

# Evidentiality and the perfect in the Rikwani and Zilo dialects of Andi (East Caucasian)

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Introduction

Map

General Characteristics

The Perfect Questionnaire

Resultative

Evidentiality

Elicitation task

Results

Preliminary conclusions

References

# Introduction

Andi < Avar-Andic < East Caucasian.

One of the eight unwritten Andic languages, spoken in the mountains of Western Daghestan (North Caucasus, Russian Federation).

9 villages = 9 dialects

**Upper:** Andi, Gagatli, Gunkha, Rikwani, Ashali, Chanko, Zilo;

**Lower:** Muni, Kwankhidatli <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Available descriptions: Andi (Dirr [1906] and Tsertsvadze [1965], with some notes on other dialects); Rikwani (Suleymanov [1957]); Gagatli (Salimov [1968]).

Figure 1: Evidentiality marking on the verb in Eurasia <sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> The maps in this presentation were created using Lingtypology for R. This particular map is based on the data points "verbal affix" and "verb tense" marked within Eurasia in de Haan [2013] (WALS); + some Finno-Ugric languages (via Aikhenvald [2004]) + East Caucasian, based on my own research.

Samira Verhees

Introduction  
Map  
General Characteristics

The Perfect Questionnaire  
Resultative  
Evidentiality

Elicitation task  
Results  
Preliminary conclusions  
References

# Map II

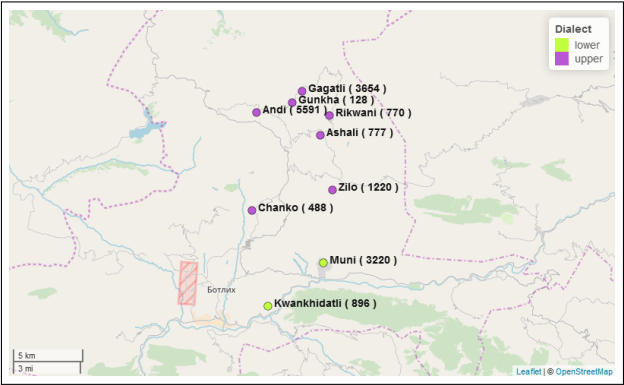
Figure 2: Andi on the map



Samira Verhees

- Introduction
- Map
  - General Characteristics
- The Perfect Questionnaire
  - Resultative
  - Evidentiality
- Elicitation task
- Results
- Preliminary conclusions
- References

Figure 3: The Andi villages and dialects



# General characteristics

Two basic past tenses:

bare past stem (AORIST) / past stem + suffix (PERFECT)

Described as **obvious/witnessed past** versus  
**non-witnessed past**, or **aorist (general past)** and  
**completed past (perfect, resultative present)** in various  
sources.

To what extent is there a grammaticalized opposition of  
information source in the past tense?

## General characteristics II

**Clause types** Perfect only occurs in main clauses; aorist in main or complement, converbs in subordinate clauses.

**Other past tenses** Imperfect and pluperfect are arranged in pairs with either an aorist or perfect auxiliary.

# The Perfect Questionnaire<sup>3</sup>

1 speaker of Rikwani, 1 speaker of Zilo.

**Table 1:** Functions of the perfect

	Resultative	Current relevance	Indirect evidentiality
Rikwani	+	-	+
Zilo	+	+	?

NB: experiential and recent past are expressed by the aorist  
in both dialects.

<sup>3</sup> See Dahl [2000].



(1) *ingur arxon-d*  
window open-PF  
'The window **is open(ed)**.' [Rikwani]

(2) *ingur* **arxon-nij**  
window **open-PF**  
'The window **is open(ed)**.' [Zilo]

+ Agent = Perfect (Indirective (3) / Perfect of result (4))

(3) ?den ingur **arχon-d**  
I.ERG window open-PF  
'I **have opened** the window (*it appears*).'  
[Rikwani]

(4) *den-ni ingur arxon-nij*  
I-ERG window open-PF  
'I **have opened** the window.' [Zilo]

Samira Verhees

Introduction

Map

General Characteristics

The Perfect Questionnaire

Resultative

Evidentiality

Elicitation task

Results

Preliminary conclusions

References

## Resultative II

There is a limited set of telic, intransitive verbs (e.g. 'to sit down', 'to fall asleep') that denote a stative situation in the present when inflected for perfect (they have no stative counterparts, i.e. there is no verb 'to sleep').

They take the **present tense** particle =/e in interrogative sentences.

- (5) *hege-w* **tt'ixon-nij=le**  
dem-M fall \_asleep-PF=Q  
'Is he sleeping?' [Zilo]
- (6) *hege-w* **tt'ixon=dile**  
dem-M fall \_asleep.AOR=Q  
'Did he sleep?' [Zilo]

Although a stative situation in the present is their default interpretation, the narrative regime may override this.

# Evidentiality

**Rikwani:** answers to the questionnaire concur with the hypothesis that there is an opposition of directly versus indirectly witnessed events for the aorist and perfect + this distinction is suggested by the speaker.

**Zilo:** answers to the questionnaire are not entirely consistent with the above mentioned hypothesis + the distinction is not salient to the speaker.

## Corpus data?

Corpus for Zilo is still under construction.

For Rikwani a corpus is available (currently 4268 words), consisting of spontaneous narratives. Almost all texts are monologues; either personal history or folklore.

Consistent use of perfect in non-witnessed narratives, aorist in witnessed, but:

**No** instances of resultative or other **non-evidential usages** of the perfect.

# Elicitation task

- Two short, nearly identical narratives of 10 sentences each, opposed in terms of whether the speaker witnessed the events or not  
6 speakers of Zilo - 5 speakers of Rikwani

Download the test: [goo.gl/ZhaN89](https://goo.gl/ZhaN89).

Shows the opposite of the perfect questionnaire; Zilo speakers fairly consistently narrate using the perfect, while Rikwani speakers opt for the aorist.

### Table 2: Results - Indirective elicitation task

Narrative	Finite	Perfect	Aorist	Dialect
Indirect	9	8	1	Zilo1
	10	10		Zilo2
	9	9		Zilo3
	9	3	6	Zilo4
	9	9		Zilo5
	9	7	2	Zilo6
	9	2	7	Rikwani1
	9		9	Rikwani2
	9	1	8	Rikwani3
	9	9		Rikwani4
	9		9	Rikwani5

## Results II

**Table 3:** Results - Directive elicitation task

Narrative	Finite	Perfect	Aorist	Dialect
Direct	10		10	Zilo1
	9	1	8	Zilo2
	9	2	7	Zilo3
	9		9	Zilo4
	9		9	Zilo5
	9	3	6	Zilo6
	9		9	Rikwani1
	9		9	Rikwani2
	9		9	Rikwani3
	9	2	7	Rikwani4
	9		9	Rikwani5

## Deviations from the narrative strategy

Switch to perfect in an aorist narrative:

- (7) *hegef-tf'u*      *berku-d*      *q'ammi-d*  
dem.M.OBL-AD snake.OBL-ERG **bite-PF**  
*tf'ek'u-qχ*  
leg.OBL-LOC  
'The snake **bit** him in the leg.' [Rikwani]

Or the other way around:

- (8) *hegel-di*      *b-ixi-j*      *ɟammi-j*      *hints'o*  
DEM.OBL-ERG NA-take-CVB **throw-PF** rock  
*berku-'o.*      *berka b-itɟ'o*  
snake.OBL-SUP.LAT. snake **AN-die.AOR**  
'She took a rock and **threw** it at the snake - The  
snake **died.**' [Zilo]



## Deviations from the narrative strategy II

Alternative strategy - aorist + reportative:

- (9) *j-etf'uχa baba*  
F-big mother  
***siri=odi***  
become \_frightened.AOR=REP  
'Grandmother **became frightened** (*they say*).'  
[Rikwani]

## Summary

- Speakers "pick" a particular narrative strategy.
- Aorist is always possible (= unmarked), perfect can only function in the main-line of an *unwitnessed* narrative
- Perfects in an aorist-narrative single out a certain event from the sequence.
- Aorists in an otherwise perfect narrative - presenting an event as a logical consequence of the previous action (e.g. "S(h)e hit the snake [and] it died.")
- Alternative: aorist + reportative particle, a discursive unit used for emphasis + reportativeness. Not obligatory.

# Preliminary conclusions on Andi

- The alledged witnessed / non-witnessed opposition between perfect and aorist is **not grammaticalized**.
- The perfect remains an indirect "evidential strategy" (see Aikhenvald [2004]) in both dialects, and its usage is subject to individual variation.
- Zilo speakers are not aware of evidential semantics, but consistently employ the perfect in unwitnessed narratives.
- The Rikwani perfect may occur with a non-evidential reading and an ergative subject

## General issues

- Are East Caucasian languages rightfully included in the Eurasian **evidentiality belt**?
- It has been questioned for other languages of the family in the past whether this is 1) grammaticalized evidentiality (cf. Forker [2016]);  
2) whether it should be called evidentiality at all (a.o. Friedman [2007] on a similar form in Lak; Maisak and Tatevosov [2007] on the Tsakhur perfect).

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