

**WHEN PERFECTIVE AND IMPERFECTIVE MEAN THE SAME:
PLUPERFECT AND “RETROSPECTIVE SHIFT” IN CIRCASSIAN LANGUAGES**

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1. Introduction

Circassian < North-West Caucasian (Abkhaz-Adyghe) <? North-Caucasian phylum
Adyghe (West Circassian) and **Kabardian** (East Circassian).

Circassian languages are famous for their poor vowel systems, polysynthesis, (lack of) word classes, non-trivial case marking patterns, a complex system of verbal spatial marking, typologically rare models of clause-combining etc., see e.g. Smeets 1984, 1992, Paris 1995, Kumakhov & Vamling 1998, 2009, Lander & Testelets 2006, Testelets (ed.) 2009, Korotkova & Lander 2010, Lander & Letuchiy 2010, Arkadiev & Letuchiy 2011, Polinsky & Caponigro 2011, Letuchiy 2012, Lander 2012, 2016, Serdobolskaya 2016, Arkadiev & Testelets 2015.

By contrast, the Circassian tense-aspect systems appear to be rather “uninteresting”, being in many ways similar to the familiar Standard Average European TA-systems.

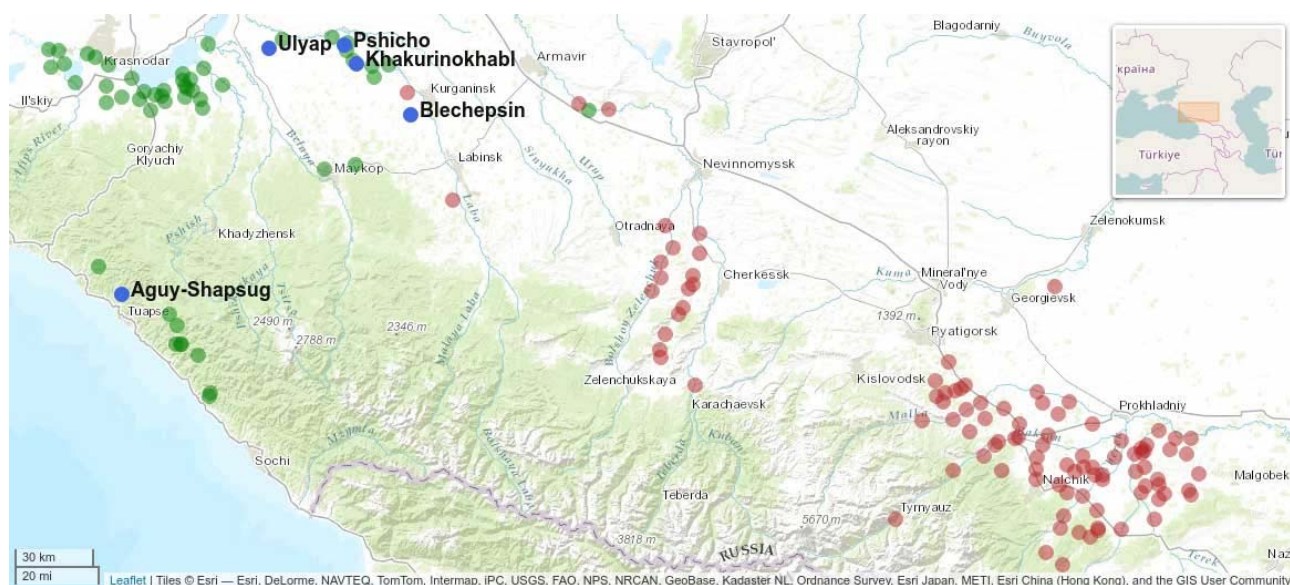
➤ However, I will try to show that the Circassian data can make important contributions to two interconnected topics in the typology and theory of tense and aspect:

- investigations on the form and meaning of **pluperfects**;
- investigations on the modal, in particular, **counterfactual** uses of past tenses.

The data from this talk comes from two Adyghe and two Kabardian varieties:

- Shapsug and Temirgoy dialects of Adyghe;
- Besleney and Kuban dialects of Kabardian.

Note that the Kabardian dialects surveyed here are spoken in the Republic of Adygeya outside of the main Kabardian area and have been in contact with Adyghe for at least 150 years. In many respects they significantly differ from the Standard Kabardian spoken farther to the east.



(Map courtesy of George Moroz)

I use both elicited and textual examples collected by myself and my colleagues; since Temirgoy Adyghe has served as the basis for Standard Adyghe, I also use examples from published literary texts.

Fieldwork data has been collected during field-trips to the villages Haqwerinehabl (Temirgoy dialect, 2004–2006, 2008), Aguy-Shapsug (Shapsug dialect, 2007), Pšyčew (Temirgoy dialect, 2010), Ulyape (Besleney dialect, 2011–2013) and Blešepsyne (Kuban dialect, 2015–2016) organized by the Russian State University for the Humanities, since 2013 jointly with the Higher School of Economics, Moscow.

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➤ Methodological caveat: although it is obvious that analysis of natural discourse is indispensable for the study of TA-categories, this work to a large extent relies on elicitation for two reasons:

- (i) pluperfects are rarely attested in extant corpora of Circassian languages; e.g., the small Shapsug text collection in Dumézil (1954) contains only one instance of the Pluperfect;
- (ii) semantics of the pluperfect is highly context-dependent, and it is therefore often hard or even impossible to tease apart the features of the context from the semantic contribution of the grammatical form. For this reason, carefully designed scenario-based elicitation of minimal pairs (see Matthewson 2004) proves to be indispensable.

2. Theoretical and typological preliminaries

Since at least Dahl (1985: 144–149), the **pluperfect** has been recognized as a cross-linguistic TA-gram type on its own rather than as purely a combination of perfect with past tense.

NB: Pluperfect does not presuppose perfect (cf. French, Italian, German, Czech).

Further work, such as Salkie (1989), Squartini (1999) and especially Plungian & van der Auwera (2006) and Sičinava (2013), has established a cross-linguistically recurrent cluster of functions characteristic of pluperfect grams, the so-called “superpast” (Rus. «сверх-прошлое», Fr. *superpassé*, cf. Plungian 2001) or “discontinuous past” (Plungian & van der Auwera 2006), cf. Dahl’s (1985: 146–147) “past temporal frames”:

– anteriority of a past event with respect to a past reference point (“past in the past”):

- (1) ENGLISH (Salkie 1989: 2)

*After he **had eaten** his dinner he smoked a cigar.*

– resultative in the past (“perfect in the past”):

- (2) ENGLISH (Salkie 1989: 16)

*John **had already left** at ten o’clock.*

– past situation explicitly asserted not to hold at present:

- (3) LATIN (Prop., Eleg. 1,12:11; Plungian & van der Auwera 2006: 335)

*Non sum ego qui **fuera**m: mutat via longa puellas.*

‘I am no longer what I was (lit. had been): a long road changes girls.’

– canceled result (“antiresultative”, Plungian 2001):

- (4) ITALIAN (Squartini 1999: 57)

*Me lo **aveva promesso**, ma adesso fa finta di non ricordarsene.*

‘He did promise (lit. had promised), but now he pretends not to remember it.’

– remote past:

(5) ITALIAN (Squartini 1999: 58)

Quel disegno lo avevo fatto io il primo giorno che lavoravo all'istituto.

(pointing to a drawing) 'I made (lit. had made) this drawing on the first day I worked at the institute.'

– experiential, especially if contrasted with the present:

(6) LATVIAN (elicited)

Es nekad agrāk nebiju dzēris vīnu.

'I have never drunk (lit. had not drunk) wine before.'

– counterfactuality in conditionals and wishes:

(7) ENGLISH (Declerck & Reed 2001: 183)

If I had known what I know now, I wouldn't have appointed him.

In languages without dedicated tense grams, this cluster of functions can be the only one grammaticalized in the temporal domain, as e.g. in Futunan or Wolof (Plungian & van der Auwera 2006).

In languages with elaborate tense systems, “discontinuous past” is more often than not expressed by a combination of a form already bearing tense marking with a special “secondary” marker called **retrospective shift** (Plungian & van der Auwera 2006: 344), often coinciding with a “regular” or “primary” tense marker, e.g. Past in English, German or Latvian, or Imperfect in French or Italian. Unanalyzable synthetic pluperfects of the Latin type are cross-linguistically rare (cf. Sičinava 2013: 18).

For the purposes of this talk it is important to mention the existence of “double past” marking, whereby the pluperfect is formed by stacking the past marker to itself:

(8) KOREAN (Sohn 1995: 33)

I kkoch-i caknyen-ey cwuk-ess-ess-ta.

this flower-NOM last.year-LOC die-PST-PST-DCL

'This flower was dead last year (but it is alive now).'

The functions belonging to the core domain of “discontinuous past” can be subclassified according to their relation to aspect (cf. Plungian & van der Auwera 2006: 323–326):

perfective-based	imperfective-based
canceled result	discontinuous durative
experiential	discontinuous habitual

On irrealis and counterfactuality marking see below, section 5.

3. Tense systems in Circassian

The schematic structure of the Circassian verbal complex:

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	

Neither templatic, nor layered morphology, but an intricate interaction of both: in many cases the order of morphemes reflects their relative scope, in particular in the slots –8 (subordinators), –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 (Arkadiev & Letuchiy 2011, Letuchiy 2015).

“Primary” tense:

	Present	Past		Future (+ 2)
		Preterite (+ 2)	Imperfect (+ 3)	
Adyghe	unmarked ~ dynamic prefix	- <i>be</i> ~ - <i>B</i> (word-finally)	- <i>š'təbe</i> ¹	- <i>š't</i>
Kabardian	(–3)	- <i>a</i> ~ - <i>be</i> (stem-internally)	- <i>te</i> ~ - <i>t</i> (word-finally)	- <i>ne</i> ²

NB Preterite and Imperfect belong to **different** slots of the verbal template: Preterite is a stem-forming suffix while the Imperfect is a stem-external ending (a useful dichotomy introduced in Smeets 1984). This manifests itself in their different behavior with respect to morphophonological alternation CeCe~CaCe and stress, cf. (9) and (10):

(9) TEMIRGOY ADYGHE (elicited)

- a. *qɑ-k^we* b. *qe-k^wɑ-β(e)* c. *qɑ-k^we-š'təbe*
 DIR-go(IMP) DIR-go-PST DIR-go-IPF
 ‘Come here!’ ‘S/he came.’ ‘S/he was coming.’

(10) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (elicited)

- a. *qá-k^we* b. *qe-k^w-á* c. *qá-k^we-t*
 DIR-go(IMP) DIR-go-PST DIR-go-IPF
 ‘Come here!’ ‘S/he came.’ ‘S/he was coming.’

Past: perfective (single bounded event) (11), (12) vs. imperfective – durative (12), (13) or habitual (14):

(11) STANDARD ADYGHE (TK_TestCour_121)

- qəzbeč' psənč'-ew jə-wəne lenəq^we-č'e ə-wəzenč'ə-ž'ə-β.*
 Qyzbech quick-ADV POSS-house direction-INS 3SG.ERG-straighten-RE-PST
 ‘Qyzbech quickly went straight to his house.’

(12) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (RS_Wolf_2)

- mel-xe-r jə-βex^w-t ... pçə q̇-jə-wəps-ɑ*
 sheep-PL-ABS 3SG.ERG-graze-IPF lie DIR-3SG.ERG-shave-PST
 ‘(While) he was grazing the sheep ... he told a lie.’

(13) STANDARD ADYGHE (TK_TestCour_55)

- ale šəw-ew zə.g^were-m qjəč'əž'-ew qe-k^wež'ə-š'təbe.*
 Ale ride.on.horse-ADV once-OBL return.home-ADV DIR-return-IPF
 ‘Once Ale was returning home on horseback.’

¹ The Adyghe Imperfect is historically a combination of the stative verb *š'ə-t* ‘LOC-stand’ with the Preterite marker; the same verb has obviously served as the source of the Future suffix. The origins of the Kabardian Imperfect ending *-t(e)* are obscure, although the same root *-t* ‘stand’ is a probable candidate.

² This is the marker attested in the Besleney and Kuban dialects, standard Kabardian features the Future suffix *-nu*.

- (14) KUBAN KABARDIAN (SSh_Biogr_16)
s-j-ane *giagrafije* *ja-r-jə-ka-h-t*
 1SG.PR-POSS-mother geography 3PL.IO-DAT-3SG.ERG-CAUS-carry-IPF
 ‘My mother used to teach geography (at school).’

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

- (15) STANDARD ADYGHE (TK_TestCour_17)
qəzbeč’ə *jə-heč’eš’* *λə* *kʷəp* *š’ə-ze-xe-sə-ɣ.*
 Qyzbech POSS-sitting.room man group LOC-REC.IO-LOC-sit-PST
 ‘A group of men were sitting in Qyzbech’s sitting-room.’

- (16) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (AT_Doctor_3)
apxʷed-u *çəxʷ* *bešəbʷen-u* *jezə-r* *š’ət-a.*
 such-ADV man peculiar-ADV self-ABS be-PST
 ‘He was such an interesting man.’

➤ A more or less well-behaved European-style tense system with an aspectual distinction in the past domain.

4. Pluperfects in Circassian

Considerable variation in the form of the pluperfects, despite the common formal model, i.e. “secondary” suffixation of tense markers.

	“base” of the pluperfect	“secondary” past marker
Shapsug Adyghe	Preterite or Imperfect	Preterite
Temirgoy Adyghe	Preterite	Preterite
Beslenev & Kuban Kabardian	Preterite	Imperfect (marginally Preterite)

➤ Despite the use of different tenses as retrospective shift (RS) markers, Adyghe and Kabardian pluperfects show a remarkable unity of functions.

4.1. Preterite as RS-marker

4.1.1. Shapsug Adyghe. For more details, see Arkadiev (2014); all examples are elicited. In general on Shapsug see Keraševa (1995/1957).

The only Circassian variety with formally distinct perfective and imperfective pluperfects.

– Perfective pluperfect: anteriority in the past (17), canceled result (18), experiential (19).

- (17) a. *se* *sə-q-jə-čə-žə-ɣa-ɣ.* *a-r* *qə-z-e-ha-m.*
 1SG 1SG.ABS-DIR-LOC-go.out-RE-PST-PST DEM-ABS DIR-REL.TEMP-DYN-go.in-OBL
 ‘When he came in, I had already gone.’

- b. *se* *sə-q-jə-čə-žə-ɣ.* *a-r* *qə-z-e-ha-m.*
 1SG SG.ABS-DIR-LOC-go.out-RE-PST DEM-ABS DIR-REL.TEMP-DYN-go.in-OBL
 ‘When he came in, I went out (after that).’

- (18) a. *zarjeme* *ʔʷək’əbze* *jə-be-kʷedə-ɣa-ɣ.*
 Zarema key 3SG.ERG-CAUS-vanish-PST-PST
 ‘Zarema lost her keys (but has already found them).’

- b. *zarjeme* *ʔʷək’əbze* *jə-be-kʷedə-ɣ.*
 Zarema key 3SG.ERG-CAUS-vanish-PST
 ‘Zarema lost her keys (and has not yet found them).’

- (19) a. *se* *njəbzəg’e* *s-je-šʷe-ka-ɣ-ep* *sane.*
 1SG ever 1SG.ABS-DAT-drink-PST-PST-NEG wine
 ‘I have never drunk wine before.’ (uttered by a person drinking wine for the first time)

- b. *se njəbzəg'e s-je-š^we-ɣ-ep sane.*
 1SG ever 1SG.ABS-DAT-drink-PST-NEG wine
 'I have never drunk wine before (and I am not going to).'

+ past temporal frame with stative verbs:

- (20) a. *se mosk:we jəles-jə-t^wəç sə-de-sə-ɣa-ɣ.*
 1SG Moscow year-LNK-twenty 1SG.ABS-LOC-sit-PST-PST
 'I lived in Moscow for twenty years (and now live somewhere else).'
- b. *se mosk:we jəles-jə-t^wəç sə-de-sə-ɣ.*
 1SG Moscow year-LNK-twenty 1SG.ABS-LOC-sit-PST
 'I have lived in Moscow for twenty years (and still live there).'

– Imperfective pluperfect: discontinuous habitual (21), discontinuous durative (22):

- (21) *əpeže a-r pčedəžere k:ofe je-š^we-štəɣa-ɣ / *je-š^we-ɣa-ɣ,*
 before DEM-ABS each.morning coffee DAT-drink-IPF-PST / DAT-drink-PST-PST
aw xəž šaje j-e-š^we.
 but now tea DAT-DYN-drink
 'Before s/he used to drink coffee in the morning, but now s/he drinks tea.'
- (22) a. *wedre wəne-m jə-sə-xe-r re-g^wəsa?e-štəɣa-ɣe-x.*
 other room-OBL LOC-sit-PL-ABS DYN-talk-IPF-PST-PL
 'The people sitting in the other room were talking (now they don't talk any more).'
- b. *wedre wəne-m jə-sə-xe-r re-g^wəsa?e-štəɣe-x.*
 other room-OBL LOC-sit-PL-ABS DYN-talk-IPF-PL
 'The people sitting in the other room were talking (and may still be).'

➤ The Preterite and the Imperfect retain their meaning in combination with the retrospective shift marker; the latter, despite being formally identical to the perfective past tense, contributes only temporal, but not aspectual, specification.

4.1.2. Temirgoy/standard Adyghe. For more details, see Korotkova (2009).

Only one pluperfect, viz. the formally perfective one in *-ɣa-ɣe*; the imperfective pluperfect is mentioned in grammars (e.g. Rogava & Keraševa 1966: 197–198), but does not occur in texts and is not recognized by the speakers.

The Temirgoy Pluperfect is used in both perfective (23) and imperfective (24) contexts (cf. Korotkova 2009: 275, 282):

- (23) *sə-zere-rjə-mə-sə-r je-p-ɽ^we-n-ew w-e-s-ɽ^we-ɣa-ɣe-ba!*
 1SG.ABS-REL.FCT-LOC-NEG-sit-ABS DAT-2SG.ERG-say-POT-ADV 2SG.IO-DAT-1SG.ERG-say-PST-PST-EMP
 'Haven't I told (lit. I had told) you to tell him I were away?!' (uttered by a person whose order was not fulfilled) (PS_Lie_6)
- (24) *bešəwew zeč'e çəf-xe-r zə-bze-č'e g^wəš'ə?e-ɣa-ɣe-x.*
 long.ago all man-PL-ABS one-language-INS speak-PST-PST-PL
 'Long ago all people used to speak (lit. had spoken) one language.' (Korotkova 2009: 275, ex. 22)

Temirgoy texts allow to pinpoint some of the discourse-related uses of the Pluperfect: – “stage setting” in the first clause of the narrative, cf. Sičinava (2008):

- (25) *lə-žə-m ə-q^we šək^we a-de-ɣ^we-ɣa-ɣ.*
 man-old-OBL 3SG.PR-son hunt 3PL.IO-COM-go-PST-PST
 'Once upon a time an old man's son went (lit. had gone) hunting.' (ShKh_BigLit_1)

– “backshifting” in the narrative, where the Pluperfect is used to refer to event prior to the main narrative line:

- (26) *amdeχan nebγar-jə-j d-jə-be-č’ə-ka-k — jə-λə-re jə-č’el-jə-blə-re.*
 Amdekhan man-LNK-eight LOC-3SG.ERG-CAUS-go-PST-PST POSS-man-COORD POSS-boy-LNK-seven-COORD
 ‘[After the war some people came to Amdekhan’s house and talked to her about those who went to fight.] Amdekhan had seen eight men go to war — her husband and seven sons.’ (NK_AbMother_28)

➤ The aspectual opposition is neutralized in the Pluperfect: paradoxically, two instances of the otherwise perfective Preterite yield an aspectually neutral Pluperfect.

4.2. Imperfect as RS-marker

Besleney and Kuban Kabardian; no significant differences between the two dialects have been discerned, cf. Somin (2011, 2012) on Besleney, Kljagina (2016) on Kuban. In general on Besleney see Balkarov (1952, 1969), Alparslan & Dumézil (1963, 1964); on Kuban see Kumaxov (1969).

Two Pluperfects with Imperfect vs. Preterite as the secondary marker.

The most commonly used form of the pluperfect consists of the Preterite *-a* and the Imperfect *-t* and is largely limited to perfective contexts such as canceled result (27), anteriority in the past (28) or past experiential (29):

- (27) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (Somin 2012: 26, ex. 48)

- a. *w-jə-dje w-jə-šə-r qe-k^w-a-t.*
 2SG.PR-POSS-to 2SG.PR-POSS-brother-ABS DIR-go-PST-IPF
 ‘Your brother came to your place (but you were away, so he left).’
- b. *w-jə-dje w-jə-šə-r qe-k^w-a.*
 2SG.PR-POSS-to 2SG.PR-POSS-brother-ABS DIR-go-PST
 ‘Your brother has come (and is still here).’

- (28) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (Somin 2012: 28, ex. 55)

- wəlepa-bze ze-z-mə-ka-še-r-u adəγa-bze*
 Ulyape-language RFL.ABS-1SG.ERG-NEG-CAUS-know-CNV-ADV Adyghe-language
ze-z-be-š-a-t.
 RFL.ABS-1SG.ERG-CAUS-know-PST-IPF
 ‘Before I started studying the language of Ulyape, I had learnt Adyghe.’

- (29) KUBAN KABARDIAN (Kljagina 2016: 18, ex. 18d)

- se zejə-m-jə s-š’x-a-te-qəm mapx^wede-bzežje-?af.*
 1SG never-OBL-ADD 1SG.ERG-eat-PST-IPF-NEG such-fish-tasty
 ‘I have never eaten such tasty fish before (said after coming from a restaurant).’

– Imperfective frame past is attested only with stative verbs:

- (30) KUBAN KABARDIAN (Kljagina 2016: 16, ex. 14d)

- s-jə-wənč’əbze-r stolə-m tje-λ-a-t.*
 1SG.PR-POSS-key-ABS table-OBL LOC-lie-PST-IPF
 ‘My keys were lying on the table (and now they are not there).’

Cf. also the “stage setting” function in the beginning of a narrative:

- (31) KUBAN KABARDIAN (SKu_Friends_1)

- zə-λə-re zə-fəz-re šə-?-a-t.*
 one-man-COORD one-woman-COORD LOC-be-PST-IPF
 ‘Once upon a time there lived a man and a woman.’

– In imperfective contexts, regardless of whether any discontinuity is implied, the Imperfect is used, never the Pluperfect, cf. durative (32) and habitual (33):

(32) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (KSh_PicGift_2)

šha.č'e zə-x^w-jə-š'ex^wə-ne-xe-m ja-g^w r-jə-hə-ne-r
 but REL.IO-BEN-3SG.ERG-buy-FUT-PL-OBL 3PL.PR + POSS-heart LOC-3SG.ERG-carry-FUT-ABS
jə-čax^w-te-qəm-jə qe-k^we-ž[?]-r-jə sabjə-xe-m ja-wəpč-a.
 3SG.ERG-know-IPF-NEG-ADD DIR-go-RE-CNV-ADD child-PL-OBL 3PL.IO + DAT-ask-PST

‘He didn’t know whether those for whom he was going to buy presents would like them, so he went back and asked the children.’

(33) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (KSh_NameCust_1)

jəpe-m, pš'ə.pχ^wə-xe-m pš'ə.q^we-xe-m ja-če-xe-r
 before-OBL sister.in.law-PL-OBL brother.in.law-PL-OBL 3PL.PR + POSS-name-PL-ABS
qə-ž[?]-a-?e-te-qəm.
 DIR-LOC-3PL.ERG-say-IPF-NEG

‘In earlier times they would not call sisters and brothers-in-law by name.’

However, there is also a specialized semi-analytic form for the imperfective discontinuous past formed by means of the Pluperfect of the stative verb ‘stand’ (cf. the Adyghe Imperfect), cf. canceled durative in (34) and canceled habitual in (35):

(34) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (Somin 2012: 30, ex. 59a)

zeg^were-m mo-bə žəγ-č'əhə-šx^we qə-š'ə-č-u-š'tə-β-a-t.
 once-OBL that-OBL tree-tall-big DIR-LOC-go.out-ADV-AUX-PST-PST-IPF

‘There once grew a very tall tree (it no longer exists).’

(35) KUBAN KABARDIAN (Kljagina 2016: 21, ex. 27a)

k^wed-č'e wə-ze-še-?ebe-ž[?]-me čax^w-xe-r pješ'ere-m šə-ps-u-št-a-t.
 many-INS 2SG.ABS-REC.IO-LOC-touch-RE-COND man-PL-ABS cave-OBL LOC-live-ADV = AUX-PST-IPF

‘Long time ago people used to live in caves.’

– The other Pluperfect formed by the doubling of the Preterite suffix, appears to be a more marginal form, except for its use in the just mentioned periphrastic construction. It occurs in basically the same functions as the Imperfect-based Pluperfect, cf. past experiential (36), canceled result (37) or an event belonging to distant past (38):

(36) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (Somin 2012: 25, ex. 47)

a max^we-m se jəpe-dəd-u mefeg^w s-λex^wə-β-a.
 DEM day-OBL 1SG first-very-ADV train 1SG.ERG-see-PST-PST

‘On that day I saw a train for the first time in my life.’

(37) KUBAN KABARDIAN (Kljagina 2016: 18, ex. 21)

xet nobe šhanəβ^wəbž'e-r ?^wə-zə-xə-β-a-r?
 who today window-ABS LOC-REL.ERG-open-PST-PST-ABS

‘Who opened the window today? (the window is closed now)’

(38) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (KA_Biogr_5)

pa?et wə-χ^wə-me puškinə-m jə-tx-a-m je-ž'e
 poet 2SG.ABS-become-COND Pushkin-OBL 3SG.ERG-write-PST-OBL DAT-read(IMP)
mə-bə je-ž'e mə-bə je-ž'e ž'arjə
 this-OBL DAT-read(IMP) that-OBL DAT-read(IMP) QUOT:3PL.ERG
qə-s-x^wə-r-a-βe-hə-ž'ə-β-a.

DIR-1SG.IO-BEN-DAT-3PL.ERG-CAUS-carry-RE-PST-PST

‘They told me: “If you (wish to) become a poet, you should read what Pushkin wrote, read this, read that”, and sent (my verses) back to me.’

The two pluperfects may occur in identical contexts and are interchangeable:

(39) KUBAN KABARDIAN (Kljagina 2016: 19, ex. 22b from an elicited narrative)

abdje azemet jə-dedež wəne-š'x^we jə-š-a-t,
 then Azamat POSS-grandfather house-large 3SG.ERG-do-PST-IPF
jəč'jə žəg-xe-r-jə jə-ve-təsə-v-a.
 and tree-PL-ABS-ADD 3SG.ERG-CAUS-sit-PST-PST

‘Then Azamat’s grandfather built a large house and planted trees.’

The preterite-based Pluperfect can itself attach the Imperfect ending thus forming a “supercompound” form, cf. (34) above and (40):

(40) KUBAN KABARDIAN (Kljagina 2016: 19, ex. 22a)

s-jə-čəkə.šhe majkop sə-šə-šə-ʔ-a-m
 1SG.PR-POSS-childhood Majkop 1SG.ABS-REL.TEMP-LOC-be-PST-OBL
pəλ zeʔaparkə-m šə-s-λeβ^wə-v-a-t.
 elephant zoo-OBL LOC-1SG.ERG-see-PST-PST-IPF

‘When as a child I was in Majkop, I saw an elephant in the zoo.’

➤ Besleney and Kuban Kabardian feature a system of pluperfects comprising three layers of forms:

- (i) the oldest common Circassian “double preterite”: the recessive perfective pluperfect;
- (ii) the innovative Kabardian Preterite + Imperfect: the dominant perfective pluperfect;
- (iii) the innovative periphrastic imperfective pluperfect.

➤ Setting the last layer (iii) aside, we see that the aspectual opposition between the Preterite and the Imperfect is neutralized when each of them is used as a “secondary” temporal marker.

5. Extensions into the modal domain

It is cross-linguistically common for past tense and pluperfect markers to be employed to mark counterfactual wishes and counterfactual conditionals, see e.g. Steele 1975, James 1982, Dahl 1997, Iatridou 2000, Van linden & Verstraete 2008, Karawani 2014, Hetterle (2015: 78–79), among many others.

(41) LEZGIAN (Haspelmath 1993: 396)

Eger am naq' ata-na-j-t'a, za am vokzal.d-a gürüşmiš iji-da-j.
 if she.ABS yesterday come-AOR-PST-COND 1SG.ERG she.ABS station-INNESS meeting do-FUT-PST
 ‘If she had arrived yesterday, I would have met her at the station.’

NB: counterfactuality is independent of temporal reference, cf. a future counterfactual:

(42) LEZGIAN (Haspelmath 1993: 395)

Eger am paka ata-na-j-t'a, za am vokzal.d-a gürüşmiš iji-da-j.
 if she.ABS tomorrow come-AOR-PST-COND 1SG.ERG she.ABS station-INNESS meeting do-FUT-PST
 ‘If she had arrived yesterday, I would have met her at the station.’

(On future counterfactuals in English see Declerck & Reed 2001: 177–182; Arregui 2007, Ippolito 2003, 2013.)

An influential line of thinking about this propensity of pasts and pluperfects to occur in counterfactuals stems from Iatridou (2000), see also Anand & Hacquard (2010), Ferreira (2014, 2016), among many others; cf. also Fleischmann (1989):

– in modal contexts, past morphemes do not express tense (or aspect), but are “fake” and signal the “exclusion” of the current world from the set of worlds described by the clause.

NB Not only “fake tense”, but “fake aspect” as well, cf. Italian “imperfect conditionals” denoting completed singular events:

(43) ITALIAN (Ippolito 2004: 369, ex. 19)

Se arrivavi prima, vedevi il film dall'inizio.

'If you had arrived earlier, you would have seen the movie from the beginning.'

In Circassian languages, the “secondary” tense markers (i.e. the Preterite in Adyghe and the Imperfect in Kabardian) are used both in the protasis and the apodosis of a hypothetical or counterfactual conditional:

(44) [protasis V-(TENSE)-RETROSPECTIVE Shift-COND] [apodosis V-FUT-RETROSPECTIVE Shift]

NB In Adyghe the “subjunctive mood” FUT-PST *-š'tə-β(e)* of irrealis apodoses is segmentally identical to the Imperfect *-š'təβ(e)*, but the two differ in morphophonological behaviour:

(45) SHAPSUG ADYGHE (cf. Arkadiev 2014: 48)

a. *sə-səmaž'e-š'təβ*
1SG.ABS-be.ill-IPF
'I was ill.'

b. *sə-səmež'e-š'tə-β*
1SG.ABS-be.ill-FUT-PST
'I would be ill.'

(46) STANDARD ADYGHE (JB_Muslim_14): past counterfactual

djanə-r t-šte-ka-βe-me a-xe-r če-tə-gə-ž'a-n-xe-t-jə
faith-ABS 1PL.ERG-take-PST-PST-COND DEM-PL-ABS LOC-1PL.ERG-throw-RE-POT-PL-CS-ADD

č'amafe-r t-f-jə-xə-š'tə-β-ep.
winter-ABS 1PL.IO-BEN-LOC-survive-FUT-PST-NEG

'If we had accepted the faith, we would have to throw it (the pork) away so that we wouldn't have been able to survive the winter.'

(47) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (elicited): present habitual counterfactual

pšaše-m pjəs'mo-xe-r jə-tx-xe-te-me ž'ewap qə-r-a-tə-ž'a-ne-t.
girl-OBL letter-PL-ABS 3SG.ERG-write-PL-IPF-COND reply DIR-DAT-3PL.ERG-give-RE-FUT-IPF

'If the girl wrote letters, she would have received letters in response.'

➤ However, in Circassian aspectual distinctions are preserved in counterfactual protases.

SHAPSUG ADYGHE (cf. above; see Orlickaja 2008, Arkadiev 2014: 56–59 for a discussion):

(48) *k'ete b-βe-že-ka-βe-je-me ʔašwə tə-šx-e-štə-β.*
chicken 2SG.ERG-CAUS-roast-PST-PST-LNK-COND tasty 1PL.ABS-eat-AP-FUT-PST
'If you had (then) roasted a chicken, we would have had a good meal.'

(49) *ʔwefe wə-mə-še-štəka-βe-me t'wapse tə-k^we-štə-β.*
work 2SG.ERG-NEG-do-IPF-PST-COND Tuapse 1PL.ABS-go-FUT-PST
'If you had not been working, we would have gone to Tuapse.'

Imperfect instead of “fake Preterite” in present counterfactuals:

(50) *mafe-qesə wə-səmag'e-štəβe-me dejə-štə-β.*
day-each 2SG.ABS-be.ill-IPF-COND bad-FUT-PST
'It would be too bad if you were ill every day.'

Simple Preterite is compatible with future or past, but not present, reference:

(51) *njep:ə t'wapse wə-k^wa-βe-me sane qə-s-f-jə-p-h'a-štə-β.*
today Tuapse 2SG.ABS-go-PST-COND wine DIR-1SG.IO-BEN-LOC-2SG.ERG-carry-FUT-PST
'If you went / had gone to Tuapse today you could bring / would have brought me wine.'

TEMIRGOY ADYGHE (see Kuznecova 2009: 299–309): the Pluperfect is largely limited to past perfective counterfactuals, as in (46) above. Past durative (52) and present (53) counterfactuals employ the Imperfect:

(52) *təx^wase swande wered q-ə-ɾ^we-š'təke-me, rwəstam gitare-m je-we-š'tə-ɛ.*
 yesterday Suanda song DIR-3SG.ERG-say-IPF-COND Rustam guitar-OBL DAT-hit-FUT-PST
 'Yesterday, if Suanda had played the guitar, Rustam would have sung.' (Kuznecova 2009: 301, ex. 38)

(53) *q^weč'əpə-m-č'e sə-š'ə-psewə-š'təke-me,*
 east-OBL-INS 1SG.ABS-LOC-live-IPF-COND
nefəle qə-zerə-ze-č'jə-č'ə-re-m pč'edəž'-qes s-je-pɫə-š'tə-ɛ.
 sunrise DIR-REL.FCT-REC.IO-LOC-LOC-burst-DYN-OBL morning-each 1SG.ABS-DAT-look-FUT-PST
 'If I lived on the east side, I would have watched sunrise every morning.' (Korotkova 2009: 265, ex. 5)

KUBAN KABARDIAN (Arkadiev 2016): the Pluperfect is limited to perfective counterfactuals regardless of temporal reference, cf. (54) and (55):

(54) *də-šə-k^we-ž'-a-m d-j-ane lež-a-te-me də-dje qə-še-č'ə-fə-ne-te-qəm.*
 1PL.ABS-TEMP-go-RE-PST-OBL 1PL.PR-POSS-mother work-PST-IPF-COND 1PL-at DIR-LOC-exit-HBL-FUT-IPF-NEG
 'If mother had (already) worked by the time of our arrival, she would not have been able to come out (she would have been too tired).'

(55) *tha wjəkepso nobe aχš'e-r qə-zerə-z-e-p-t-a-m-č'e*
 thanks today money-ABS DIR-REL.FCT-1SG.IO-DAT-2SG.ERG-give-PST-OBL-INS
awe pšedje-jə qə-z-e-p-t-a-te-me deɣ^we-ne-t.
 but tomorrow-ADD DIR-1SG.IO-DAT-2SG.ERG-give-PST-IPF-COND good-FUT-IPF
 'Thanks for giving me money today, but if you had given them to me tomorrow, it would have been fine, too.'

The Imperfect is used in imperfective conditionals regardless of temporal reference and reality status, cf. (56)–(58):

(56) *də-šə-k^we-ž'-a-m d-j-ane laže-te-me də-dje qə-še-č'ə-fə-ne-te-qəm.*
 1PL.ABS-TEMP-go-RE-PST-OBL 1PL.PR-POSS-mother work-IPF-COND 1PL-at DIR-LOC-exit-HBL-FUT-IPF-NEG
 'If mother had been working when we had arrived she wouldn't have been able to come out (she would be occupied).'

(57) *ž'əpstu weš'x q-jə-mə-š'x-te-me qe-t-k^wehə-ne-t.*
 now rain DIR-DAT-NEG-rain-IPF-COND DIR-1PL.ERG-go.around-FUT-IPF
 'If it weren't raining now we would have gone for a walk.'

(58) *jə-pe-č'e turcije-m wə-k^we-te-me,*
 POSS-before-INS Turkey-OBL 2SG.ABS-go-IPF-COND
tərk^wə-bze šə-z-we-mə-ɛe-çəx^w-a-r λo?
 Turk-language REL.RSN-RFL.IO-2SG.ERG-NEG-CAUS-know-PST-ABS what
 'If you have been to Turkey before, why didn't you learn Turkish?'

In fact, Temirgoy Adyghe conditional protases with the Preterite or Pluperfect marking are compatible with realis interpretation as well (Kuznecova 2009: 306–309), cf. (59) with the Pluperfect denoting canceled result in a realis conditional:

(59) TEMIRGOY ADYGHE (Kuznecova 2009: 307, ex. 54b)
Azemat qe-k^we-ka-ɛe-me se a-š' sə-fə-tje-we-š't.
 Azamat DIR-go-PST-PST-COND 1SG DEM-OBL 1SG.ABS-BEN-LOC-hit-FUT
 'If Azamat came (and then left), I will call him.'

➤ Irrealis/counterfactuality is unambiguously marked only in the apodosis.

➤ Counterfactual marking in Circassian is primarily sensitive to aspect:

		Shapsug Adyghe	Temirgoy Adyghe	Kabardian
perfective		Perfective Pluperfect	Pluperfect	Pluperfect
imperfective	past	Imperfective Pluperfect	Imperfect	Imperfect
	present	Imperfect		

➤ The Kabardian Imperfect in counterfactuals is just as “fake” as in the Pluperfect itself.

6. Conclusions with a typological outlook

Despite a remarkable degree of formal and functional variation, the Circassian pluperfects all represent variations on a common theme:

- (i) morphologically recursive past tense marking employed for
- (ii) the expression of past events “disconnected” from the present.

The most stable semantic “core” of the pluperfects is constituted by the perfective functions, i.e. anteriority to a past event, canceled result, and experiential. For the expression of the imperfective functions, e.g. habitual past or “past temporal frame”, innovative forms are employed, such as the Shapsug Imperfective Pluperfect or the Kabardian periphrastic constructions. Kabardian, having renewed the Pluperfect (PST-PST > PST-IPF), has retained the aspectual restriction to perfective functions.

➤ Regardless of which of the “primary” tenses is used as the “secondary” temporal marker, the resulting compound tense form inherits the aspectual value of the “internal” tense marker (with the exception of Temirgoy Adyghe with its apparently aspectually neutral Pluperfect).

➤ Aspectual restrictions on the use of tense markers are likewise at play in conditional protases, where the Pluperfect seems to have become a marker of perfective counterfactuality (regardless of tense) while imperfective aspect requires the use of the Imperfect regardless of temporal interpretation and reality status.

Pluperfects are attested in all NW Caucasian languages³:

ABKHAZ (Hewitt 1979: 175, 180–181) and Abaza (Lomtadidze 2006: 159) have a specialized Perfect suffix *-x’a-*, to which the Past suffix can be added to form the Pluperfect:

- (60) a. *jə-qa-s-ça-x’e-jt*
 3SG.N.ABS-LOC-1SG.ERG-do-PRF-FIN
 ‘I have already done it.’ (Hewitt 1979: 181)
- b. *jə-qa-ħ-ça-x’a-n*
 3SG.N.ABS-LOC-1PL.ERG-do-PRF-PST
 ‘We had already done it (before something else happened).’ (ibid.: 175)

UBYKH (Fenwick 2011: 117–123) employs the retrospective shift (originally aorist) marker *-jt* (SG) ~ *-jλ* (PL) across all tenses, i.e. Present + RS = Imperfect, Past + RS = Pluperfect:

- (61) a. *wə-s-k^wə-n* b. *wə-s-k^w-qa*
 2SG.ABS-1SG.ERG-kill-PRS 2SG.ABS-1SG.ERG-kill-PST
 ‘I am killing you.’ ‘I killed you.’ (Fenwick 2011: 118)
- c. *wə-s-k^wə-na-jt* d. *wə-s-k^w-qa-jt*
 2SG.ABS-1SG.ERG-kill-PRS-RS.SG 2SG.ABS-1SG.ERG-kill-PST-RS.SG
 ‘I was killing you.’ ‘I had killed you.’ (ibid.: 121)

(The Ubykh Past *-qa* is probably a former Perfect, Fenwick 2011: 118–119.)

³ Transcription standardized according to the conventions employed for Circassian.

In fact, Kabardian is minimally different from Ubykh in that its Imperfect is not built on the Present form of dynamic verbs:

(62) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (elicited)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>a. <i>s-o-laž'e</i>
1SG.ABS-DYN-work
'I am working.'</p> | <p>b. <i>sə-lež'-a</i>
1SG.ABS-work-PST
'I (have) worked.'</p> |
| <p>c. <i>sə-laž'e-t</i> / * <i>s-o-laž'e-t</i>
1SG.ABS-work-IPF / *1SG.ABS-DYN-work-IPF
'I was working.'</p> | <p>d. <i>sə-lež'-a-t</i>
1SG.ABS-work-PST-IPF
'I had worked.'</p> |

There is no sufficient data on the functions and uses of the Ubykh and Abkhaz-Abaza tense forms, especially the Pluperfects.

➤ Circassian languages stand out in the family in that they tend to have several pluperfects (and renew them cyclically).

➤ In this Circassian languages are similar to some familiar European languages:

– Shapsug Adyghe, like English, preserves aspect in the Pluperfect:

ENGLISH (BNC, <http://corpus.byu.edu/bnc/>)

(63) *The chairman thanked all those who **had worked** hard and tirelessly over the last year.*

(64) *Before that unfortunate incident it **had been working** very successfully for several hours.*

– Kabardian, like Romance, employs both perfective and imperfective past markers for the formation of the Pluperfects, notably without compositional semantic effects, cf. French Plus-que-parfait vs. Passé antérieur (cf. Bertinetto 1987).

FRENCH (Araneum Francogallicum Maius)

(65) *Avant mon rendez vous, **j'avais lu** beaucoup de choses qui faisaient peur...*

'Before my appointment I had read many frightening things.'

(66) *Dès que le roi d'Israël **eut lu** la lettre, il déchira ses vêtements et dit:*

'When the king of Israel had read the letter, he rent his clothes, and said' (2 Kings 5:7)

In Romance, the originally innovative and semantically fairly restricted Pluperfect with the Imperfect auxiliary has undergone functional expansion and ousted the originally default Pluperfect with the Aorist auxiliary into the periphery of the system (see Sičinava 2013: 62–78 and references therein). It is plausible that similar development occurred with the Kabardian Pluperfects in *-B-a* (PST-PST) and *-a-t* (PST-IPF).

The Kabardian “supercompound” pluperfects in *-B-a-t* (PST-PST-IPF) find a formal parallel in the European “supercompound” periphrastic tenses like the French Passé surcomposé (see Apothéloz 2010, Sičinava 2013: 125–150 and references therein):

FRENCH (Araneum Francogallicum Maius)

(67) *on en revient à ce que **j'ai eu dit** un jour*

'From this one comes back to what I have said one day.'

(68) ***J'avais eu lu** que le roman était vraiment amusant et riche en situations burlesques...*

'(before reading the novel) I had read that the novel was really amusing and rich in burlesque situations...'

➤ We do not find and should not expect to find parallel functional distributions of forms in different systems with multiple pluperfects, beyond their generally fitting into the domain of “discontinuous past”. However, the case of Circassian pluperfects with their notable internal formal and functional variation suggests that the European tense systems are in the end not so exotic from a typological perspective.

Abbreviations

ABS — absolutive; ADD — additive; ADV — adverb; AOR — aorist; AP — antipassive; AUX — auxiliary verb; BEN — benefactive; CAUS — causative; CNV — converb; COM — comitative; COND — conditional; COORD — coordination; CS — causal; DAT — dative applicative; DCL — declarative; DEM — demonstrative; DIR — directional preverb; DYN — dynamic; EMP — emphatic; ERG — ergative; FCT — factive; FIN — finite; FUT — future; HBL — habilitive; IMP — imperative; INESS — inessive; INS — instrumental; IO — indirect object; IPF — imperfect; LNK — linking morpheme; LOC — locative; N — neuter; NEG — negation; NOM — nominative; OBL — oblique; PL — plural; POSS — possessive; POT — potential; PR — possessor; PRF — perfect; PRS — present; PST — past; QUOT — quotative; RE — refactive; REC — reciprocal; REL — relativizer; RFL — reflexive; RS — retrospective shift; RSN — reason; SG — singular; TEMP — temporal.

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