

CHAPTER IV

VERBAL MORPHOLOGY

The verbal morphology of Yaghnobi, described in the following sections, includes the tense, aspect, number, and person affixes on verbs; forms of copulas; complex verbs; nominalizers; and adverbs.

1. VERBS

Yaghnobi verbs always occur with at least one affix; the bare root is only used in imperative clauses, as shown in example 1, where *vov* ‘come’ is uninflected for person or number but is understood to apply to the second person singular, since this is an imperative construction. The citation form is generally the nominalized (non-finite) form with the suffix *-ak* (See section 1.1). Verbs are more conservative than nouns; verbal morphosyntax is quite distinct from the Tajik, the dominant language of the region, and there are far fewer borrowed verbs than nouns in the Yaghnobi language.

- (1) *kat -i -sa* *vov*
 house -CS -to come
 ‘Come to (my) house.’

1.1. THE NOMINALIZED FORM

The non-finite form of Yaghnobi verbs consists of the root plus the suffix *-ak*. This is the form most often used by the consultants on this project when naming the verb. These are some of the syntactic features of the nominalized form: it can be possessed, it can be the subject of a sentence, and it can accept case and postpositions. These are shown in example 2. From these sentences it can be seen that this form is nominal, although it does not seem to occur in all the places in which a noun would occur (for example, it doesn't appear to take the plural suffix).

(2) Use of the nominalized verb form

a. *tfak -i kar -ak -f ajoib xoġ*
 climb -GEN do -NZR -3S amazing was
 'His **climbing** was amazing.'

b. *to pulla -i kar -ak -i -sa -f otfa -i kat -i -f nid -tġi*
 to birth -CS do -NZR -CS -until -3S mother-CS house-CS-3S sit-3S.PR
 (GEN) (GEN) (GEN) (GEN)
 'She is staying at her mother's house until **giving birth**.'

c. *axtit tfidoka zav -ak -i op zavar -oft*
 they from.here drink -NZR -CS water take.out -3P.PR
 'They are getting **drinking** water from here.'

1.2. TENSE

Yaghnobi has two tenses, a past and a present/future.¹ The primary morphological difference between the two tenses is that past tense is signaled by the prefix *-a*, while there is no prefix on the verb in present tense. In addition, the person and number suffixes differ between the tenses. The verb root does not change with tense.

1.2.1. PAST TENSE

The past tense is formed by prefixing the verb root with *a-* and adding the appropriate suffix, as shown in Table 4.1. The use of each suffix in this table is shown in example 3.

Table 4.1. Past tense verb paradigm

	singular	plural
1 st person	<i>-im</i>	<i>-im</i>
2 nd person	<i>-i:</i>	<i>-si:</i>
3 rd person		<i>-or</i>

(3) Past tense verb inflection

a. First person singular

man it kat -i nahke aven -im
 I this house -CS now PST- see -1
 (ACC)

‘I saw this house just now.’

¹ This is also true of Tajik, the majority language of Tajikistan which is spoken as a second language by most Yaghnobis.

b. Second person singular

tfuki futur -i vi:ta pak -a a- kun -i:
 why sheep -CS rope cut -ing PST- do **-2S.PST**
 ‘Why did **you** cut the sheep’s rope?’

c. Third person singular

ax tʃi sar a- ves -∅
 he from above PST- descend **-3S**
 ‘**He** came down from above.’

d. First person plural

mox naxke tʃi sar -i karmen a- ves -im
 we now from top -CS Gharmen PST- descend -1
 (GEN)

‘We are just now going down from upper Gharmen.’

e. Second person plural

if hamom fumox a- kun -si:
 this bath.house you.pl PST- do **-2P.PST**
 ‘Did you build this bath house?’

f. Third person plural

axtit tʃi etk a- gudar -or
 they from bridge PST- cross **-3P.PST**
 ‘They crossed the bridge.’

1.2.2. NON-PAST TENSE

The present tense consists of the verb root followed by one of the suffixes (or pairs of suffixes) shown in Table 4.2. In this paper, the suffix *-ift* is analyzed as a present tense suffix, but it may also be possible to analyze it as an imperfective aspect suffix.

to karmenisa dah duvozdah soati ras -im -ift
 to Gharmen -CS -toward ten twelve hour -CS arrive -1P -PRS
 ‘The morning of the next day we get up and in ten - twelve hours reach
 Gharmen.’

e. Second person plural

it murk -t -i jumox kor -s -ift
 this chicken -P -CS (ACC) you.pl look -2P -PRS
 ‘Do **you (pl)** take care of these chickens?’

f. Third person plural

axtit kitob zoj -oft
 they book read -3P.PRS
 ‘**They** are reading a book.’

(5) Non-past verb inflection used for the future
(the same paradigm as shown in 4)

a. First person singular

man firona avoka fav -om -ift
I tomorrow there go -1S -PRS
'Tomorrow **I** will go there.'

b. Second person singular

No data was elicited.

c. Third person singular

ax ark na- kun -tʃi
he work not- do -3S.PRS
'**He/she** won't do that.'

d. First person plural

dʒuma vo -tʃi ki malim -t -i fuk kun -im -ift
Juma say -3S.PRS that teacher -P -CS silent do -1P -PRS
(ACC)
'Juma says, **we** will silence the teachers.'

e. Second person plural

nihedoka exi nov du -j -if deh -sift
right.here Ekhi Nov two -CS -3S hit -3S -PRS
'Right here, (at) Ekhi Nov **you (pl)** will shoot two of his (men).'

f. Third person plural

awtiti vo firona kat -i vov -ant
to.them say tomorrow house -LOC come -3P
'Tell **them** to come to the house tomorrow.'

1.2.3. PRESENT IN THE PAST

Mirzoev (1998:31) describes this construction (Mirzoev calls it the “storytelling tense”), which is formed by adding the prefix *a-* and the suffixes shown in Table 4.3 to the verb root. It is interesting to note that this construction reflects a combination of the past tense prefix and an approximation of the present/future tense suffixes (rather than past tense suffixes) described in the previous sections.

Table 4.3 Present in the past verb paradigm

	singular	plural
1 st person	<i>-im-ift</i>	<i>-im-ift</i>
2 nd person	<i>-ift</i>	<i>-s-ift</i>
3 rd person	<i>-ift</i>	<i>-oft</i>

Example 6 shows use of the “story telling” tense with second/third person singular in (a), and third person plural in (b).

(6) Historical present verb inflection

a. *neki sambaqa tim nahaw -tit -i -sa a- kor -ift*
 but frog also that.very -3P.HUM -CS -toward PST- look -2/3S
 ‘The frog also looks right at them.’

b. *diraxt -i sar -i kut -i -pi -f sambaqa -j a- kov -oft*
 tree -CS top -CS dog -with -3S frog -CS PST- search -3P.PRS
 (GEN) (LOC) (LOC)
 ‘From on top the tree with his dog they were looking at the frog.’

1.3. ASPECT

Yaghnobi has several morphological forms used to mark perfective and imperfective aspect, or a verb may also be unmarked for aspect. The unmarked past

form is usually understood to be perfective, and the unmarked present/future form is usually understood to be imperfective.² Two types of imperfective aspect have been identified in Yaghnobi: habitual and progressive.

1.3.1. PERFECTIVE

Perfective aspect is the default aspect for the past tense.³ It is the default in the sense that a hearer will interpret the action as completed even though there is no explicit perfective grammatical marking. In example 7, *a- nipif -i*: ‘you wrote’ is understood to be a completed action.

(7) *xajr zuta -i takdir -i tfo a- nipif -i*
 well son -CS fate -CS what **PST- write -2S.PST**
 ‘Well, what fate did **you write** for the child?’

1.3.2. IMPERFECTIVE

Imperfective aspect is the default interpretation for non-past tense clauses when describing the present. They may be interpreted as either progressive or habitual. This is cross-linguistically quite common since “the present tense is used essentially to describe, rather than to narrate” (Comrie, 1976:66). For example, in sentence 8a *zoi -oft* ‘they read’ is interpreted as a progressive action even though progressive aspect is not grammatically marked. The sentence in 8b would be understood to mean that the boy sleeps in that place regularly.

² The unmarked form can also be used to express states or ongoing activities.

³ The suffix *-ta* may be a perfective marker, but it will not be discussed in this chapter. Its function is currently not clear; it may intersect with evidentiality. More data needs to be analyzed in order to understand the uses of this suffix.

(8) Imperfective interpretation of present tense clauses

a. Progressive interpretation

axtit kitob zoj -oft
 they book read -3P.PRS
 ‘They are reading a book.’

b. Habitual interpretation

zut -am nahawoka nipidtfi:
 son -1S that.very -place sleep -3S.
 ‘My son sleeps right there.’

Clauses with verbs inflected for either present or past tense can be interpreted as habitual if the O argument is not definite, as shown in example 9.

(9) Habitual interpretation with non-definite O arguments

a. Present tense with no aspect marking

ax har pions -tʃi
 he donkey sell -3S.PRS
 ‘He sells donkeys.’

b. Past tense with no aspect marking

har a- pions -im
 donkey PST- sell-1
 ‘I sold donkeys.’

Progressive aspect in the present tense is indicated by combining the infinitive form of the verb with the copula *ast* ‘has.’ Sentence 10a is an example of present perfective, and example 10b is an example of past perfective.

(10) Perfective aspect in present and past tense

- a. *man maktab -i fav -ak ast*
 I school -CS go -Part have
 (LOC)
 ‘I am **going** to the school.’

- b. *karim -i tup -ak xoj*
 Karim -CS go -Part was
 (NOM)
 ‘Karim **was going**.’

1.4. COMPLEX PREDICATES

“Complex predicate” is the term used in Iranian language studies for what are in other places called “light verb constructions” or “compound verbs.” A complex predicate is composed of a nominal element (frequently called a “preverb”) followed by a verb, as shown in example 11. A complex predicate can occur with all the same morphosyntax as a simple verb.

- (11) *ark kun -ift*
 work do -2S.PRS
 ‘Are you working?’

1.4.1. PREVERBS

A preverb can be a noun or adjective that occurs in the usual distribution for these word classes, or it can be a word from a special nominal class only used in complex predicates. Examples of words from the preverb word class are shown in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4. Elements of complex predicates

Preverb	verb	complex predicate
<i>putʃa</i>	<i>karak</i> ‘do’	<i>putʃai karak</i> ‘to break’
<i>tʃak</i>	<i>dorak</i> ‘have’	<i>tʃaki dorak</i> ‘to catch’
<i>Pijoda</i>	<i>ʃavak</i> ‘go’	<i>pijoda ʃavak</i> ‘to walk’
<i>Top</i>	<i>xvarak</i> ‘eat’	<i>topi xvarak</i> ‘to turn’

Preverbs in complex predicates are marked with the suffix *-i*, which does not seem to have any function other than to “glue” the preverb to the verb, as shown in the sentences in example 12.

(12) Clauses with complex predicates

- a. Complex predicate with progressive aspect

av -i odam -t -i jordam -i kar -ak ast
 3S -CS person -P -CS help -CS do -Part have
 ‘That person is helping.’

- b. Complex predicate with present tense

man xvart -im toza kun -om -ift
 I self -1S clean do -1S -PRS
 ‘I will wash myself.’

- c. Complex predicate with past tense

aw -i burda a- kun -or
 1Per -CS eye PST- do -3P.PST
 ‘They gave him the evil eye.’

2. COPULAS

There are two copulas in the Yaghnobi language, although they only have distinct forms in the third person. The form *xast* ‘be’ is used in sentences describing location, equation, and attribution. The other, *ast* ‘be, have’, is used for possession and existence. (See Chapter VI for a discussion of the copular functions of location, equation, attribution, possession, and existence.)

Both *xast* and *ast* are inflected for person and tense, but they are irregular verbs; they do not follow the inflection paradigms of any other Yaghnobi verb. Table 4.5 shows the inflection paradigms of the two copulas. The following sections will show the data and analysis used to discover the paradigms shown in this table.

Table 4.5. Copula paradigms

		Present tense		Past tense	
Semantics	Person	Singular	Plural	Singular	Plural
Possession & existence	1 st person	<i>ast</i>	<i>ast</i>	<i>o₂im</i>	<i>ijom</i>
	2 nd person	<i>ast</i>	<i>ast</i>	<i>o₂i:</i>	<i>ijot</i>
	3 rd person	<i>ast</i>	<i>ast</i>	<i>o₂j</i>	<i>ijor</i>
Location, attribution, equation, and proper inclusion	3 rd person	<i>xast</i>	<i>or</i>	<i>xo₂j</i>	<i>xo₂j</i>

2.1. NUMBER

The singular form of *xast* is shown sentences 13a, b, and c. Sentence a shows the singular form in a clause expressing possession with a possessive suffix, *-ik*;

sentence b with possession expressed by word order, *man kat* ‘my house’; and sentence c with possession indicated by the genitive case.

(13) Singular form of *xast* ‘be’

a. *ax kat man - ik xast*
 he house I - 's be
 ‘That house is mine.’

b. *ax kat man kat xast*
 he house I house be
 ‘That house is my house.’

c. *mox zivok jəknob -i xast*
 we language Yaghnob -CS be
 ‘Our language is Yaghnobi.’

Both *xast* and *ast* have plural forms in the past tense, but only *xast* has a plural form,⁴ *or*, in the present tense, as can be seen in Table 4.5. Examples of this usage are shown in sentences 14, 15, and 16. These sentences also show that *or* is used in clauses with the semantic functions associated with *xast*. Note that the copula agrees with the nominal element of the predicate (not the subject) in number.

Sentence 14 is an example of *or* occurring in a clause with the function of proper inclusion. Note that the copula is agreeing in number with the subject, *if* ‘this’, not the predicate, *manik* ‘mine’.

⁴ No data was elicited for first and second person present plural forms of *xast* ‘be’.

- (14) *if -tit man -ik or*
 this -3P I -3S.Poss **be.3P**
 ‘These **are** mine.’

Sentence 15 is an example of *or* occurring with the function of attribution. There is only one nominal element, *sankt* ‘stones’, for the copula to agree with in number.

- (15) *if sank -t darkor or*
 this stone -P necessary **be.3P**
 ‘These rocks **are** necessary.’

Sentence 16 is an example of *or* occurring in a clause with the function of location.

- (16) *tfi odam -t -i purs -oft ki bosmatfi -t kumoka or*
 from person -P -CS ask -3P.PRS that rebel -P where **be.3P**
 ‘They ask people where the rebels **are**.’

For the copula *ast* ‘have, is’, there is no plural form. This can be seen in example 17, where it doesn’t matter whether the subject is plural as in (a) or plural as in (b); the form of the copula is still *ast*.

- (17) Use of *ast* ‘be, have’

- a. With a singular subject

<i>nihet</i>	<i>havz -i</i>	<i>op -i</i>	<i>hufru</i>	<i>mohi -t -i</i>	<i>ast</i>
this	pond -CS	water -CS	pretty	fish -P -CS	have
	(GEN)	(LOC?)		(ACC?)	

‘This pond’s water **has** good fish.’

- b. With a plural subject

awtiti avd kov-i ast
 they seven cow -QTY **have**
 ‘They **have** seven cows.’

2.2. TENSE AND PERSON

The past tense conjugation of *xast* ‘be’ and *ast* ‘be, have’ is shown in Table 4.6.

The distinction in the form of the two copulas disappears in the past tense, since all copular functions are expressed by the forms in this one paradigm.

Table 4.6. Past tense copula paradigm

Person	Singular	Plural
1	<i>o₂im</i>	<i>Ijom</i>
2	<i>o₂i:</i>	<i>Ijot</i>
3	<i>o₂i, xo₂i</i>	<i>Ijor</i>

Sentence 18 is an example of the first person singular form of the past tense copula.

(18) Past tense, singular forms of *xast* ‘be’

- a. First person

ax intʃ anos man na- o₂-im
 he wife PST- take I **not - was -1S**
 ‘I **wasn’t** there when he got married.’

- b. Second person

(No example was elicited.)

c. Third person

idoki *i:* *sutur* *oĵ*
 here -CS a sheep had.3S.PST
 ‘A sheep was here.’ (‘This place had a sheep.’)

Sentences 19, 20, and 21 are examples of the past tense third person singular form of the copula. Notice that there are two forms: *oĵ* ‘had, was’ and *xoĵ* ‘was’. The copula *oĵ* appears in sentence 19 expressing possession and in sentence 20, expressing existence. These are obviously the same functions as the present tense form *xast*.

(19) Possession

aw -i *nihed* *men* *kat* *oĵ*
 3 -CS this.very village -CS house **had**
 ‘He **had** a house in this very village.’

(20) Existence, state

vijor *oĵ*
 night **was**
 ‘It **was** night.’

Sentence 21 shows the third singular past tense form *oĵ*, expressing location, which corresponds to the present tense form *ast*.

(21) Location

ax nihedok *-i* *xoĵ*
 he right.here -CS **be.PST.3S**
 ‘He **was** right here.’

Both past tense third person forms are shown in sentence 22, where their associated semantic functions are clear: possession for *oĵ* and attribution for *xoĵ*.

- (22) *obron -i intʃ oɟ ax dujon xoɟ*
 irrigator -CS wife **had.3S** she pregnant **was.3S**
 (GEN)

‘The irrigator **had** a wife; she **was** pregnant.’

The past tense first person plural form is shown in sentence 23, where it is expressing existence.

- (23) First person plural (Existence)

mox panj -tit ijom
 1P five -3S **1P.PST**

‘There **were** five of us.’

The past tense third person plural form is shown in sentence 24, where it is expressing existence.

- (24) Third person plural (Existence)

ax -tit panj -tit ijor
 Pro -3P five -3P **be.3P.PST**

‘There **were** five people.’

2.3. NEGATION

Negative copular clauses are formed by prefixing the copula with *na-* ‘not’, as shown in sentences 25, 26, and 27.

(25) Negative form (showing location)

malim kat -i na xast

teacher house -CS not be

(LOC)

‘The teacher isn’t in the house.’

(26) Negative form (showing location)

if odam piḡn kat -i n - xoḡ

this person yesterday house -CS not- was

(LOC)

‘This man wasn’t in the house yesterday.’

(27) Negative form (showing possession)

it dajro -i mohi: na -ast

This river -CS fish not - have

(LOC)

‘This river doesn’t have fish.’

2.4. CONTRACTION

The copula *xast* ‘be’ is commonly contracted to *-x* and becomes a suffix on the predicate, as shown in sentence 28. This contraction does not appear to be the result of any phonological conditioning, as *-x* occurs following a diverse variety of phonemes, including vowels, nasals, and voiced and unvoiced stops. It is a common occurrence in rapid, connected speech.

(28) *if kata koḡaz safed -x*

this big paper white -be

‘This big paper is white.’