many examples of this form with a habitual meaning, i.e. with a meaning for which my informants exclusively use *-ida*.

<sup>18</sup> The underlying form of *q'elēri* is *|q'ela(j)-iri|*.

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 (the narrative use of *-iri* resulting probably from the maintenance of its former use as a historical present);
- 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 in Akhvakh by *-ada*.

### 5.3. *Similar developments in other languages, and the areal hypothesis*

In addition to morphological evidence, the plausibility of the reanalysis scenario put forward in section 5.2 is reinforced by independent attestations of the fact that evolutions affecting perfects may be sensitive to speech act roles 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>19</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-mİş-am</i>	‘I have looked’
<i>bax-mİş-san ~ bax-İb-san</i>	‘You (sing.) have looked’
<i>bax-İb (~ bax-mİş-dir)</i>	‘(S)he has looked’
<i>bax-mİş-İq</i>	‘We have looked’
<i>bax-mİş-sİnİz ~ bax-İb-sİnİz</i>	‘You (pl.) have looked’
<i>bax-İb-lar (~ bax-mİş-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* occurs only in a non-finite verb form). 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-mİş 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.

This coincidence may well involve areal convergence, but direct influence of Azerbaijani on Northern Akhvakh is not a plausible explanation: the speakers of Axaxdərə Akhvakh are all bilingual in Akhvakh and Azerbaijani, but the speakers of the Daghestanian varieties of Northern Akhvakh have no direct contact with Azerbaijani. Moreover, the hypothesis of a transfer from Azerbaijani could not explain the emergence of a pattern very different from the person agreement pattern of Azerbaijani. And crucially, more information about the situation in Southern Avar dialects would be necessary before trying to evaluate the hypothesis of an areal phenomenon.

The point is that the space between the two Daghestanian languages in which an assertor’s involvement marking system has been recognized so far (Northern Akhvakh and Mehweb Dargwa) is occupied by Southern Avar dialects. Contrary to Standard Avar (based on a Northern Avar dialect), which has no person marking on verbs, Southern Avar dialects are known for having developed some form of person marking. Moreover, the “1st person” form in Southern Avar dialects is of participial origin, like the form that marks assertor’s involvement in Akhvakh (Helmbrecht 1996). Note that the fact that Nakh-Daghestanian languages have both “pronominal” (originating from personal pronouns) and “non-pronominal” person markers was already recognized by Troubetzkoy 1929. Unfortunately, the available documentation on Southern Avar dialects is limited to morphological paradigms showing 1st vs. 2nd/3rd person contrasts, which leaves entirely open the question of the exact nature of the contrast.

## Conclusion

In this talk, I have tried to summarize the current state of knowledge on assertor’s involvement marking systems and to confront it with the system of assertor’s involvement marking I have discovered in Akhvakh. The discovery of a Caucasian language having an assertor’s involvement

<sup>19</sup> *I* represents an underspecified high vowel with 4 possible values (*i, ü, ɨ, and u*) determined by vowel harmony.

marking system very similar to those found in Himalayan languages is of great significance for the typology of such systems and for the elaboration of hypotheses about their functional motivation. The main conclusion in this respect is that Akhvakh confirms a widespread tendency towards restricting assertor's involvement marking to *active* involvement.

As already mentioned in section 5.3, the study of speech act role marking in other languages spoken in the southern part of Daghestan seems to constitute a promising direction for future investigations in this domain. Unfortunately, the data on Mehweb Dargwa provided by Magometov 1982, although perfectly clear, are rather scanty, their relation to the person marking systems of other Dargwa varieties are still poorly understood, and the available documentation on Southern Avar dialects permits no conclusion about the nature of their speech act role marking systems. Consequently, intensive field work in this area will be a crucial condition for a better understanding of the development of assertor's marking systems in Daghestan.

## Abbreviations

1SG : 1st pers. sing. pronoun	DEM : demonstrative	M : singular human masculine
2SG : 2nd pers. sing. pronoun	EL : elative	N : singular non-human (neuter)
1PLE : 1st pers. pl. (excl.) pronoun	ERG : ergative	NP : non-human (neuter) plural
1PLI : 1st pers. pl. (incl.) pronoun	ESS : essive	O : oblique stem
2P : 2nd pers. pl. pronoun	F : singular human feminine	PFV : perfective
ABS : absolute	GEN : genitive	PFVNEG : perfective negative
ASSINV : assertor's involvement	HPL : human plural	PL : plural
COP : copula	INESS : inessive	POST : posterior converb
COPNEG : negative form of the copula	INF : infinitive	PROG : progressive converb
CVB : general converb	IPFV : imperfective	PTCP : participle
DAT : dative	IRR : irrealis	
	LAT : lative	

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