Tense and aspect systems in Gur languages

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Aspect is a basic feature of the verb systems of most Gur languages. It is indicated by verbal inflection with the means of tone, ablaut phenomena and particular suffixes while tense marking is generally provided by preverbal elements. In spite of these basic similarities Manessy could reconstruct neither the aspect nor the tense system for Proto Central Gur.

Differences between the verbal systems of modern languages often consist of more than only individual peculiarities. The preverbal elements vary as to their number as well as to their functions that may include tense marking as well as modal and further aspectual differentiation. The verbal inflection itself is not restricted to indicate aspect but may in addition be used to mark mood, tense and plurality in several of the languages. The use of simple verbal phrases consisting only of a subject and an inflected verb as well as of morphologically tense marked phrases display noticeable variances even across languages of a single subgroup.