

‘Old presents’ and the layered history of the Andi verb

In a seminal article on the typology of verbal inflection, Haspelmath (1998) points out that many anomalous features in the shape and behaviour of imperfective verb forms cross-linguistically can be explained as a side effect of grammaticalization. Once an innovative present tense grammaticalizes into the TAM system of a given language, the pre-existing formation whose central function it takes over – labelled an ‘old present’ – may become restricted to more peripheral roles (whether in terms of semantics or of lexical distribution) that have only their diachronic heritage in common. This observation predicts that at a particular moment in a language’s history, traces of numerous diachronic layers of present formation may be preserved side by side in its synchronic morphology and morphosyntax. The formal complexity of such a system thus provides clues to its development.

In this paper we present a verb system of just this kind in Andi, an understudied minority language of the East Caucasian family, and show that the unusual functional distribution of its morphological material makes sense as the result of a particularly multi-layered history, in which each successive imperfective formation has encroached upon the domain of the one preceding it.

Andi, belonging to the Avar-Andic branch of East Caucasian and spoken by approximately 20,000 people in a handful of villages in mountain Daghestan, is a largely unwritten language attested only since the late 19th century: our material is drawn from the two printed works comprising the Andi corpus (Magomedova & Alisultanova 2010 and Luke 2015), complemented by dialect descriptions and the results of recent fieldwork. A striking feature of Andi morphology is the division of its verb system into two formal zones based on distinct, lexically listed inflectional stems – neither of which, however, has an identifiable function in its own right, e.g. they do not straightforwardly encode tense or aspect. Instead, the longer of these two stems serves as the basis for a disparate range of somewhat peripheral verb forms, including certain specialized converbs, the negative (but not positive) imperative, the typologically notable ‘counterexpectation present’ (Maisak & Verhees 2020), the future, and the present habitual – but not the basic present itself, which uses Stem 1.

‘comb’	Stem 1 <i>roxo-</i>	Stem 2 <i>roxud-</i>
	<i>roxo-∅</i> AOR ‘combed’	<i>roxud-ja</i> FUT ‘will comb’
	<i>roxo-rado</i> PRS ‘combs, is combing’	<i>roxud-o</i> HAB ‘(generally) combs’
	<i>roxo-ddu</i> PF ‘has combed’	<i>roxud-abiddu</i> COUNTEREXP.PRS ‘still isn’t combing (!)’
	<i>roxo-r</i> MSD ‘(action of) combing’	<i>roxud-obʔ:ij</i> ANT.CVB ‘before combing’
	<i>rox-o!</i> IMP ‘comb!’	<i>roxud-os:ub!</i> NEG.IMP ‘do not comb!’

Table 1. Some examples of Gagatli Andi finite and non-finite verb forms based on Stems 1 and 2

We show that this complex synchronic situation can be explained by reconstructing a series of developments whereby each ‘new present’ takes over the central functions of the preceding one, while small sets of lexical items may resist the change. Thus the current PRS *roxorado* ousted what is now FUT *roxudja*, which once had a more general non-past value, as attested by the existence of an identical participial form referring to inherent characteristics, e.g. [*hinuk:u*] *dašdja* ‘openable [from inside]’ (Salimov 2010: 222); this value also survives on finite modal verbs, e.g. FUT *ʔidja* ‘may’.

However, *roxudja* was itself an innovation, marginalizing earlier non-past *roxudo*; the latter formation in fact still serves as the basic present for precisely one verb, meaning ‘go’. We give cross-dialectal evidence that *-dja* and the other Stem 2 forms are based on the formation underlying *-do* – some of them via an imperfective participle in *-dob*, which survives only as the suffix deriving ordinals.

Meanwhile, internal reconstruction and Avar-Andic parallels allow us to identify *-do* as an innovation itself: it is the grammaticalized present in *-o* of an iterative in **-id-*. And remarkably, a few exceptional verbs retain a present signalled by this *-o* directly. This means we can identify formations from at least *four* diachronic layers coexisting with basic present value for different verbs in Andi.

References

Haspelmath, Martin (1998). The semantic development of old presents: new futures and subjunctives without grammaticalization. *Diachronica* 15.1: 29-62.

Luke (2015) = *Lukašdi bosam rerhanol'li' xabar* [The good news according to Luke]. Moscow: Institut perevoda Biblii.

Maisak, Timur, and Samira Verhees (2020). *Counterexpectation present in Andi*. MS., HSE University, Moscow.

Salimov, Khangerej (2010). *Gagatlinskij govor andijskogo jazyka* [The Gagatli dialect of Andi]. Makhachkala: IJaLI.