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PECULIARITIES OF PAST TIME REFERENCE IN CIRCASSIAN

1. Circassian languages

Circassian < North-West Caucasian (Abkhaz-Adyghe) < North-Caucasian phylum
Two languages (groups of dialects): **Adyghe** (West Circassian) and **Kabardian** (East Circassian).
Our fieldwork data come from two Circassian varieties spoken in the Republic of Adygea (Russian Federation):
➢ Temirgoy dialect of Adyghe, villages Haqwerinehabl and Pšyčo (very close to Standard Adyghe);
➢ Ulyap variety of Kabardian, village Ulyap (previously and possibly erroneously assigned to the Besleney dialect; very different from Standard Kabardian);
➢ For Adyghe, we also use examples from various literary texts.

Adyghe   Kabardian

Ulyap
Haqwerinehabl and Pšyčo
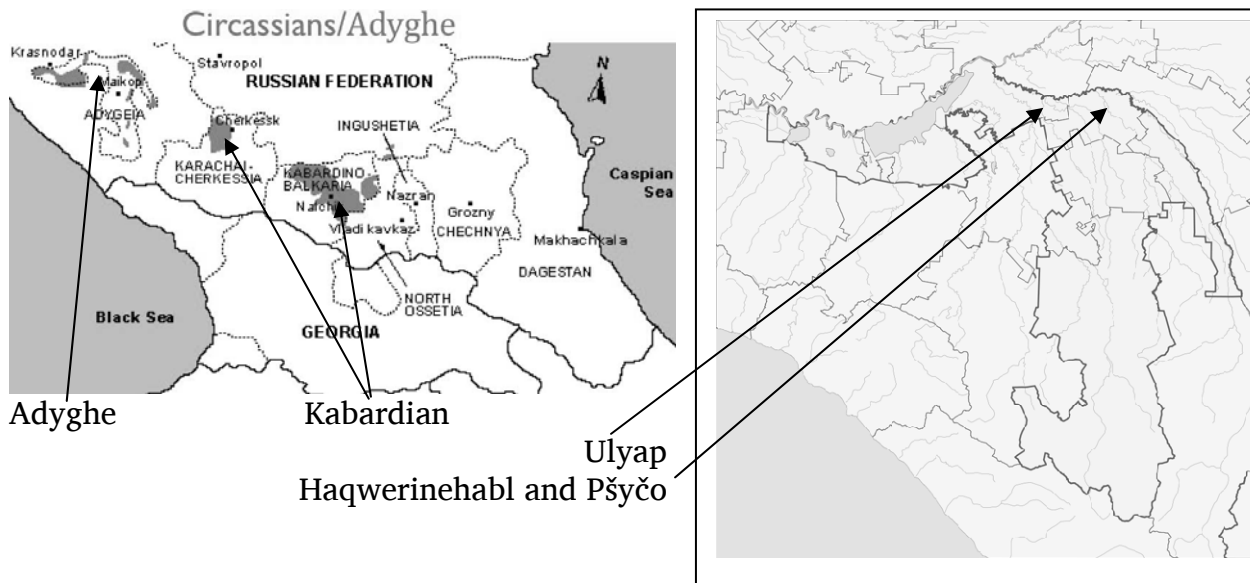
Important typological features:
➢ very little distinction between nouns, adjectives and verbs (Lander & Testelets 2006);
➢ polysynthesis: pronominal affixes expressing all arguments of the verb (S, A, P as well as various indirect objects such as recipient, benefactive, and even location, cf. e.g. Smeets 1992) and a rich system of affixes marking aspectual, temporal and modal meanings (Smeets 1984; Korotkova & Lander 2010; Lander & Letuchiy 2010; Arkadiev & Letuchiy 2011)

Ulyap Kabardian

(1) *sə-qə-zer-a-xʷə-č'erə-mə-ṭetə-č'ə-ž'-a-r*
 1SG.ABS-DIR-REL.FCT-3PL.IO-BEN-LOC-NEG-tie-ELAT-RE-PST-ABS
 'that they could not untie me'

➢ double-marking, i.e. presence of both head and dependent marking;
➢ ergativity in both head- and dependent-marking (Smeets 1992, Kumakhov & Vamling 2009, Letuchiy 2012), coupled with an impoverished case system comprising only Absolutive (*-r*, marks S (2a) and P (2b)) and Oblique (*-m*, marks A (2b), all types of indirect objects (2b), and adnominal possessors (2c); NB personal pronouns, proper names and non-specific nouns normally lack overt case marking, see (Testelec 2014).

Adyghe

(2) a. *č'ale-r* $\varnothing^1$-*me-čaje*.
       boy-ABS   3.ABS-DYN-sleep
       'The boy is sleeping.'

   b. *č'ale-m*   *pŝaŝe-m*   *txəλə-r* $\varnothing$-$\varnothing$-*r-j-e-tə*.
       boy-OBL   girl-OBL   book-ABS   3.ABS-3SG.IO-DAT-3SG.A-DYN-give
       'The boy is giving the book to the girl.'

   c. *çəfə-m* $\varnothing$-*jə-wəne*
       man-OBL   3SG.PR-POSS-house
       'the man's house'

➢ a rich system of morphological marking of clausal subordination including various types of nominalizations, relativized predicates, and converbs (Kumaxov & Vamling 1998; Serdobol'skaja & Motloxov 2009; Lander 2012; Eršova 2012; Klimenčenko 2014).
➢ a rich system of auxiliary verb constructions marking aspectual and modal meanings in addition to and sometimes on a par with suffixes (Kimmelman 2011).

Adyghe

(3) *se*   *məẑʷe-r*   *qe-s-ʔetə-ŝʷə-n*   *s-λeč'ə-ʁ-ep*
 I   stone-ABS   DIR-1SG.ERG-lift-HBL-POT   1SG.ERG-can-PST-NEG
 'I could not lift the stone.' (Yury Lander, p.c.)

Existing sources on Circassian morphosyntax:
➢ in general on Circassian: Kumaxov 1971 (in Russian), Kumakhov & Vamling 2009;
➢ on Adyghe: Paris 1989 (in French), Smeets 1984 (in English), Rogava & Keraševa 1962, Testelec (ed.) 2009 (in Russian);
➢ on Kabardian: Colarusso 1989, 1992, 2006, Matasović 2008 (in English), Kumaxov (ed.) 2006 (in Russian).

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[1] Henceforth we will not mark and gloss zero morphemes.

2. The structure of the Circassian verbal complex

Neither templatic, nor layered morphology, but an intricate interaction of both.

prefixes										root	suffixes			
argument structure zone						pre-stem elements					stem		endings	
−10	−9	−8	−7	−6	−5	−4	−3	−2	−1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4
absolutive	directional	subordinators	applicatives	dative	ergative	jussive	dynamicity	negation	causative	root	directionals, transitivity	propositional operators	absolutive plural	subordinators, force

In many cases the order of morphemes reflects their relative scope, in particular in the slots −8 (subordinators) and −7 (applicatives) and +2 (propositional operators), see Korotkova & Lander 2010, though the overall morphological structure involves complex and sometimes opaque interactions between elements in different slots, see Arkadiev & Letuchiy 2011, Letuchiy 2014.

3. Tense marking in Circassian

"Primary" tense:

	Present	Past		Future (+2)
		Preterite (+2)	Imperfect (+3)	
Adyghe	unmarked ∼ dynamic prefix (−3)	-ʁe ∼ -ʁ (word-finally)	-š'təʁe[2]	-š't
Ulyap Kabardian		-a ∼ -ʁe (stem-internally)	-te ∼ -t (word-finally)	-ne

Past: perfective (single bounded event) vs. imperfective (durative or habitual)

Adyghe

(4)   *qəzbeč' psənč'-ew jə-wəne λenəqʷe-č'e **ə-wəzenč'ə-ž'ə-ʁ**.*
    Qyzbech quick-ADV POSS-house direction-INS 3SG.ERG-straighten-RE-PST
    'Qyzbech quickly went straight to his house.' (TK_TestCour_121)

(5)   *ale šəw-ew   zə.gʷere-m   qjəč'əž'-ew   **qe-ķʷež'ə-š'təʁe**.*
    Ale   ride.on.horse-ADV once-OBL   return.home-ADV   DIR-return-IPF
    'Once Ale was returning home on horseback.' (TK_TestCour_55)

Ulyap Kabardian

(6)   *mel-xe-r   **jə-ʁeχʷ-t** ...   pç̣ə   **q̇-jə-wəps-a***
    sheep-PL-ABS 3SG.ERG-graze-IPF   lie   DIR-3SG.ERG-shave-PST
    '(While) he was grazing the sheep ... he told a lie.' (RS_Wolf_2)

With stative verbs, normally only the Preterite is used, regardless of aspect.

Adyghe

(7)   *qəzbeč'ə jə-heč'eš'   λ̣ə   kʷəp   **š'ə-zexe-sə-ʁ**.*
    Qyzbech POSS-sitting.room man group LOC-together-sit-PST
    'A group of men were sitting in Qyzbech's sitting-room.' (TK_TestCour_17)

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[2] The Adyghe Imperfect is historically a combination of the stative verb *š'ət-* with the past tense marker. The origins of the Kabardian Imperfect ending *-t(e)* are obscure.

Ulyap Kabardian

(8) *apxʷed-wə   çəxʷ   ʁeŝeʁʷen-wə   jezə-r   š'ət-a̱.*
    such-ADV   man   peculiar-ADV   self-ABS   be-PST
    'He was such an interesting man.' (AT_Doctor_3)

"Retrospective shift" (Plungian & van der Auwera 2006) markers combining with past and future markers and inducing interpretations such as distant past, annuled result or irrealis:

= Preterite in Adyghe (Korotkova 2009; Arkadiev 2014)

= Imperfect in Kabardian (Somin 2012)

Adyghe

(9) *mə   tape.č'e   qəzbeč'   a-š'   fed-ew   zəgʷere   qə-r-a-ŝe-ʁa-ʁ.*
    DEM   before   Qyzbech   DEM-OBL similar-ADV something   DIR-DAT-3PL.ERG-do-PST-PST
    'Before that something similar had already been done to Qyzbech.'
    (TK_TestCour_156)

Ulyap Kabardian

(10) *q̇ə-š'ə-ḵʷež'ə-m   a-r   q̇ə-s-xʷ-jə-ʔʷet-a-t-jə ...*
     DIR-TEMP-return-OBL   DEM-ABS   DIR-1SG.IO-BEN-3SG.A-tell-PST-IPF-ADD
     se-rjə   q̇e-s-ʔʷete-ž'-a.
     I-ADD   DIR-1SG.ERG-tell-RE-PST
     'When she returned home she (had) told it to me ... [and then] I told it [to you].' (ZT_SisterStory_25)

The "retrospective" past marker can attach to future forms yielding irrealis or counterfactual meanings (a cross-linguistically common phenomenon, cf. Iatridou 2000).

Adyghe

(11) *se-rew   ə-ŝa-ʁe-me   a-wəč'ə-n-ew   r-a-χʷəha-ʁe-r,*
     I-ADV   3SG.ERG-know-PST-COND   3PL.ERG-kill-POT-ADV DAT-3PL.ERG-decide-PST-ABS
     š'ebzaš'e-r   a-f-jə-ŝə-š'tə-ʁ-ep.
     arrow-ABS   3PL.IO-BEN-3SG.ERG-do-FUT-PST-NEG
     'Had he known that it was me whom they decided to kill, he would not have made the arrow for them.' (NartArrow_90)

Ulyap Kabardian

(12) *fə   ja-mə- λeʁʷ-a-te-me   a-xe-r-jə   a-bə   ḵʷe-ne-xe-te-q̇əm.*
     good   3PL.ERG-NEG-see-PST-IPF-COND   DEM-PL-ABS-ADD   DEM-OBL   go-FUT-PL-IPF-NEG
     'If they hadn't liked it, they wouldn't have gone there.' (LT_LifeStory_44)

Not only can the past tense markers attach to the future tense markers, but in Adyghe the future tense markers can attach to the past tense markers as well, yielding an epistemic meaning.

Adyghe

(13) *š'ebzaš'e qəzerəḵʷ-ep   mə-r,   a-r   we-rjə   qe-p-ŝe-ʁe-š't.*
     arrow   ordinary-NEG   DEM-ABS DEM-ABS 2SG-ADD DIR-2SG.ERG-know-PST-FUT
     'That arrow is not an ordinary one, and you must have known it.' (NartArrow_104)

➢ Below we will focus on some non-trivial uses of the Circassian Preterite which do not seem to naturally follow from its general past/perfective uses, but rather related to the **resultative** meaning, i.e. reference to a state caused by the event denoted by the verb root and holding at the reference time.

4. Past as resultative
4.1. Genuine resultative

The Preterite suffix can be used to form resultative predicates from telic verbs, which differ from the normal past tense uses in that transitive verbs lack the ergative agent prefix (14a,b); with intransitive bases the uses are not formally differentiated (15a,b). Syntactically, resultative forms behave like adjectives, i.e. occur as postpositional modifiers in NPs (14b), or as stative predicates.

Adyghe

(14) a.   *qebasqe-r*   *ə-ʁež'ʷa-ʁ*   (perfective past)
              cabbage-ABS   3SG.ERG-cook-PST
              's/he cooked the cabbage'

     b.   *qebesqe*   *ʁež'ʷa-ʁe*   (resultative)
              cabbage   cook-RES
              'cooked cabbage'

(15) a.   *sane-m*   *je-ŝʷa-ʁ*   (perfective past)
              wine-OBL   DAT-drink-PST
              's/he drank the wine'

     b.   *je-ŝʷa-ʁe-m*   *nah-jə*   *nah*   *ʔaj.*   (resultative)
              DAT-drink-RES-OBL more-ADD   more   bad
              'It is worse than (when one is) drunk.' (MD_SleepDrive_11)

In resultatives, the Preterite suffix does not have past time reference:
– resultative predicates denote situations simultaneous to the speech time or narrative line, cf. (16)–(17);
– for non-present reference, resultative predicates take tense markers, cf. (18)–(19).

Adyghe

(16) *jə-tanž'-jə*   *jə-meʔʷ-jə*   *təž'ən-re*   *dəŝe-re-č'e*   *ʁela-ʁe-x.*
      POSS-helmet-ADD POSS-shield-ADD silver-COORD   gold-COORD-INS   paint-RES-PL
      'His helmet and shield are painted with silver and gold.' (NartArrow_55)

Ulyap Kabardian

(17) *fatjəme*   *gʷəbž-a-wə*   *jə-q̇ʷe-m*   *je-χʷen-t*
      Fatima   get.angry-RES-ADV   POSS-son-OBL   DAT-scold-IPF
      'Fatima was angirly (lit. having become angry) scolding her son.' (Klimenčenko 2014: 32)

Adyghe

(18) *pče-r*   *ʁepəte-ž'ə-ʁa-ʁe.*
      door-ABS   lock-RE-RES-PST
      'The door was already locked.' (TK_TestCour_119)

Ulyap Kabardian

(19) *ž'əle-r*   *ǵeŝəh-a-t*
      village-ABS   fence-RES-IPF
      'The village was fenced.' (AA_GateUlyap_8)

At least one of such resultative forms is (partly) lexicalized, viz. *pəλaʁ* 'is hanging' (intr.) ← *pəλen* 'to hang' (tr.) and can attach suffixes seldom occurring after tense markers, e.g. the refactive *-ž'ə* (20a) vs. (20b):

Adyghe

(20) a. *pəλe-ʁe-ž'-ep*
hang-RES-RE-NEG
'no longer hangs' (NK_AbzMother_13)

   b. *jefendə-r č'ale-m š'əha-ž'ə-ʁ-ep.*
efendi-ABS boy-OBL come.IO-RE-PST-NEG
'Efendi no more visited the boy.' (BJ_Efendi_23)

It is noteworthy that Kumaxov (1964: 120–121; 1971: 216) calls the Circassian Preterite "perfect" and links the past and resultative functions of the suffix *-ʁe* to its use as the suffix of abstract nominals, cf. Adyghe *çəfə-ʁe* 'humanness' ← *çəf* 'man', *daxa-ʁe* 'beauty' ← *daxe* 'beautiful', via formations which are ambiguous between a resultative "participle" and an abstract noun, such as *txə-ʁe* 'writing; written', *tə-ʁe* 'gift' (lit. 'given').

4.2. Resultative interpretation in temporal clauses

Temporal adverbial clauses formed with the manner relativizer (Adyghe *zere-*, Ulyap *zerə-*) and the adverbial ending (Adyghe *-ew*, Ulyap *-wə*; see Gerasimov & Arkadiev 2007, Arkadiev & Gerasimov 2009) are interpreted as denoting bounded events and (immediate) temporal precedence with telic predicates, cf. (21), (22), while with atelic predicates (states, activities) these constructions denote temporal simultaneity, cf. (23).

Adyghe

(21) *q-je-ӡ a-š' brasletə-r qə-zer-jə-ʁʷet-ew.*
DIR-DAT-call DEM-OBL bracelet-ABS DIR-REL.MNR-3SG.ERG-find-ADV
'Call him/her as soon as s/he finds the bracelet.'

Ulyap Kabardian

(22) *č'ale-r q̇ə-zerə-ḵʷ-wə twəč'anə-r q̇əzeʔʷ<a>xə-ne.*
boy-ABS DIR-REL.MNR-go-ADV shop-ABS open<3PL.ERG>-FUT
'As soon as they boy comes, they will open the shop.'

Adyghe

(23) *č'ale-r zere-čəj-ew, wəne-m r-a-xə-ʁ.*
boy-ABS REL.MNR-sleep-ADV house-OBL LOC-3PL.ERG-carry-PST
'While the boy was sleeping they carried him out of the house.'

However, when the Preterite suffix is added to a telic verb in this construction, the interpretation usually shifts to the simultaneous one, cf. (24), (25), which suggests that the Preterite form in this construction is interpreted as resultative:

Adyghe

(24) *q-je-ӡ a-š' brasletə-r qə-zer-jə-ʁʷetə-ʁ-ew.*
DIR-DAT-call DEM-OBL bracelet-ABS DIR-REL.MNR-3SG.ERG-find-PST-ADV
'Call him/her while s/he still has the found bracelet.'

Ulyap Kabardian

(25) *č'ale-r q̇ə-zerə-ḵʷ-a-w twəč'anə-r q̇əʔʷ<a>xə-n-wə j-ew-že.*
boy-ABS DIR-REL.MNR-go-PST-ADV shop-ABS open<3PL.ERG>-POT-ADV DAT-DYN-wait
'Having come, the boy is waiting for the opening of the shop.'

Note that in (24) the transitive verb retains the ergative cross-referencing prefix *jə-* and thus morphologically is not a resultative.

4.3. Resultative interpretation under operators referring to states

Some propositional operators in slot +2 can occur after the Preterite suffix and induce its resultative interpretation.

-xe 'already' (inceptive)

Adyghe

(26) **wə-qe-ḳ^wa-ʁa-x-ew**   *qəč'eč'ə-š't*
    2SG.ABS-DIR-go-PST-INC-ADV   turn.out-FUT
    'It will turn out that you have already come.' (RG_Nettle_22)

Ulyap Kabardian

(27) *žejəž'ə-**ʁa-xe***
    fall.sleep-PST-INC
    's/he is already sleeping (lit. has already fallen asleep)'

Inceptive forms can attach further tense markers, including Preterite (28), Imperfect (29), Future (30) or combinations thereof with the retrospective shift marker (31):

Adyghe

(28) *sə-qə-ze-ḳ^we-m*   *çəfə-m*   *pjəsme-r*   **ə-txə-ʁe-xa-ʁ**.
    1SG.ABS-DIR-TEMP-go-OBL   man-OBL   letter-ABS   3SG.ERG-write-PST-INC-PST
    'When I came, the man had already written the letter.'

(29) *sə-qa-ḳ^we*   *qes,*   *pŝaŝe-m*   *jə-wəne*   **ʑeʔ^w<jə>xə-ʁa-xe-š'təʁe**.
    1SG.ABS-DIR-go   every.time   girl-OBL   POSS-room   tidy.up<3SG.ERG>-PST-INC-IPF
    'Everytime I come, the girl would have already cleaned her room.'

Ulyap Kabardian

(30) *univjersitjetə-r*   *s-jə-q̇ewəxəʁ^we-m*   *hawəbədə-m*   *dəʁ^waḳ^we-r*
    university-ABS   1SG.PR-POSS-graduation-OBL   police-OBL   thief-ABS
    q̇-jə-wəbədə-ʁe-xe-ne
    DIR-3SG.ERG-catch-PST-INC-FUT
    'The police will probably have already caught the thief by the time I graduate from the university.' (Somin 2012: 31)

(31) *sə-x^wej-a*   *dəʁ^wase*   *bul'jonə-r*   **t-ŝə-ʁe-xe-n-t-wə**.
    1SG.ABS-want-PST   yesterday   broth-ABS   1PL.ERG-do-PST-INC-POT-IPF-ADV
    'I had wished that we would have made broth yesterday.' (Somin 2012: 28)

In Adyghe, the combination of the Future marker with the Inceptive yields epistemic rather than temporal interpretation (32).

(32) *pŝaŝe-m*   *məʔerəsə-r*   **ə-šxə-ʁe-xe-š't**.
    girl-OBL   apple-ABS   3SG.ERG-eat-PST-INC-FUT
    'The girl must have already eaten the apple.'

-č'e 'just' (immediative)
Adyghe

(33) *q̇ə-z-g^wərəʔ^wa-ʁ*   *mə*   *q̇aq̇ərə-r*   **ʑer-a-ŝə-ʁe-č'a-ʁe-r**
    DIR-1SG.ERG-understand-PST   DEM   barn-ABS   REL.FACT-3PL.ERG-do-PST-IMD-PST-ABS
    'I understood that this barn had been just built.'

-č'ej(e), -je 'very much' (intensive): forces the resultative interpretation of the Preterite, no longer denoting past time reference, cf. (34a) and (34b) vs. (34c) and (34d); cf. the textual example (35).

Adyghe

(34) a. *me-gʷəbžə-č'aj*
      DYN-get.angry-INT
      's/he is very angry'

    b. *gʷəbžə-ʁe-č'aj*
      get.angry-PST-INT
      's/he is very angry' (lit. "has very much got angry")

    c. *gʷəbžə-ʁe-č'eje-š't*
      get.angry-PST-INT-FUT
      's/he will be very angry'

    d. *gʷəbžə-ʁe-č'eja-ʁ*
      get.angry-PST-INT-PST
      's/he was very angry'

(35) *asλanə-r arʁʷejə-m zəf<jə>ʁa.z-jə* **gʷəbžə-ʁa-j-ew** *tjeʁʷeɣa-ʁ.*
    lion-ABS   mosquito-OBL   <3SG.ERG>turn.to-ADD   get.angry-PST-INT-ADV   start.roaring-PST
    'The lion turned to the mosquito and started roaring angrily.' (Mosquito_16)

5. Discussion and conclusions

Why does the Preterite have perfect interpretation in contexts reviewed in 4.1-4.3, but not in the independent use?

What all this cases have in common is that the Preterite marker falls under the scope of a higher semantic operator, usually with explicit morphological exponent.

(36) a. $\boxed{\text{V} + \text{PST}}$ → past tense (V)

    b. $\boxed{\boxed{\text{V} + \text{PST}} + \text{OP}}$ → OP (result (V))

However, not all wider-scope operators license the resultative reading of Preterite: this effect is not observed, e.g. with markers of epistemic modality (37 = 13), negation (38) and most types of subordination, e.g. relativization (39).

Adyghe

(37) *š'ebzaš'e qəzerəḳʷ-ep mə-r, a-r we-rjə* **qe-p-ṣe-ʁe-š't.**
    arrow   ordinary-NEG   DEM-ABS   DEM-ABS   2SG-ADD   DIR-2SG.ERG-know-PST-FUT
    'That arrow is not an ordinary one, and you must have known it.' (NartArrow_104)

Ulyap Kabardian

(38) *jeʁaṣe-m wə-rəs w-adəɣe ž'we çəxʷə-m ʔape-č'e* **s-jeʔab-a-ġəm.**
    life-OBL   2SG.ABS-Russian   2SG.ABS-Adyghe   QUOT   man-OBL   finger-INS   1SG.ABS-touch-PST-NEG
    'I have never in my life touched a person with my finger saying "You're Russian, you're Circassian".' (AT_Russian_13)

Adyghe

(39) *çəfə-r* **zer-a-tjeḳʷa-ʁe-r**
    man-ABS   REL.MNR-3PL.IO-overcome-PST-ABS
    'How a man won.' (HowManWon_0)

We claim, therefore, that the resultative interpretation of the Preterite is induced by particular constructions whose semantics is harmonious with such a reading.

(40) $\boxed{\text{V + PST} \leftrightarrow \underline{\text{OP}}} \to \text{OP (result (V))}$

The Circassian data discussed in 4.1-4.3 are thus instances of the well-known mechanism of coercion (Michaelis 1996; 2004; de Swart 1998; *inter alia*), just like English sentences (41-42).

English

(41) *I **suddenly** knew.*

(42) *I **already** ate.*

What makes Adyghe and Ulyap Kabardian different from English (and other better-studied languages) is the former's propensity for coercion, the notably wide range of constructions and operators able to trigger aspectual type shift (see (Arkadiev 2009) for discussion of aspectual coercion induced by temporal adverbs in Adyghe). The motivation behind this cross-linguistic variation yet remains to be uncovered.

Abbreviations

A – agent; ABS – absolutive; ADV – adverbial; BEN – benefactive; COND – conditional; COORD – coordination; DAT – dative; DEM – demonstrative; DIR – directive preverb; DYN – dynamic preverb; ELAT – elative; ERG – ergative; FCT – factive; FUT – future; IMD – immediative; INC – inceptive; INS – instrumental; INT – intensive; IO – indirect object; IPF – imperfective; LOC – locative preverb; MNR – manner; NEG – negation; OBL – oblique; PL – plural; POSS – possession; PR – possessor; POT – potential; PST – preterite; QUOT – quotative; RE – repetitive; REL – relativization; RES – resultative; S – intransitive subject; SG – singular; TEMP – temporal relation.

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