

## ACTIONALITY, ASPECT AND TENSE IN KUBAN KABARDIAN COUNTERFACTUAL CONDITIONALS

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### 1. On past tense and counterfactuality<sup>1</sup>

In many languages of the world past tense markers are used in conditional clauses to mark counterfactuality, see e.g. Steele (1975), James (1982), Dahl (1997), Iatridou (2000), Van linden & Verstraete (2008), Karawani (2014), Hetterle (2015: 78–79).

ENGLISH (Declerck & Reed 2001: 183)

- (1) a. *If I **knew** the truth, I would tell you.* (present counterfactual)  
b. *If I **had known** what I know now, I wouldn't have appointed him.*  
(past counterfactual)

LEZGIAN (Haspelmath 1993: 396)

- (2) *Eger am naq' ata-na-j-t'a,*  
if she.ABS yesterday come-AOR-PST-COND  
*za am vokzal.d-a gürüşmiş iji-da-j.*  
1SG.ERG she.ABS station[R]-INESS meeting do-FUT-PST  
'If she had arrived yesterday, I would have met her at the station.'

The counterfactual function is especially characteristic of **pluperfects**, i.e. grams used to denote past situations “disconnected” from the present (see e.g. Plungian & van der Auwera 2006; Sičinava 2013). E.g. in English (contrary to what is often taught at schools), the Pluperfect as in (1b) is perfectly licit in counterfactual conditionals with present (3a) and even future (3b) reference (Declerck & Reed 2001: 177–182; on future counterfactuals in English see Arregui 2007, Ippolito 2003, 2013).

ENGLISH (Declerck & Reed 2001: 178, 180)

- (3) a. *If I **hadn't been** in the country now, I wouldn't have been able to attend your wedding.*  
b. *If you **had come** tomorrow, you wouldn't have found me at home.*

Similarly, in Lezgian the Past Aorist in counterfactual protases is used with reference not only to the past (2), but to the future as well (4).

LEZGIAN (Haspelmath 1993: 395)

- (4) *Eger am paka ata-na-j-t'a,*  
if she.ABS tomorrow come-AOR-PST-COND  
*za am vokzal.d-a gürüşmiş iji-da-j.*  
1SG.ERG she.ABS station[R]-INESS meeting do-FUT-PST  
'If she had arrived tomorrow, I would have met her at the station.'

**NB** It is essential to keep apart temporal reference and epistemicity in conditionals, see e.g. Declerck & Reed (2001) and Xrakovskij (2005).

An influential “formalist” line of thinking about this propensity of pasts and pluperfects to occur in counterfactuals stems from Iatridou (2000), see also Anand & Hacquard (2010),

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Ferreira (2014, 2016), among many others; cf. also Fleischmann (1989) and Dancygier (1998) for similar ideas in the cognitive-functional framework:

➤ in modal contexts, past morphemes do not express tense, 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 (Iatridou 2000, Bjorkman & Halpert 2013), cf. Italian “imperfect conditionals” denoting completed singular events:

ITALIAN (Ippolito 2004: 369, ex. 19)

(5) *Se arrivavi (IPF) prima, vedevi (IPF) il film dall'inizio.*

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

➤ In this paper I discuss counterfactual conditionals in the Kuban dialect of Kabardian (East Circassian), a polysynthetic ergative North-West Caucasian language. Without committing myself to any particular framework, I will focus on the interaction of actionality, aspect and temporal reference in order to determine the role of each of these factors in the choice of marking in conditionals.

## 2. Circassian: a brief introduction

A branch of the North-West Caucasian (Abkhaz-Adyghe) language family, comprising two major languages (or rather groups of dialects): **Adyghe** (West Circassian) and **Kabardian** (East Circassian). The data comes from the **Kuban** dialect of Kabardian as spoken in the village Blešepsyne in the Republic of Adygeya (Russian Federation). The data has been collected during the fieldtrip organized jointly by the Russian State University of the Humanities and the National Research University Higher School of Economics in July 2016.

Important typological features of the Circassian languages (Lander & Testelets 2017):

➤ Very little distinction between major word classes (Lander & Testelets 2006).  
 ➤ Polysynthesis: pronominal affixes expressing all arguments of the verb (S, A, P as well as various indirect objects, see e.g. Smeets 1992) and a rich system of affixes marking aspectual, temporal and modal meanings (Korotkova & Lander 2010, Lander & Letuchiy 2010, Arkadiev & Letuchiy 2011). Note that most 3<sup>rd</sup> person pronominal prefixes are null and won't be marked in the examples.

(6) *wə-ǰə-s-č'er-jə-r-a-ve-wəpəŕə-č'ə-f-a-ǰəm*

2SG.ABS-DIR-1SG.IO-LOC-3SG.IO-DAT-3PL.ERG-CAUS-tie-ELAT-HBL-PST-NEG

‘They could not make him untie you from me.’ (elicited)

The schematic structure of the East 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	+5
absolute	directional	subordinators	applicatives	dative	ergative	jussive	dynamivity	negation	causative	root	directionals, transitivity	TAM	plural	imperfect	subordinators negation

➤ 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 intransitive subjects (7a) and direct objects (7b)) and Oblique (-m, marks transitive subjects (7b), all types of indirect objects (7b), and adnominal possessors (7c); NB personal pronouns, possessed nominals and proper names, as well as non-referential common nouns normally do not admit case marking (see Arkadiev & Testelets 2015).

- (7) a. *šale-r me-ž'ej*  
 boy-ABS DYN-sleep  
 'The boy is sleeping.'
- b. *šale-m pšaše-m txələ-r jə-r-jə-t-a*  
 boy-OBL girl-OBL book-ABS 3SG.IO-DAT-3SG.ERG-give-PST  
 'The boy gave the book to the girl.'
- c. *çax<sup>w</sup>ə-m jə-wəne-r*  
 man-OBL POSS-house-ABS  
 'the man's house'

➤ Marking of clausal subordination by means of non-finite forms, e.g. nominalizations and converbs (see e.g. Serdobolskaya 2016 on clausal complements in Adyghe and Klimentenko 2014 on adverbial subordination in the Besleney dialect of Kabardian, closely related to and spoken in the vicinity of, the Kuban dialect).

– temporal form with the prefix *š(ə)*- (-8):

- (8) *sə-qa-š-jə-λακ<sup>w</sup>ə-m* *ʔ<sup>w</sup>ənç'əbze-xe-r* *s-tər-jə-χə-ž'-a*  
 1SG.ABS-DIR-TEMP-3SG.ERG-see-OBL key-PL-ABS 1SG.IO-LOC-3SG.ERG-take-RE-PST  
 'When he saw me, he took the keys away from me.' (text example)

– conditional form with the suffix *-me* (+ 5):

- (9) *zderovje-r mə-terez-me* *p-x<sup>w</sup>e-hə-ne-qəm.*  
 health[R]-ABS NEG-in.order-COND 2SG.IO-BEN-carry-FUT-NEG  
 'If your health is weak, you won't bear (the hajj).' (text example)

### 3. Conditionals and tenses in Circassian

As other Circassian languages (see e.g. Korotkova 2009 on Temirgoy Adyghe, Arkadiev 2014 on Shapsug Adyghe, Somin 2011 on Besleney Kabardian; see also Arkadiev 2017 for a general overview), Kuban Kabardian has a “two-layer” tense system (cf. Kljagina 2016):

– “Primary” tenses: Present (unmarked) ~ Preterite *-a* ~ Imperfect *-t(e)* ~ Future *-ne*

- (10) a. *ž'əstəwne a šəpe-r de jən-əw d-ew-ke-λəpe.*  
 now DEM place-ABS we big-ADV 1PL.ERG-DYN-CAUS-valuable  
 'Nowadays we value this place very much.' (text example)
- b. *dade-r mašəne-xe-r š-a-še-m qe-k<sup>w</sup>-a.*  
 grandfather-ABS car[R]-PL-ABS LOC-3PL.ERG-sell-OBL DIR-go-PST  
 'Granddad came to the place where they sold cars.' (text example)
- c. *β<sup>w</sup>əneβ<sup>w</sup>-jə nəbžəβ<sup>w</sup>-jə ja-dej qe-mə-k<sup>w</sup>-əw ja-zaq<sup>w</sup>e psew-xe-t.*  
 neighbour-ADD friend-ADD 3PL.IO-at DIR-NEG-go-ADV 3PL.POSS-alone live-PL-IPF  
 'Neither neighbours nor friends visited them, they lived alone.' (text example)
- d. *we-rjə zeg<sup>w</sup>ere-m qə-b-ne-sə-ne.*  
 you.SG-ADD once-OBL DIR-2SG.IO-LOC-reach-FUT  
 'This will sometime affect you as well.' (text example)

– “Secondary” tenses formed by combining two or even more tense suffixes.

The most notable “secondary” tense forms involve the Imperfect suffix *-t(e)*, which attaches to the Preterite to form the Pluperfect (11) and to the Future to form the Irrealis, thus functioning as a “retrospective shift” marker (Plungian & van der Auwera 2006: 344). Both appear in counterfactual conditionals: the Pluperfect in the protasis, and the Irrealis in the apodosis (12).

- (11) *x<sup>w</sup>əλx<sup>w</sup>əβ-əw nebgər-jə-tx<sup>w</sup> də-qe-ne-ž'-a-te-rjə.*  
 male-ADV person-LNK-five 1PL.ABS-DIR-remain-RE-PST-IPF-ADD  
 '... and (by that time) only five had remained of us, men' (text example)

- (12) *jəw<sup>w</sup>e-m wə-qe-k<sup>w</sup>-a-te-me dirjekterə-m w-jə-šte-ne-t.*  
 on.time-OBL 2SG.ABS-DIR-go-PST-IPF-COND director[R]-OBL 2SG.ABS-3SG.ERG-take-FUT-IPF  
 ‘If you had come on time the director would have let you in.’ (elicited)

Previous analyses of conditional clauses in Circassian (Kuznetsova 2009: 297–309 and Korotkova 2009: 276–277 on Temirgoy Adyghe, Orlickaja 2008 and Arkadiev 2014: 55–61 on Shapsug Adyghe, Klimenčenko 2014: 86–92 on Besleney Kabardian) have argued that the use of the Pluperfect is a feature of past counterfactual protases. Thus, for Shapsug Adyghe counterfactuals, I have proposed (Arkadiev 2014), following Iatridou (2000), that one of the two Preterite markers constituting the Pluperfect contributes past temporal reference, while the other is “fake” and serves to encode irreality, cf. (13).

SHAPSUG ADYGHE (elicited)

- (13) *k’ete b-ke-že-ka-ke-je-me ʔaš<sup>w</sup>ə 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.’

The same reasoning appears to follow from the description of conditional clauses in Besleney Kabardian in Klimenčenko (2014: 86–92). In realis conditional protases tenses have their normal interpretation, cf. (14)–(16).

BESLENEY KABARDIAN (Klimenčenko 2014: 88–89)

- (14) *χ<sup>w</sup>ən wə-s-šxə-ne-qəm wə-iskustvjene-me*  
 ok 2SG.ABS-1SG.ERG-eat-FUT-NEG 2SG.ABS-artificial[R]-COND  
 ‘OK, I won’t eat you if you are artificial.’ (text example)
- (15) *pape č’ew-r jə-βel-a-me alaj de-ʔapəq<sup>w</sup>-a.*  
 dad[R] fence-ABS 3SG.ERG-paint-PST-COND Ali COM-help-PST  
 ‘If dad painted the fence (yesterday), Ali helped him.’
- (16) *alaj jə-urok-xe-r jə-šə-ž’ə-ne-me j-ane kanfet qə-r-jə-tə-ne.*  
 Ali POSS-lesson[R]-PL-ABS 3SG.ERG-do-RE-FUT-COND POSS-mother sweets[R] DIR-DAT-3SG.ERG-give-FUT  
 ‘If Ali does (lit. will do) his homework, his mother will give him sweets.’

Counterfactuality is marked in both parts of the conditional by the Imperfect suffix; when it attaches to tense suffixes in the protasis the latter retain their temporal interpretation, cf. (17)–(18). Not surprisingly, in counterfactuals with present-tense reference the Imperfect is the only tense marker, and its function is simply irrealis, cf. (19).

BESLENEY KABARDIAN (Klimenčenko 2014: 88–89)

- (17) *s-j-ane pš’edej qe-k<sup>w</sup>e-ne-te-me se sə-p-je-β<sup>w</sup>eč’ə-ne-t.*  
 1SG-POSS-mother tomorrow DIR-go-FUT-IPF-COND I 1SG.ABS-LOC-DAT-meet-FUT-IPF  
 ‘If mother were to arrive tomorrow, I would have met her.’
- (18) *d-jə-senehatə-r fə ja-mə-λeβ<sup>w</sup>-a-te-me*  
 1PL.PR-POSS-profession-ABS good 3PL.ERG-NEG-see-PST-IPF-COND  
*a-xe-r-jə a-bə k<sup>w</sup>e-ne-xe-te-qəm*  
 DEM-PL-ABS-ADD DEM-OBL go-FUT-PL-IPF-NEG  
 ‘If they (our children) had not loved our profession, they would not have gone there (to the university), too.’ (text example)
- (19) *pšaše-m pis’mo-xe-r jə-tx-xe-te-me ž’ewap qə-r-a-tə-ž’ə-ne-t.*  
 girl-OBL letter[R]-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.’

➤ What is lacking in most descriptions of the Circassian conditionals, especially of the Kabardian ones, is the information on the interaction of counterfactuality with aspect and actional properties of verbs. Indeed, most if not all examples of counterfactual clauses reported so far involve telic events in the perfective aspect as in (13), (17) and (18). However, given that the secondary past tense/irrealis marking is carried out by the Imperfect, whose function as a primary tense is to mark past imperfective (durative and habitual) contexts as in (10c), the following questions arise:

- How is counterfactuality marked in imperfective (durative and habitual) contexts?
- How is counterfactuality marked with atelic (activity and state) predicates?
- Does temporal reference of conditionals interact with aspect and actionality in any non-trivial way?

#### 4. The findings

(All subsequent examples are elicited, which is not specially marked.)

Since the doubling of the Imperfect suffix is impossible (\*-te-te-me), past imperfective counterfactuals could in principle be expressed in two ways:

- a) by the Pluperfect (-a-te-me PST-IPF-COND), neutralizing the aspectual distinction;
- b) by the Imperfect (-te-me IPF-COND), neutralizing the modal distinction.

Kuban Kabardian follows the second strategy:

Table 2. Tense forms in Kuban Kabardian counterfactual protases

tense	eventuality type	imperfective		perfective
		durative	habitual	
past	telic	IPF		PST(-IPF)
	atelic	IPF	IPF / PST(-IPF)	PST(-IPF)
	states	IPF / PST(-IPF)		
present		IPF / PST(-IPF)		—
future	telic	?		PST-IPF / FUT-IPF
	atelic	IPF / PST(-IPF) / FUT-IPF		?

➤ Imperfective contexts, regardless of temporal interpretation, are overwhelmingly covered by the Imperfect.

➤ The Pluperfect (PST-IPF) is optional in counterfactuals, being almost always substitutable by the simple Preterite.

– Past imperfective counterfactuals are strictly opposed to past perfective ones, at least with telic verbs, by means of Imperfect vs. Pluperfect, cf. (20a) vs. (20b):

(20) a. *də-qə-šə-k<sup>w</sup>-a-te-m*                      *šhambəj polə-r*                      *jə-pχenč’-te-me*  
 1PL.ABS-DIR-TEMP-go-PST-IPF-OBL    Shkhambi    floor-ABS    3PL.ERG-sweep-IPF-COND

*wəne-m də-š-jə-βe-he-ne-te-qəm.*

house-OBL 1PL.ABS-LOC-3SG.ERG-CAUS-enter-FUT-IPF-NEG

‘If Shkhambi had been sweeping the floor at the moment when we had come, he would not have let us into the house.’

b. *də-qə-šə-k<sup>w</sup>-a-te-m*                      *šhambəj polə-r*                      *jə-pχenč’-a-te-me*  
 1PL.ABS-DIR-TEMP-go-PST-IPF-OBL    Shkhambi    floor-ABS    3PL.ERG-sweep-PST-IPF-COND

*wəne-m də-š-jə-βe-he-ne-te-qəm.*

house-OBL 1PL.ABS-LOC-3SG.ERG-CAUS-enter-FUT-IPF-NEG

‘If Shkhambi had (already) swept the floor by the time we had come, he would not have let us into the house.’

– At least some of my consultants have similar intuitions with respect to atelic verbs as well, cf. (21a) vs. (21b):

- (21) a. *də-šə-k<sup>w</sup>e-ž'-a-m*      *d-j-ane*      *laže-te-me*  
 1PL.ABS-TEMP-go-RE-PST-OBL    1PL-POSS-mother    work-IPF-COND  
*də-dej*    *qə-še-č'ə-fə-ne-te-qəm.*  
 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).'
- b. *də-šə-k<sup>w</sup>e-ž'-a-m*      *d-j-ane*      *lež-a-te-me*  
 1PL.ABS-TEMP-go-RE-PST-OBL    1PL-POSS-mother    work-PST-IPF-COND  
*də-dej*    *qə-še-č'ə-fə-ne-te-qəm.*  
 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).'

This aspectual restriction accords well with the observation by Kljagina (2016) that the Kuban Kabardian Pluperfect does not in general occur in imperfective contexts, cf. (22):

- (22) *a-r*    *jəpeč'e*    *pšedgəž-č'e*    *fade*    *je-fe-t* / \**je-f-a-t.*  
 DEM-ABS    before    morning-INS    booze    DAT-drink-IPF / \*DAT-drink-PST-IPF  
 'In earlier times he used to drink booze in the morning (but now he doesn't have such a habit any more).' (Kljagina 2016: 20, ex. 23a)

– Conditional protases with Imperfect marking are underspecified with respect to both reality status and tense, cf. realis conditional in (23), present counterfactual in (24) and even future counterfactual in (25).

- (23) *jəpeč'e*    *turcije-m*    *wə-k<sup>w</sup>e-te-me,*  
 before    Turkey-OBL    2SG.ABS-go-IPF-COND  
*tərk<sup>w</sup>ə-bze*    *šə-z-we-mə-βe-çəx<sup>w</sup>-a-r*      *λew?*  
 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?'
- (24) *ž'əpstəw*    *weš'x*    *q-je-mə-š'x-te-me*      *qe-t-k<sup>w</sup>ehə-ne-t.*  
 now    rain    DIR-DAT-NEG-rain-IPF-COND    DIR-1PL.ERG-go.around-FUT-IPF  
 'If it wasn't raining now we would have gone for a walk.'
- (25) *pšedej*    *thamex<sup>w</sup>e-max<sup>w</sup>e-te-me*    *de*    *də-lež'e-ne-te-qəm.*  
 tomorrow    Sunday-day-IPF-COND    we    1PL.ABS-work-FUT-IPF-NEG  
 'If tomorrow had been Sunday we wouldn't work.'

➤ It is only the marking of the apodosis that distinguishes between realis and irrealis conditionals.

The role of situation types:

– With stative predicates the aspectual distinction appears to be neutralized: my consultants allow both the Imperfect and the Pluperfect in past counterfactual contexts with statives without any tangible difference in meaning, cf. (26):

- (26) *dəβ<sup>w</sup>ase*    *s-jə-q<sup>w</sup>eš'ə-r*      *wəne-m*    *še-s-te-me* / *še-s-a-te-me*  
 yesterday    1SG-POSS-brother-ABS    house-OBL    LOC-sit-IPF-COND / LOC-sit-PST-IPF-COND  
*qə-p-x<sup>w</sup>ə-tje-we-ne-t.*  
 DIR-2SG.IO-BEN-LOC-hit-FUT-IPF  
 'If my brother had been at home yesterday he would have called you.'

This accords well with the tendency for the distinction between the perfective Preterite and the imperfective Imperfect to be neutralized with stative verbs in Circassian.

– Moreover, such neutralization is attested with dynamic atelic verbs as well, especially in past habitual contexts (27), where the Pluperfect is allowed even by those speakers who assign to it a perfective interpretation in episodic contexts like (21b) above:

- (27) *neᵛabe neᵛə-be.re wə-ž'ej-a-te-me / wə-ž'ej-te-me*  
 last.year more-often 2SG.ABS-sleep-PST-IPF-COND / 2SG.ABS-sleep-IPF-COND  
*neᵛ-maše.re w-je-zeš'ə-ne-t.*  
 more-rarely 2SG.ABS-DAT-get.tired-FUT-IPF  
 'If you had slept more last year you would have been less tired.'

The Pluperfect appears to be barred from habitual contexts only with telic verbs:

- (28) *neᵛabe wə-qə-č'erə-mə-x<sup>w</sup>-te-me / wə-qə-č'erə-mə-x<sup>w</sup>-a-te-me*  
 last.year 2SG.ABS-DIR-LOC-NEG-fall-IPF-COND / 2SG.ABS-DIR-LOC-NEG-fall-PST-IPF-COND  
*škola-m wə-qə-š-a-x<sup>w</sup>ə-ne-te-qəm*  
 school[R]-OBL 2SG.ABS-DIR-LOC-3PL.ERG-drive-FUT-IPF-NEG  
 'If you had not regularly / once arrived late last year, they would not have excluded you from school.'

### 5. Pluperfect: optionality vs. spread

The investigation has revealed that the use of the pluperfect is not obligatory even in past counterfactuals: as in Adyghe (see e.g. Arkadiev 2014: 56–57), the Preterite can be used in such contexts instead, cf. (29):

- (29) *jəᵛ<sup>w</sup>e-m wə-qe-k<sup>w</sup>-a-me dirjekterə-m w-jə-šte-ne-t.*  
 on.time-OBL 2SG.ABS-DIR-go-PST-COND director[R]-OBL 2SG.ABS-3SG.ERG-take-FUT-IPF  
 'If you had come on time the director would have let you in.' — cf. (11)

Moreover, the Preterite can also replace the Imperfect with stative (30) and habitual atelic verbs (31), but not with telic verbs (32).

- (30) *dəᵛ<sup>w</sup>ase s-jə-q<sup>w</sup>eš'ə-r wəne-m še-s-a-me qə-p-x<sup>w</sup>ə-tje-we-ne-t.*  
 yesterday 1SG-POSS-brother-ABS house-OBL LOC-sit-PST-COND DIR-2SG.IO-BEN-LOC-hit-FUT-IPF  
 'If my brother had been at home yesterday he would have called you.' — cf. (26)
- (31) *jəᵛes-k<sup>w</sup>-a-m neᵛə-be.re wə-ž'ej-a-me neᵛ-maše.re w-je-zeš'ə-ne-t.*  
 year-go-PST-OBL more-often 2SG.ABS-sleep-PST-COND more-rarely 2SG.ABS-DAT-get.tired-FUT-IPF  
 'If you had slept more last year you wouldn't have been less tired.' — cf. (27)
- (32) *#səhatə-r t<sup>w</sup>ə-m swande sup jə-ᵛe-v-a-me*  
 hour-ABS two-OBL Swande soup[R] 3SG.ERG-CAUS-boil-PST-COND  
*jə-peš'ə-m tjeļjevizərə-r xe-ᵛe-ne-ᵛe-ne-te-qəm.*  
 POSS-room-OBL television[R]-ABS LOC-CAUS-be.lit-RES-FUT-IPF-NEG  
 'If at two o'clock Swande had already finished cooking (\*had been cooking) soup, the TV-set in her room couldn't have been turned on.'

Such a use of the Preterite seems to be the minor option, but it is robustly attested even if not all speakers accept it in all contexts. This probably shows that the use of the Pluperfect in counterfactuals is perceived by the speakers as somehow redundant.

Just like the Imperfect, the Preterite does not unambiguously mark the protasis as counterfactual, cf. (33) with a realis conditional:

- (33) *ruslan qe-k<sup>w</sup>-a-me sebranije-r je-d-ᵛe-že-n.*  
 Ruslan DIR-go-PST-COND meeting[R]-ABS DAT-2PL.ERG-CAUS-begin-POT  
 'If Ruslan has come, let's begin the meeting.'

On the other hand, there is a clearly observable spread of the Pluperfect to non-past (including future) contexts, testifying to its becoming a default marker of counterfactuality *per se*, regardless of temporal reference, cf. (34)–(36). Cf. a similar development in English illustrated above, and the discussion in Dahl (1997).

- (34) *ž'əpstəw weš'x q̇-je-mə-š'x-a-te-me q̇e-t-ḱ<sup>w</sup>ehə-ne-t*  
 now rain DIR-DAT-NEG-rain-PST-IPF-COND DIR-1PL.ERG-go.around-FUT-IPF  
 'If it were not raining now, we would go for a walk.'
- (35) *aslan ž'əle-m naχə-bere q̇e-ḱ<sup>w</sup>-a-te-me*  
 Aslan village-OBL more-often DIR-go-PST-IPF-COND  
*zeč'e-m-jə ja-g<sup>w</sup>epe-ne-t*  
 all-OBL-ADD 3PL.PR + POSS-joy-FUT-IPF  
 'If Aslan came to the village more often, everyone would be happy.'
- (36) *tha wjəpəsew newbe aχš'e-r q̇ə-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 pšedej-jə q̇ə-z-e-p-t-a-te-me deχ<sup>w</sup>e-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 also been fine.'

Note that (34)–(35) show the Pluperfect in clearly imperfective (durative and habitual) present contexts with dynamic verbs, a use strictly precluded with past time reference.

## 6. Conclusions

Marking of counterfactuality in Kuban Kabardian (and, *mutatis mutandis*, most probably in other Kabardian varieties as well) is achieved by means of a non-trivial interplay of actionality, aspect and tense:

- The Imperfect *-t(e)* serves as a marker of counterfactuality *par excellence* only in non-past contexts and, as part of the complex Pluperfect, in past perfective (and some habitual) contexts; in most imperfective contexts the Imperfect does not specify either reality status or temporal reference.
- Given that the Imperfect *-t(e)* forms part of the Pluperfect, which in its independent uses is largely limited to perfective contexts (e.g. anterior in the past or annulled result), as opposed to imperfective contexts (e.g. past habitual situations no longer holding at present, as in (22)), where the “bare” Imperfect appears, there is no reason to consider the use of the Imperfect in counterfactuals “fake” — at least, it is no more “fake” than its use in the Pluperfect in general.
- Nevertheless, the distribution of the Imperfect can be accommodated under the “fake aspect” theory if we assume that in syntax the Imperfect as a marker of irrealis can attach to the “real” past tense Imperfect, with morphological haplology then deleting the second occurrence of the marker (IPF-IPF *\*-te-te* > IPF *-te*). However, such an analysis cannot account for the fact that the Imperfect marker is optional, and can be substituted by the simple Preterite even in past perfective counterfactuals.
- Temporal reference seems to be the less important parameter in the marking of irrealis conditionals in Kuban Kabardian: all of the markers surveyed, even the Pluperfect, are in principle compatible with past, present and future interpretations; with respect to the Pluperfect this points towards its development into a specialized marker of counterfactuality.
- By contrast, the aspectual distinctions (perfective vs. imperfective, and, in the latter, durative vs. habitual), as well as the actional ones (telic vs. atelic), constrain the morphological expression of counterfactuality in important ways.



## Abbreviations

ABS — absolutive; ADD — additive; ADV — adverb; AOR — aorist; AP — antipassive; BEN — benefactive; CAUS — causative; COM — comitative; COND — conditional; DAT — dative; DEM — demonstrative; DIR — directional; DYN — dynamic; ELAT — elative; ERG — ergative; FCT — factive; FUT — future; HBL — habilitive; INESS — inessive; INS — instrumental; IO — indirect object; IPF — imperfect; LNK — linker; LOC — locative; NEG — negation; OBL — oblique; PL — plural; POSS — possessive; POT — potential; PST — past; R — Russian loan; RE — refactive; REL — relativizer; RES — resultative; RFL — reflexive; RSN — reason; SG — singular; TEMP — temporal.

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