Cases, arguments, verbs in Abkhaz, Georgian and Mingrelian

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A number of apparently anomalous features in the marking of arguments are examined in three contiguous languages spoken in Transcaucasia: Abkhaz from the North West Caucasian family, and Georgian and Mingrelian, two South Caucasian (or Kartvelian) languages. Among the categories examined are those of potentiality, unwilling/accidental activity, causation, (in) transitivity, and non-standard case-assignment, as well as the much debated question of whether Georgian (and, by extension, Proto-Kartvelian) is correctly described in part of its morpho-syntax as exemplifying an Ergative as opposed to an Active configuration. There are passing references to such other languages as (Indo-European) Ancient Greek, (North West Caucasian) Circassian and (Kartvelian) Svan.

1. The article considers a medley of features in three languages spoken in western Transcaucasia: Abkhaz, a member of the North West Caucasian (NWC) family, in Abkhazia in the extreme north-west of the region; Georgian, a South Caucasian language and the state-language of Georgia; Mingrelian, another South Caucasian language, which historically has been a buffer between Abkhaz and Georgian.
2. The interest in the argument-structure of Abkhaz has nothing to do with cases, as this language does not make use of them to mark its verbal arguments

All three members of NWC (Abkhaz-Abaza, Circassian, Ubykh) possess three sets of pronominal agreement-affixes, which are differentiated from one another principally by sequential ordering in the verb's preradical structure and secondarily sometimes by modification to the markers themselves. The Abkhaz affixal sets are:

Table 1. Abkhaz Verbal Agreement-prefixes

		Singular			Plural		
		I	**II**	**III**	**I**	**II**	**III**
1st		s-[1]	s-	s-(/z-)	ħ-	ħ-	ħ-(/ɑ: -)
2nd	Masc/N-Hum	w-	w-	w-	ʃʷ-	ʃʷ-	ʃʷ-(/ʒʷ-)
2nd	Fem	b-	b-	b-	ʃʷ-	ʃʷ-	ʃʷ-(/ʒʷ-)
3rd	Masc Hum	d-	j-	j-	j-/ø-	r-(/d-)	r-(/d-)
3rd	Fem Hum	d-	l-	l-	j-/ø-	r-(/d-)	r-(/d-)
3rd	N-Hum	j-/ø-	ɑ-/ø-	(n)ɑ-	j-/ø-	r-(/d-)	r-(/d-)

The way the system operates can be illustrated as follows:

Monovalent intransitive

(1)   ɑ-'lamp'ɑ   ø-psə-ø-jt'
    the-lamp   it-die-PAST-FIN(=AOR)[2]
    'The lamp went out'

Bivalent intransitive

(2)   'ɑ-dz-kʷɑ   s-ɑn   jə-'lə-tsħɑ-wɑ-n
    the-flea-PL   my-mother   they-her-bite-DYN-FIN(=IMPERF)
    '(The) fleas were biting[3] my mother'

Bivalent transitive

(3)   r-ab   s-ɑn   də-j-'bɑ-ø-jt'
    their-father   my-mother   her-he-see-PAST-FIN(=AOR)
    'Their father saw my mother'

Trivalent transitive (=ditransitive)

(4)   r-ab   s-ɑn   ɑ-'parɑ   ø-'lə-j-tɑ-ø-jt'
    their-father   my-mother   the-money   it-her-he-give-PAST-FIN(=AOR)
    'Their father gave the money to my mother'

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1. A bracketed schwa could be added to each of the single consonants in this chart, and in the immediate neighbourhood of/ħ/the close (schwa) vowel is lowered to the language's open vowel.

2. Regarding glossing-conventions, a bracketed gloss preceded by an equals-sign, as in this final element, means that the morpheme in question (here the Aorist tense) is a function of the combination of more than one of the individually glossed morphemes (here Past + Finite). A bracketed hyphen in the original means that there is a morpheme-division which is not germane to any line of argument, and thus the individual morphemes are not assigned glosses.

3. From the affixal structure of Abkhaz there can be no doubt that this verb is construed as a biva-lent INtransitive, however counter-intuitive this might appear from an anglocentric point of view.

As intransitives contain no 'agent'-affix (viz. one from set III, which stands second in bivalent or third in trivalent transitives), they have a slot free to accommodate one, when an additional argument is added under synthetic causativisation, which is marked by pre-radical/r-/:

Monovalent intransitive causativised

    (1′)   s-ɑn   ɑ-'lɑmpʾɑ øø-lə-r-'psə-ø-jtʾ
           my-mother the-lamp it-she-CAUS-die-PAST-FIN(=AOR)
           'My mother extinguished the lamp'

Bivalent intransitive causativised

    (2′)   r-ɑb   ʿɑ-dz-kʷɑ s-ɑn   jə-l-'jə-r-tshɑ-wɑ-n
           their-father the-flea-PL my-mother them-her-he-CAUS-bite- DYN-FIN(=IMPERF)
           'Their father was making/letting the fleas bite my mother'

The process is not quite as simple when a bivalent transitive is causativised, as the agent-slot is already filled. The problem is resolved in the way predicted by Comrie (1976): the causee is transformed into the indirect object of the causativised verb and marked with the affixal set employed for indirect (and oblique) objects, namely set II, leaving the causer to be marked (by the appropriate set III affix) as the causativised verb's agent:

    (3′)   (sɑ(-'rɑ)) r-ɑb   s-ɑn   də-j-sə-r-'bɑ-ø-jtʾ
           I   their-father my-mother her-him-I-CAUS-see-PAST-FIN(=AOR)
           'I caused their father to see my mother/showed my mother to their father'

Though quadrivalent verbs are not absolutely excluded in Abkhaz, as demonstrated by:

    (5)   jə-ħɑ-z-'rə-j-tɑ-ø-jtʾ
           it/them-us-for-them-he-give-PAST-FIN(=AOR)
           'He gave them it/them (e.g., greeting(s)) on behalf of us',

the language prefers to avoid them, and so a causativised ditransitive is treated analytically, e.g.,

    (4′)   (sɑ(-'rɑ)) r-ɑb   s-ɑn   ɑ-'pɑrɑ   ø-'lə-j-tɑ-r(-)tʷ
           I   their-father my-mother the-money it-her-he-give-RESULT
           ø-qʿɑ-s-'ts'ɑ-ø-jtʾ   /ø-jə-'sə-r-qʿɑ-ts'ɑ-ø-jtʾ
           it-PREV-I-make-PAST-FIN(=AOR) it-him-I-CAUS-PREV-make-PAST-FIN(=AOR)
           'I got[4] their father to give the money to my mother'

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4.   As this example demonstrates, the lexical causative verb in such circumstances can itself be causativised.

These examples suggest that everything is pretty straightforward in Abkhaz and that arguments are easily identifiable from the verb's affixal structure. Occasionally, however, a puzzle emerges.

2.1   Compare the following, both insignificantly adapted from folk-tales:

(6)   (ja(-'ra))   jə-pa-'tɕʷa   d-a: -'rə-pχʲa-ø-jtʼ
       he   his-son-PL   he-PREV-them-summon-PAST-FIN(=AOR)
       'He summoned his sons'

vs.

(7)   jə-'pa   d-'a: -l-pχʲa-ø-jtʼ
       his-son   him-PREV-she-summon-PAST-FIN(=AOR)
       'ʃhe summoned his son'

The verb-root/-pχʲA-/and associated orientational (sometimes modal) preverb/-a:
-/are the same, but, whilst in example (7) the verb is treated as a bivalent transitive, in example (6) it is treated as a bivalent intransitive, the stress-patterning helping to distinguish them. Again compare the different affixal patterning in these verbs:

(8)   s-an   s-χə   d-a-gʷʼdzə-ø-jtʼ/   ø-lə-gʷʼdzə-ø-jtʼ
       my-mother my-head she-it-kiss-PAST-FIN(=AOR) it-she-kiss-PAST-FIN(= AOR)
       'My mother kissed my head'

where now only the affixal patterning differs. But regardless of patterning, the arguments are easily identifiable: with intransitives (whether mono- or bivalent) the first affix in the sequence marks the subject, any second affix being the indirect, or possibly the oblique, object (sc. where the affix is 'governed' by a preverb), as in:

(9)   a-'ʈʂə   a-'gʷara   j-a-'χə-pa-ø-jtʼ
       the-horse the-fence   it-it-PREV-jump-PAST-FIN(=AOR)
       'The horse jumped over the fence'

and with transitives it is the affix closer/closest to the root which correlates with the subject, as may be demonstrated by the usual control-tests (e.g., reflexivisation).

All the verbs in the examples presented above are of the 'dynamic' type. Abkhaz also possesses so-called 'stative' verbs:

(10)   a-'χarp   ø-s-ʃʷə-w-pʼ
         the-shirt it-me-on-STAT-FIN(=PRES)
         'I am wearing the shirt'

which corresponds to the dynamic:

(10′)   a-'χarp   ø-s-'ʃʷə-s-tsʼa-ø-jtʼ
          the-shirt it-me-PREV-I-put-PAST-FIN(=AOR)
          'I put on the shirt'[5]

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5.   Though one might have expected a reflexive here to correlate with English 'on myself', if one considers that the preverbal element is originally likely to have been a nominal indicating

or again in:

(11)   ɑ(-)'r'j   ɑ-ʉ'nə   ø-s-tʷ'ə-w-p'
         this   the-house   it-my-possession-STAT-FIN(=PRES)
         'This house belongs to me' or 'I own this house'

But where is the subject here? Assuming that the meaning equates to 'belong to', then 'house' could be interpreted as subject. But if the meaning is rather 'own', then the first person singular affix would become subject. Since the reflexive with many (?most) Abkhaz verbs is identical to the lexeme 'head' combined with appropriate possessive prefix, the relevant sequence with this verb, namely:

(11′)   s-χə   ø-s-tʷ'ə-w-p'
         my-head/self it-my-possession-STAT-FIN(=PRES)

permits both the interpretations 'My head belongs to me' and 'I own myself', which is unhelpful, although, if one considers this verb's reciprocal form, one finds it is the typically intransitive reciprocal formant/-ɑj-/which has to be employed, and this suggests that the correct interpretation of (11′) is 'My head belongs to me', viz.:

(12)   ħ-ɑj-'tʷ'ə-w-p'
         we-REC-belong-to-STAT-FIN(=PRES)
         'We belong to each other'[6]

However, for the similarly patterning verb 'want', one would definitely prefer to take the affix standing next to the root as the subject-marker:

(13)   s-χə   ø-s-tɑ'χə-w-p'
         my-head/self   it-I-want-STAT-FIN(=PRES)
         'I want myself'

One cannot say:

(13′)   *s-χə   s-ɑ-tɑ'χə-w-p'
          my-head/selfme-it-want-STAT-FIN(=PRES)
          'My head/self wants me'

'body/torso' incorporated within the verbal complex to function preverbally, then the absence of a reflexive becomes understandable, as the notion will have been 'I placed on my body/torso the shirt', from which it would follow that the stative form in (10) could be glossed as 'it-my-body-STAT-FIN(=PRES)' and thus produce a literal translation of 'The shirt is on my body'.

6.   Or 'We are each other's possession'?

and the reciprocal affix employed with this verb is typically the one that replaces an agent-affix (for fuller discussion see Hewitt 1979):

(14)   ħ-ɑj(-)bɑ-tɑ'χə-w-p'
        us-REC-want-STAT-FIN(=PRES)
        'We want each other'

Though Abkhaz today makes no use of case to mark arguments, the likelihood is that it once did possess a case-system similar to that of the sister-languages. But even with such a system, where, to take Circassian, one finds a (definite) Absolutive case in /-r/ vs. a (definite) Oblique case in /-m/ (the latter fulfilling such functions as Ergative, Genitive and Dative), case alone does not unambiguously indicate grammatical role, as both Ergative- and Dative-functions are packaged within the one morphic shape. Nor, as already demonstrated, does verbal category alone necessarily predict the argument-structure of the associated affixes, given the variations in (6)–(8).

2.2   A further peculiarity arises when one takes into account the marking of (a) potentiality or (b) the idea that a verbal action is carried out unintentionally (sometimes by mistake). If the verb is intransitive (i.e., does not contain a set III agent-affix), then the relevant prefix is simply inserted at the appropriate point in the verbal complex's preradical structure:[7]

(15)   sə-z-tsɑ-'wɑ-m
        I-POT-go-DYN-not(=FIN.PRES)
        'I cannot go'

where the potential-marking /-z/ stands immediately after the intransitive subject affix. This contrasts with:

(16)   'jə-ø-kʷə-r-χ-χʲɑ-jt'   ɑ-rt   ɑ-dɑw-'tɕʷɑ --- sɑ(-'rɑ)
        them-it-on-they-take-PERF-FIN this-PL ART-ogre-PL   me

        sə-r-'zə-ø-kʷə-m-χə-ø-jt'
        me-they-POT-it-on-not-take-PAST-FIN(=AOR)

        'These ogres have liquidated them (literally: carried them off from it [the surface of the earth]) … me they couldn't destroy'

where it can be demonstrated that the second clause's agent-marker is not a member of the typically agentive set III but belongs to the typically indirect-/oblique-object marking set II.[8] The same applies to the prefix marking unwillingness on the part of the subject/agent, as seen in:

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7.   Though the potential prefix is usually associated with a negative or interrogative, this requirement is not absolute.

8.   Hewitt (1979) gives details. In short, normal agent-affixes stand immediately before the verb-internal negative, and, if the agent is 3rd person non-human singular and the complex

(17) ɑ(-)q'ər(-)'q'ər(-)ħʷɑ 'd-ɑmχɑ-tʃtʃɑ-ø-jt'
      raucously   he-unw[9]-laugh-past-fin(=aor)
      ɑ-'wə(-)trɑ(-)q'ɑ(-)ts'ɑ(-)ɥə
      the-gardener
      'The gardener, despite himself, laughed out raucously'

which parallels the intransitive verb of (15), whereas the transformation of an underlying transitive verb ('eat') to provide a parallel with (16) is seen in:

(18) ɑ-bħʷɑ-'gʷɑʁʲ-kʷɑ   ø-j-ɑmχɑ-'fɑ-ø-zɑ(-)r,
      the-plum-stone-pl   them-he-unw-eat-past(=non.fin)-if
      d-ɑ-χə-p's-ɑ:-ø-r   ø-'ɑ-l-ʂɑ-wɑ-jt'
      he-it-of-die-suff-past(=non.fin)-if   it-it-prev-be-possible-dyn-fin(=pres)
      'If he ate the plum-stones accidentally/by mistake, he may die of it'

With bivalent intransitives the potential prefix splits subject- and indirect-object-markers, as in:

(19) də-z-s-'mə-sə-ø-jt'
      (s)he-pot-me-not-hit-past-fin(=aor)
      '(S)he couldn't hit me'

Some potentials present anomalies, which I investigated in 1999,[10] but here everything behaves predictably. However, when one associates the prefix of unwillingness with the verb-root illustrated in (2) and (2′), the prefix stands AFTER (rather than before) the indirect-object-marker, which for some speakers at least seems to lead to confusion as to which of the verb's two arguments is the agent and which the patient:

(20) d-'s-ɑ/əmχɑ-tsħɑ-ø-jt'
      (s)he-me-unw-bite-past-fin(=aor)
      '(S)he accidentally bit me'

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contains a preverb or is tripersonal, it takes the shape /-nɑ/ – here, for example, the verb-form in the first clause of (16) would with such an agent be /'jə-ø-kʷ-nɑ-χ-χʲɑ-jt'/ 'It has destroyed them'. However, when a 3rd person non-human singular entity functions as indirect/oblique object, it can only take the form /-ɑ/ – here the verb-form in the second clause of (16) would in that case be /s-ɑ-'zə-ø-kʷ'-m-χə-ø-jt'/ 'It could not destroy me'.

9. This affix has no role in Abkhaz external to the verb, whereas the potential affix is to be related to the verb-external postposition of benefaction /-z'/ 'for'.

10. On p. 197 of that article the verb-form quoted in the penultimate line of text is the same as presented in example (4), namely (with transcription adapted to that used in the present article) /j-ɑ-z-'k'ələ-m-χə-ø-jt'/; it should have read /j-ɑ-z-'k'ələ-m-χ'-ø-jt'/.

Speakers who suggest this form rather means 'I accidentally bit him/her' are prob-
ably seduced into treating the verb as transitive by virtue of the fact that in transi-
tives this (sc. post-set II affixal slot) is the position adopted by this prefix. Clearly
the question to be investigated is why the prefix should find itself so deeply embed-
ded in bivalent intransitives (rather than immediately follow the initial pronomi-
nal prefix), but this peculiarity does not affect the point being made here, namely
that in transitive structures the normal affixal patterning is altered.

Abkhaz has no diathetic (sc. active vs. passive) opposition, and so it cannot
be argued that transitive structures containing a prefix indicating potentiality or
unwillingness are in any way passivised (or have arisen out of passive structures).
Control-tests indicate that it is the argument signalled by the indirect/oblique
object-marking affix within the verbal complex which functions as subject. We
have, then, with these verb-forms examples of pure subject-demotion. And Abkhaz
is not alone in the region in associating structural changes with these categories.

3.   The South Caucasian (Kartvelian) family, consisting of Georgian, Svan,
Laz and Mingrelian (the latter two being treated within Georgia as co-dialects of a
language called Zan), marks its arguments by a combination of pronominal cross-
referencing and case-marking. Differently from North West Caucasian, an active vs.
passive opposition does exist here. Consider first Georgian's two agreement-systems:

Table 2

	Singular	**Plural**		
Agreement-pattern A in Georgian				
1st person	v-	v-	-t	
2nd person	ø(/χ)-		ø(/χ)-	-t
3rd person		-s/α/ɔ		-(α/ε)n/ɛs/nɛn[11]
Agreement-pattern B in Georgian				
1st person	m-	gv-		
2nd person	g-	g-	-t	
3rd person	ø(s/h)-	ø(s/h)-	(-t)	

The appropriate affix from Set A is universally selected to mark the subject for
(monovalent) intransitives, and the case is Nominative:

(21)   kαl-i   dʒd-ɛb-α
        woman-NOM   sit-TS-3p$_A$[=PRES]
        'The woman is sitting down'

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11.   The agreement-suffixes for the 3rd person vary according to the tense or mood (or, in kart-
velological parlance, 'screeve') of the relevant finite verb.

Georgian can indicate within its verbs the presence of an indirect object. We can add such an argument to (21) by placing the relevant noun in the Dative case, adding the so-called Objective Version vocalic prefix to the verb,[12] and using its Set B correlate to cross-reference the Dative:

(21′)　kɑl-i　　　　　mɛgɔbr-ɛb-s　gvɛrd-zɛ　ø-u-dʒd-ɛb-ɑ(-t)
　　　　woman-NOM　friend-PL-DAT　side-at　　$3p_B$-ov-sit-TS-$3p_A$(-PL_B)
　　　　'The woman is sitting down beside her friends'

Because of structural (and, for transitives, syntactic) variation, Georgian TMA (or 'screeval') paradigms are divided into three so-called Series. In Series I transitives have their subject in the Nominative, cross-referenced by a Set A affix, their direct object (plus any indirect object) in the Dative, cross-referenced by a Set B affix:

(22)　kɑl-i　　　　　ts'ɛr(-)il-s　ø-ts'ɛr-s
　　　woman-NOM　letter-DAT　$3p_B$-write-$3p_A$[=PRES]
　　　'The woman is writing a/the letter'

(22′)　kɑl-i　　　　　mɛgɔbr-ɛb-s　ts'ɛr(-)il-s　ø-s-ts'ɛr-s
　　　 woman-NOM　friend-PL-DAT　letter-DAT　$3p_B$-$3pIO_B$-write-$3p_A$[=PRES][13]
　　　 'The woman is writing a/the letter to (her) friends'

Depending on the type/class of verb, transitives can be transformed into corresponding intransitives, some, but not all, of which can convey passive meaning, in one of three ways, styled: markerless, suffixal, and prefixal.[14] The suffixal method employs the post-radical element /-d-/ in the first two screeve-Series and, in Series I, the thematic suffix /-ɛb-/:

(23)　saχl-s　　　v-ø-ɑ-ʃɛn-ɛb vs.　　　　saχl-i　　　ʃɛn-d-ɛb-ɑ
　　　house-DAT　$1p_A$-$3p_B$-NV-build-TS[=PRES]　house-NOM　build-SUFF-TS- $3p_A$[=PRES]
　　　'I am building a house' vs. 'The/A house is being built'

An associated indirect object here would produce:

(23′)　saχl-i　　　mɔχuts-eb-s　gv-i-ʃɛn-d-ɛb-ɑ
　　　house-NOM　old-PL-DAT　us_B-ov-build-SUFF-TS[15]-$3p_A$[=PRES]
　　　'A house is being built for us old folk'

12.　Not all indirect objects require this versioniser.

13.　The relative ordering of the direct and indirect object prefixes is conjecture, as one of them will, for reasons we cannot discuss here, always be zero. Note that the s-prefix is never used to cross-reference direct objects, whilst the bracketed t-pluraliser from Set B only very rarely does.

14.　If the underlying agent is expressed, it stands in the Genitive case, governed by either of the postpositions /miɛr/ or /-gɑn/ 'by'.

15.　Since thematic suffix /-ɛb-/ is found in both transitives (23) and intransitives (23′), its presence alone encodes nothing – it is the combination of markers that defines a form's (in)transitivity.

The markerless intransitive employs no special prefix or suffix, as illustrated by the verb-form in (21) and (21′). Prefixal intransitives employ in the first two screeve-Series the prefix/i-/and, in Series I, usually the thematic suffix /-ɛb-/:

(24)   [ʃɛn]   ts'ɛr(-)il-s   ø-ø-ts'ɛr   vs. ts'ɛr(-)il-i i-ts'ɛr-ɛb-ɑ
        you NOM letter-DAT $2p_A$-$3p_B$-write[=PRES] letter-NOM PREF-write-TS- $3p_A$[=PRES]
        'You are writing a letter' vs. 'A letter is being written'

When an indirect object is associated with an intransitive whose monovalent form is produced prefixally, the prefix /i-/ is replaced by /E-/:

(24′)   ts'ɛr(-)il-i   g-ɛ-ts'ɛr-ɛb-ɑ
        letter-NOM $2p_B$-IO PREF-write-TS-$3p_A$[=PRES]
        'A letter is being written to/for you'

With these preliminaries out of the way, we can investigate how Georgian handles potentiality and unwilling/accidental actions.

    3.1   Potentiality is, quite simply, an inherent feature of (at least some) prefixal intransitives and indeed for a few their primary one:

(25)   ɛ(-)s ʁvinɔ   i-sm-ɛb-ɑ,   i(-)s χɔrts-i
        this   wine NOM PREF-drink-TS-$3p_A$[-PRES]   that   meat-NOM

        i-tʃ'm-ɛb-ɑ
        PREF-eat-TS-$3p_A$[=PRES]
        'This wine is drinkable, that meat edible'

and any Dative nominal associated with such a verb can be interpreted as the argument possessed of the potential to effect the action:

(25′)   ɛ(-)s ʁvinɔ   ɑdɑmiɑn-s ɑr   ø-ɛ-sm-ɛb-ɑ,
        this   wine NOM human-DAT not $3p_B$-IO PREF-drink-TS-$3p_A$[=PRES]

        i(-)s χɔrts-i   ɑr   ø-ɛ-tʃ'm-ɛb-ɑ
        that meat-NOM not $3p_B$-IO PREF-eat-TS-$3p_A$[=PRES]
        'No human can drink this wine or eat that meat'

Which of the two nominals represents the verb's subject? Considering that it is the Dative nominal that imposes its plurality on the verb and also controls the reflexive possessive in:

(26)   m(-)ʃ(-)ɔb(-)l-ɛb-s   tɑv(-)iɑnt-i ʃv(-)il-ɛb-i   gɑnɑ
        parent-PL-DAT   own-AGR   child-PL-NOM really?
        ø-ɛ-k'vl-ɛb-ɑ-t
        $3p_B$-IO PREF-kill-TS- $3p_A$-PL_B[=PRES]
        'Does one really suppose that parents are able to kill their children?!'

one must conclude that the Dative argument is functioning as subject, otherwise one would have expected the Nominative nominal to have imposed its plurality on the verb (giving/*ø-ɛ-k'vl-ɛb-i-ɑn/). Now, Georgian has a class of so-called 'inverted' verbs (including 'love', 'want', 'have') which take Dative subjects and Nominative direct objects; these behave the same way (and, indeed, are in part formally identical to the bivalent potentials just introduced) as illustrated in (26). Interestingly, an actual shift in subjecthood is attested for these verbs. Consider the clause 'if ye love them which love you' from Luke 6.32. Old Georgian (mss. CDE, whose date of copying is respectively: 897, 936, and 973) has:

(27)   ukuɛ(-)tu g-i-q'uɑr-d-ɛ-n   tkuɛn   mɔ(-)q'uɑr(-)ɛ-n-i
       if   you$_B$-ov-love-IMPERF-SUBJ-3p-PL$_A$ you$_{DAT}$ lover-PL-NOM
       tkuɛn-n-i
       your-PL-AGR

where it is the Nominative nominal that imposes its plurality on the verb and is thus to be regarded as the subject. Modern Georgian,[16] however, has:

(27′) tu g-ɛ-q'vɑr-ɛb-ɑ-t   tkvɛn-i   mɔ(-)q'vɑs-n-i
       if you$_B$-IO PREF-love-TS-3p$_A$-PL$_B$[=FUT]   your-AGR   lover-PL-NOM

where the Dative's plurality is marked, indicating that this is the nominal serving as subject.[17] One suspects a parallel development for the potentials, and, as Georgian (/Kartvelian) has a formal voice-opposition which permits us to derive the bivalent potential construction with its 'inverted' morpho-syntax from the passive, one might feel inclined to suggest that Abkhaz has been influenced in this regard by the neighbouring Kartvelian family, given the absence of diathesis in North West Caucasian. But the situation is not quite so straightforward for three reasons. Firstly, we find an exact parallel usage of the Circassian benefactive postposition in preverbless transitives,[18] and Kartvelian influence on Circassian is highly unlikely. Consider from West Circassian Temirgoi:

(28)   ø-s-fɑ-txə-r-ɑp
       3p-I-POT-write-FIN-PRES-not
       'I cannot write it'

---

16.   From the Georgian Patriarchate's Bible.

17.   The switch from Old Georgian Present Subjunctive to Modern Georgian Future Indicative has nothing to do with the change in marking, for the equivalent Modern Georgian Present Subjunctive would be /g-i-q'vɑr-d-ɛ-t/, with only the Dative's plurality being markable.

18.   In intransitives (and preverbal transitives) Circassian employs a potential suffix (the only strategy available to the third member of the family, Ubykh) that does not affect the verb's normal preradical affixal structure (see Hewitt 2004: 135).

Secondly, valency-altering constructions for potentiality are attested more widely than just South and North West Caucasian. In the Nakh sub-group of North East Caucasian a suffix is added to the lexical verb, which in Chechen-Ingush is the root of the verb 'give', and its presence causes the agent to stand in the Dative and the object in the Absolutive(-Nominative), e.g., (Ingush)

(29)   su:o-na   ɨz   kinaʃka-ø   dika   d-i:eʃa-l-u
       I-DAT   this   book₄-ABSOL   well   4[19]-read-give/POT-PRES
       'I can read this book well'   (from Nichols 1994: 123)

And, thirdly, the situation within Kartvelian is not totally uniform.

3.2   Whilst Georgian potentiality is contextually determined insofar as the relevant verb-forms are structurally akin to bivalent intransitives, Mingrelian has a formal marker of potentiality (at least in Series I screeves):

(30)   ts'ign-i   i-tʃ'ar-u-ø   vs.   ts'ign-i   tʃkim   ɔsur-s
       book-NOM   PREF-write-INTR-3p$_A$[-PRES]   book-NOM   my   wife-DAT

       ø-a-tʃ'ar-u-ø
       3p$_B$-IO PREF-write-INTR-3p$_A$[=PRES]
       'A book is being written' vs. 'A book is being written for my wife'

(30′)   ts'ign-i   i-tʃ'ar-ɛ-ø   vs.   ts'ign-i   tʃkim
        book-NOM   PREF-write-INTR/POT-3p$_A$[-PRES]   book-NOM   my

        ɔsur-s   ø-a-tʃ'ar-ɛ-ø
        wife-DAT   3p$_B$-IO PREF-write-INTR/POT-3p$_A$[=PRES]
        'A book can be written' vs. 'My wife can write a book'

Indeed, Kartvelian permits even impersonal potentials, both monovalent and bivalent, as exemplified by the Mingrelian near-rendition of the RAF's motto *Per ardua ad astra* 'Through challenges to the stars', in which Latin sequence the understood verb is the impersonal passive *itur* 'it is gone':

(31)   a(-)taʃ   m[i]-i-rt-ɛ-ø   murɛtsχ-ɛp-i(-)ʃa[20]
       thus   PREV-PREF-go-INTR/POT-3p$_A$ star-PL-ALL

(31′)   k'ɔ-s   a(-)taʃ   wa   mi-ø-a-rt-ɛ-ø
        man-DAT   thus   not   PREV-3p$_B$-IO PREF-go-INTR/POT-3p$_A$
        murɛtsχ-ɛp-i(-)ʃa[21]
        star-PL-ALL
        'Man cannot get to the stars this way'

---

19.   Ingush has class-marking, and here the Absolutive noun belongs to class 4.

20.   Cf. Georgian: a(-)sɛ mi-i-svl-ɛb-a varsk'vlav-ɛb-is-k'ɛn.

21.   In Georgian: /k'ats-s a(-)sɛ ar mi-ɛ-svl-ɛb-a varsk'vlav-ɛb-is-k'ɛn/.

3.3   How, then, does Kartvelian indicate unwilling or accidental activity? Potskh-ishvili (1969) has described the Georgian phenomenon, which is basically found in perfective forms. Perfective aspect is usually associated with the presence of a preverb, and for the (admittedly somewhat rare) category of unwitting/accidental action the verb's regular preverb yields to the complex preverb /ʃɛ(-)mɔ-/, a transitive verb being transformed into an intransitive and the unwilling/accidental agent standing in the Dative, e.g.,

(32)   [mɛ] baɴk'-is   dirɛkt'ɔr-s   ga-v-ø-landzʁ-av   vs.
       Inom bank-gen   director-dat   prev-1p$_A$-3p$_B$-insult-ts[=fut]

       tu [mɛ] baɴk'-is   dirɛkt'ɔr-i   ʃɛ(-)mɔ-m-ɛ-landzʁ-ɛb-a
       if Idat bank-gen   director-nom   prev-I/me$_B$-io pref-insult-ts-3p$_A$ [=fut]

       'I shall insult the bank-manager' vs. 'If I unwittingly insult the bank-manager'

If the idea is 'kill unintentionally', somewhat oddly perhaps, it is the intransitive root 'die' that is used with a Dative argument, which is interpreted as the unwitting actor in the act of killing; the regular preverb (/mɔ-/) still yields to /ʃɛ(.)mɔ-/:

(33)   mt'ɛr-s   utsɛb   mɔ-v-ø-k'l-av-d-i
       enemy-dat straightaway prev-1p$_A$-3p$_B$-kill-ts-imperf-condit-1p

       magram dzm(-)ɔb(-)il-i   ra(-)t'ɔm ø(-)u(-)nd(-)a ʃɛ(-)mɔ-m-a-k'vd-ɛ-s
       but   sworn-brother-nom why   necessary   prev-me$_B$-lv-die-
                                                                  aor-subj-3p$_A$ [22]

       'I would kill an enemy at once, but why should I be the unwitting agent of the death of a sworn brother?'

Even the non-finite verbal noun with no overt expression of the agent implies 'killing' as much as 'dying', viz.

(34)   k'ats-is   ʃɛ(-)mɔ-k'vd-ɔm-a[23]   u(-)bɛd(-)ur(-)ɛb(-)a-a
       man-gen   prev-die-ts-masd[-nom]   misfortune-is
       'The unwitting killing/death of a man is a misfortune'

---

22.   The vowel glossed as LV (viz. Locative Version) is another way of associating a Dative nominal with verbs that are (usually) intransitive but not of the prefixal sub-type.

23.   Glossed in the 8-volume Georgian Academy Dictionary as, and thus synonymous with, the transitive masdar-phrase /k'ats-is u(-)nɛb(-)liɛ(-)d mɔ-k'vl-a/ 'the accidental killing of a man', where the notion of non-volitional action is carried entirely by the free-standing adverb /u(-)nɛb(-)liɛ(-)d/.

Mingrelian has the same preverbal substitution-strategy, the substituting preverb being /ɑ-/:

(35)   dɔ-b-ʁur-u-t   vs.   wɑ   m-ɔ-k'ɔ-n-ɑ
       PREV-1p$_A$-die-INTR-PL$_A$[=FUT]   not   1p$_B$-LV-want-3p$_A$-PL[=PRES]
       mɑ(-)χ(-)indʒ(-)i-s   ɑ-v-ø-ɔ-ʁur-ɑ-ti-n[i]
       thief-DAT   PREV-1p$_A$-3p$_B$-LV-die-AOR-SUBJ-PL$_A$-SUB
       'We shall die' vs. 'We don't want to die unwittingly at the hands of a thief/a thief unwittingly to kill us'

The masdar-phrase in (34) would produce in Mingrelian /k'ɔtʃ-iʃ[i] ɑ-ʁur-ɑ/.[24]

4.   There is, then, quite widespread Caucasian evidence for potentiality to require alteration to the valence-patterning of a transitive verb, whilst a similar change is attested for unwilling/accidental activity in at least two of the language-families. Whilst one can account for the resulting 'inverted' construction in Kartvelian by hypothesising a shift from an original bivalent intransitive structure, this explanation is hardly available in North West Caucasian or Nakh. Perhaps something more general underlies these phenomena. In actions which are potential or the result of unwitting/accidental activity the entity (possibly) realising the verbal action is hardly a fully blown agent; in one case the action is not even necessarily ever effected, being only a potentiality, whilst in the other the performer is assigned a non-volitional role. If the function of the case that normally marks a transitive subject in the relevant languages is to underline its essential agentivity,

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24.   Associating the substituting preverbs with the roots for 'kill' is possible in both Georgian and Mingrelian, but the verb not transformed into a bivalent intransitive, possibly because of the presence of the parallel construction with the roots for 'die', as illustrated already. However, as direct object the reflexive pronoun (Georgian /tɑv.i/= Mingrelian/dud.i/ 'head; self') must be added. The final verb in (35) could thus be replaced by:

       dud-i   ɑ-v-ø-ø-ɔ-?wil-ɑ-ti-n[i]
       self-ACC PREV-1p$_A$-3p$_B$-3p$_B$-LV-kill-AOR-SUBJ-PL$_A$-SUB

to give literally 'We don't want to kill ourselves upon the thief as unwitting agent' – why Mingrelian has an Accusative case is explained later in the article. The preverb seems to be semantically associated more with the Dative indirect object. Though the verb here is not a causative, it is semantically close to one, with the Dative nominal being something of a causee (or secondary agent). Exactly the same conundrum is found in Georgian, where the corresponding clause would read:

       ɑr   gv-i-nd-ɑ   kurd-s   tɑɑv-i   ʃɛ(-)mɔ-v-ø-ø-ɑ-k'l-ɑ-t
       not we$_B$-OV-want-3p$_A$[-PRES]   thief-DAT self-NOM PREV-1p$_A$-3p$_B$-3p$_B$-LV-kill-
       AOR-SUBJ-PL$_A$

then there would be justification for placing the 'logical' subject in a different case when that entity lacks full-blown agentivity. And so, an oblique case, appropriate to the particularities of each language, is selected for the role, possibly accompanied by a subsidiary change (such as the alteration of the preverb to indicate unwitting activity in Kartvelian).

4.1   Of course, it has been argued in recent years (see Harris 1985; Amiridze 2006) that an Active-Inactive opposition is even more centrally relevant to Georgian. I have argued against this interpretation in a number of contributions to the debate (see especially 1987, 1989), but there are additional arguments (see Lazard 1995), and one of them relates to a verb-type that has figured above, namely the bivalent prefixal intransitive. Before discussing this, however, more background needs to be provided on the morpho-syntax of Georgian transitives.

4.1.1   As already stated, intransitives (whether mono- or bivalent) follow the same patterns of case-assignment and agreement for their arguments across all three screeve-series as illustrated above for Series I. The same does not apply to transitives, and so far the only examples of transitives have been from Series I. In Series II screeves (viz. Aorist Indicative and Subjunctive) transitive subjects/agents are characterised by /-m(ɑ)/, a case known in Georgian as *motxrobiti*, which is literally translateable as 'Narrative', and this designation will be employed for the moment not because I want to argue that it is the most appropriate description for the morpheme's function but simply in order not to prejudge the issue to be discussed – additionally, transitive subjects/agents are cross-referenced on the verb by the same affixal set that indexed this argument when standing in the Nominative for Series I screeves; the direct object stands in the Nominative/Absolutive and is cross-referenced by the same set of affixes that indexed this argument when standing in the Dative for Series I screeves. To illustrate, examples (22) and (22′) are transposed into their Aorist Indicative equivalents:

(36)   kɑl-mɑ   ts'ɛr(-)il-i   dɑ-ø-ts'ɛr-ɑ
       woman-NARR   letter-NOM   PREV-3p$_B$-write-3p$_A$[=AOR]
       'The woman wrote a/the letter'

(36′)   kɑl-mɑ   mɛgɔbr-ɛb-s   ts'ɛr(-)il-i   mi-ø-s-ts'ɛr-ɑ
       woman-NARR   friend-PL-DAT   letter-NOM   PREV-3p$_B$-3pIO$_B$-write-3p$_A$ [=AOR]
       'The woman wrote a/the letter to (her) friends'

In Series III screeves (Perfect, Pluperfect, IIIrd Subjunctive) transitive subjects/agents stand in the Dative and are cross-referenced by the affixal set that hitherto has been used to index (in)direct objects; the direct object stands in the Nominative and is cross-referenced by means of the affixal set that has hitherto been

associated with (in)transitive subjects; any indirect object is governed by the bene-
factive postposition and cannot be indexed in the verb:

(37) kɑl-s   mɛgɔbr-ɛb-is-tvis   ts'ɛr(-)il-i   mi-ø-u-ts'ɛr-i-ɑ
      woman-DAT   friend-PL-GEN-for   letter-NOM   PREV-3p$_B$-OV-write-PERF-3p$_A$
      'The woman has (apparently) written a/the letter to (her) friends'

If this were all there were to the Georgian verbal system, the conclusion would
be relatively straightforward, namely: in Series I there is Nominative-Accusative
alignment (the direct object being treated differently from (in)transitive subjects
both in terms of case-marking and verbal indexing); in Series III there is Ergative-
Absolutive alignment (the transitive subject standing apart in the Dative and
requiring Set B cross-referencing); Series II would be seen as exhibiting split Ergative-
Absolutive alignment insofar as, whilst the transitive subject stands uniquely in
the Narrative case and the Nominative signals both direct object and intransitive
subject, in terms of verbal indexing the same affixal set (A) correlates with both
transitive and intransitive subjects against the employment of the Set B affixal set
to mark direct (and indirect) objects. In fact, Series III is generally accepted to
be a relatively late Kartvelian development arising out of stative (and thus origi-
nally intransitive) structures such that today's transitive Series III forms arose out
of bivalent intransitives whose indirect (Dative) object became reinterpreted as
the subject (just as we argued above happened with the Kartvelian Potentials), no
doubt under pressure from the rest of the paradigm, where the IIIrd Series Dative
nominal corresponded to the Nominative subject of Series I and the Narrative
subject of Series II. For this reason, it is customary to refer to the Series III transi-
tive structure as exemplifying inversion, and ergativity is normally assigned only
to Series II, the Narrative case being identified as the Georgian Ergative. Even after
consideration of the complicating factor, this remains for me the correct interpre-
tation of Georgian's IInd Series morpho-syntax, but before examining the compli-
cation, one other verbal sub-category needs to be introduced.

4.1.2   Examples already presented have included an array of pre-radical vow-
els, known as the system of 'Version'. Encountered so far have been: Neutral Ver-
sion (/ɑ-/ with some verbs vs. /ø-/ for others), Objective Version (/i-/ for 1p/2p vs.
/u-/ for 3p indirect objects), and Locative Version (/ɑ-/). The remaining member
of this set is the Subjective Version in /i-/, which conveys in Ist and 2nd Series
screeves a notion of reflexivity: the object could be part of the subject's body or
belongs to the subject, or the action could be carried out in the subject's own
interest:

(38) ɛp'isk'ɔp'ɔs-mɑ   mʁvdɛl-i   gɑ-ø-p'ɑrs-ɑ
      bishop-NARR   priest-NOM   PREV-3p$_B$-shave-3p$_A$[=AOR]
      'The bishop shaved = defrocked the priest'

(38′) ɛp'isk'ɔp'ɔs-mɑ   (ts'vɛr-i /   ulvaʃ-ɛb-i)   gɑ-ø-i-p'ɑrs-ɑ
    bishop-ɴᴀʀʀ   beard-ɴᴏᴍ moustache-ᴘʟ-ɴᴏᴍ ᴘʀᴇᴠ-3p$_B$-sᴠ-shave-3p$_A$
                                                    [=ᴀᴏʀ]

    'The bishop shaved (his beard/moustache)'

As (38′) indicates, whilst not necessarily in every case, a predictable direct object can be omitted with a verb so marked. The problematic class of verbs can now be introduced.

4.2   A group of verbs exists whose Present Sub-Series screeves (Present Indicative, Present Subjunctive, Imperfect Indicative) of Series I are formed in a variety of ways. Nevertheless, such verbs generally take the Subjective Version in the remaining screeves of Series I (viz. the so-called Future Sub-Series, which consists of Future Indicative, Future Subjunctive and Conditional); this formant is then carried over into Series II, where the subject stands in the Narrative; Series III is characterised by inversion:

(39) gɔgɔ   (si(-)mʁɛr(-)ɑ-s) ø-mʁɛr-i-s   vs.   gɔgɔ   (si(-)mʁɛr(-)ɑ-s)
    girl$_{\text{NOM}}$ song-ᴅᴀᴛ   3p$_B$-sing-ᴘʀᴇs-3p$_A$ girl$_{\text{NOM}}$ song-ᴅᴀᴛ

    ø-i-mʁɛr-ɛbs   vs.   gɔgɔ-m   (si(-)mʁɛr(-)ɑ)   ø-i-mʁɛr-ɑ vs.
    3p$_B$-ʃV-sing-ᴛs-3p$_A$[=ꜰᴜᴛ] girl-ɴᴀʀʀ song$_{\text{NOM}}$ 3p$_B$-ʃV-sing-3p$_A$ [=ᴀᴏʀ]

    gɔgɔ-s   (si(-)mʁɛr(-)ɑ)   ø-u-mʁɛr(-n)-i-ɑ
    girl-ᴅᴀᴛ song$_{\text{NOM}}$ 3p$_B$-ᴏᴠ-sing-?-ᴘᴇʀꜰ-3p$_A$

    'The girl sings vs. will sing vs. sang vs. has (apparently) sung (a song)'

If all the relevant verbs were like 'sing', there would be no problem, but the class in question (styled Medial) contains many verbs that signify sound-production or movement, which are never attested with a direct object:

(40) dzaʁl-i (?ø-)q'ɛp-s   vs. dzaʁl-i (?ø-)i-q'ɛp-ɛb-s   vs.
    dog-ɴᴏᴍ 3p$_B$-bark-3p$_A$[=ᴘʀᴇs] dog-ɴᴏᴍ 3p$_B$-sᴠ-bark-ᴛs-3p$_A$[=ꜰᴜᴛ]

    dzaʁl-mɑ (?ø-)i-q'ɛp-ɑ   vs. dzaʁl-s ø-u-q'ɛp(-n)-i-ɑ
    dog-ɴᴀʀʀ 3p$_B$-sᴠ-bark-3p$_A$[=ᴀᴏʀ] dog-ᴅᴀᴛ 3p$_B$-ᴏᴠ-bark-?-ᴘᴇʀꜰ-3p$_A$

    'The dog barks vs. will bark vs. barked vs. has (apparently) barked'

The argument then goes that, since such verbs appear to be intransitive, what determines the use of the Narrative case to mark their subjects is the semantic feature of activity which Medial subjects share with transitive subjects; the Narrative case should, thus, be seen as Georgian's Active case and the syntactic alignment of Series II in Georgian should be interpreted as of the Active-Inactive type. When it is pointed out that such common verbs as that signifying motion (/svl-ɑ/) or those meaning 'sit down' (/dɑ-dʒd-ɔm-ɑ/ vs. /dɑ-sχd-ɔm-ɑ/ if the subject is human plural), 'stand up' (/ɑ-dg-ɔm-ɑ/) and 'lie down' (/dɑ-ts'-ɔl-ɑ/), all of which

have subjects acting volitionally and should, therefore, on this analysis, take a Narrative/Active subject but actually require the Nominative, the answer is that there is dialectal evidence for the use of the Narrative and that the 'conservative' literary language has yet to conform to Active alignment.

Whilst not denying that one future path of development for Georgian's IInd Series could be precisely for it to shift in this direction, I can see no reason to accept the relevance of this semantic opposition to the current state of affairs manifested across the range of Georgian dialects (literary and non-literary). In addition to dialectal evidence for the presence of the Narrative as subject-marker for the common volitional verbs just listed, this case is also found marking the subject of distinctly non-volitional verbs (I have adduced elsewhere examples of Narrative subjects alongside /mɔ-k'vd-ɑ/ 'X died' and /dɑ-bɛr-d-ɑ/ 'X grew old'). Perhaps more damaging for the hypothesis is the presence in the Medial class of very many verbs which can by no stretch of the imagination be deemed to take volitional subjects (e.g., /duʁ(-)il-i/ 'boiling (of liquids)', /livliv-i/ 'lapping (of waves)', /lik'lik'-i/ 'babbling (of a brook)', /priɑl-i/ 'flapping (of a flag)'). And, since Medials share with ordinary transitives not only the presence of a IInd Series subject in the Narrative case but inversion in Series III, why, if Activity is the common feature that determines the morpho-syntax of Series II, is there no evidence for inversion in Series III with the 'volitional' intransitives listed above (viz. the verbs for 'go', 'sit down', 'stand up' and 'lie down')? The alternative and (to my mind) only plausible explanation of the Georgian data is that, despite appearances, the verb-forms in question are (or, at least, were in their origin) actually transitive outside the Present Sub-Series,[25] the Subjective Version allied to typically transitive morphology being the clue to the (historical or underlying) presence of either a reflexive[26] or an internal direct object (by which term I mean a noun built from the same root as the verb itself, as in the English 'die a death'), and this transitive structure is then the basis for the inversion exhibited in their IIIrd Series screeves. What, then, is the further evidence, if any actually be needed, against the Active Hypothesis for Georgian? That evidence is offered below, but it would have been well nigh impossible for anyone new to the problem to appreciate its value without the essentials of the debate to which it contributes having been delineated first – hence the need for the preceding somewhat lengthy setting of the context, which might be already familiar to some readers.

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25.   Originally Medials only existed in the Present Sub-Series and then filled out their paradigms by borrowing morphologically related forms that happen to be transitive.

26.   Viz. the noun /tɑv-i/ 'head'.

4.3   A relationship has long been postulated between the Subjective Version vowel and the i-prefix of prefixal intransitives (Deeters 1930). Deeters' pupil Karl Horst Schmidt in a series of papers comparing Georgian to Indo-European structures devoted one (1965) to a comparison of Georgian's Subjective Version and the Indo-European Middle Voice. Monro (1998.9), having remarked that 'the original force of the Middle Person-Endings is 'Reflexive'; that is to say, they denote that the action of the Verb is directed towards the agent', goes on (p. 10) to illustrate both a Passive usage and an occasional 'use intermediate between the Reflexive and the Passive'. Consider *Iliad* 6.140:

(41)   ἐπεὶ ἀθνάτοισιν ἀπήχθετο   πᾶσι   θεοῖσιν
       as   immortal   X made self hateful   all   gods$_{DAT}$
       'since he had made himself hateful to all the immortal gods'

or *Iliad* 13.110:

(42)   οἵ   κείνῳ   ἐρίσαντες   ἀμυνέμεν   οὐκ   ἐθέλουσι
       who$_{NOM}$ that$_{DAT}$ having argued   to defend   not   they want

       νηῶν   ω'κυπόρων   ἀλλὰ   κτείνονται   ἀν' αὐτάς
       ships$_{GEN}$ swift   but   they let themselves be slain   on   them$_{ACC}$

       'Who, having quarrelled with him [the commander], have no wish to defend any of our swift vessels, but allow themselves to be slaughtered by them'

What we have here is a kind of reflexive causative. Other examples can be located at: *Iliad* 13.525 and 23.409, or *Odyssey* 3.284. Reflexive causation is, of course, precisely what has been argued to lie behind the peculiarity of Georgian's borrowed Medial forms, which are treated transitively for the reasons given above. But, if the intransitive prefixal vowel is related to the Subjective Version, does Georgian offer any parallels from its intransitive formations? One does not really find anything of interest among the monovalent intransitives, but the situation is different, if one examines the bivalent ones. Consider such occasional examples as:

(43)   dɛda   t'k'b(-)il   dzil-s   ø-ɛ-dzl(-)ɛv-a   vs.
       mother$_{NOM}$ sweet   sleep-DAT   3p$_B$-IO PREF-give-3p$_A$[=PRES]
       mi-ø-ɛ-ts-a   vs.   mi-s-ts-ɛm-i-a
       PREV-3p$_B$-IO PREF-give-3p$_A$[=AOR]   PREV-3p$_B$-give-TS-PERF-3p$_A$
       'Mother gives vs. gave vs. has (apparently) given herself up to sweet sleep'

(44)   bitʃ'-i   gɔgɔ-s   ø-ɛ-tsn-ɔb-a   vs.
       lad-NOM   girl-DAT   3p$_B$-IO PREF-introduce-TS-3p$_A$[=PRES]
       ga-ø-ɛ-tsn-ɔ   vs.   ga-s-tsn-ɔb-i-a
       PREV-3p$_B$-IɔPREF-introduce-3p$_A$[=AOR]   PREV-3p$_B$-introduce-TS-PERF-3p$_A$
       'The lad introduces vs. introduced vs. has (apparently) introduced himself to the lass'

We have here manifestly intransitive forms, with Nominative subject across the screeve-Series. But an objection might be that the postulated Active semantics of reflexive causation is a feature not of the Georgian originals but only of the English renditions: might not (43) just be a way of saying 'Mother fell into a sweet sleep' or (44) just as acceptably rendered as 'The lad got to know/was introduced to the lass', which do not necessarily imply volition on the part of the subjects? For such examples such an objection might not be easily countered. But there is a group of bivalent intransitives not open to such objection.

4.3.1   Georgian, like Abkhaz (and, indeed, other Caucasian languages), possesses a morphological causative, marked by the post-radical suffix /-(εv-)in-/. With an overt reflexive direct object, the causee functions as indirect object:

(45)   kɑl-i   tʃʼir-s   tɑv-s   ø-ø-ɑ-lɑχ-v-in-ɛb-s   vs.
       woman-NOM woe-DAT self-DAT 3p$_B$-3p$_B$-LV-overcome-TS-CAUS-TS- 3p$_A$[=PRES]

       kɑl-mɑ   tʃʼir-s   tɑv-i
       woman-NARR   woe-DAT self-NOM

       gɑ-ø-ø-ɑ-lɑχ-v-in-ɑ   vs.
       PREV-3p$_B$-3p$_B$-LV-overcome-TS- CAUS-3p$_A$[=AOR]

       kɑl-s   tʃʼir-is-tvis   tɑv-i
       woman-DAT woe-GEN-for   self-NOM

       gɑ-ø-u-lɑχ-v-in-ɛb-i-ɑ
       PREV-3p$_B$-OV-overcome-TS-CAUS- TS-PERF-3p$_A$

       'The woman allows vs. allowed vs. has (apparently) allowed herself to be
       overcome by woe/woe to overcome her'

Here we have a ditransitive verb, whose three arguments are treated exactly as one would expect: specifically, the transitive subject (agent) stands in the Narrative (Ergative) in Series II and, via inversion, the Dative in Series III. The peculiarity of crucial interest to us is that such structures in Georgian have synonyms where the verb surfaces as a bivalent INtransitive, the reflexive direct object of the transitive formation being somehow subsumed within the essentially reflexive intransitive structure of the verb, leaving just two overt arguments (causer and causee):

(45′)   kɑl-i   tʃʼir-s   ø-ɛ-lɑχ-v-in-ɛb-ɑ   vs.
       woman-NOM woe-DAT   3p$_B$-IO PREF-overcome-TS-CAUS-INTR-3p$_A$[= PRES]

       gɑ-ø-ɛ-lɑχ-v-in-ɑ   vs.
       PREV-3p$_B$-IO PREF-overcome-TS-CAUS-3p$_A$[=AOR]

       gɑ-ø-lɑχ-v-in-ɛb-i-ɑ
       PREV-3p$_B$-overcome-TS-CAUS-TS-PERF-3p$_A$

Any causative verb that can substitute for the verb illustrated in construction (45) has an intransitive synonym that can build a parallel like that of (45′). Examples (in the Aorist) include: /gɔgɔ mgɛl-s ga-ø-ɛ-t'ats-ɛb-in-a/ 'the girl$_{NOM}$ allowed/ got the wolf$_{DAT}$ to carry her off';[27] /dʒar(-)is(-)k'ats-i mt'ɛr-s mɔ-ø-ɛ-k'vl-ɛv-in-a/ 'the soldier$_{NOM}$ allowed/got the enemy$_{DAT}$ to kill him'; /kal-i mɛzɔbel-s ga-ø-ɛ-landzʁ-v-in-a/ 'the woman$_{NOM}$ allowed/got her neighbourDAT to abuse her'. Even if the notion of permission is felt to be more salient than that of compulsion, this still fits the criterion of volitional activity on the part of a subject in full control of events, which is the fundamental justification proposed in the Active Hypothesis to explain the use in the Aorist of the Narrative case. Yet it is a Nominative subject which these verbs take across all three screeve-Series, and this is exactly what one would expect of intransitives, regardless of their semantics. The conclusion is, I hope, clear: there are no grounds in Georgian to justify classifying it as manifesting in any part of its morpho-syntax the Active-Inactive opposition and the Narrative is, thus, correctly interpreted as Ergative in function.

5.   But one should not conclude that there remain no puzzles as regards Georgian's argument-structure. There are instances of verbs with patently intransitive morphology taking what looks like a direct object:

(46)   ra-s   ø-ʔø-ʃvr-ɛb-i
        what-DAT   2p$_A$-3p$_B$-do-INTR-PRES(=2p)
        'What are you doing?'

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the origin of the Dative here no doubt lying in its old Locative function[28] (?'In respect to what are you engaging in work?'). When it comes to the occasional such verb that takes two Dative arguments, like:

(47)   mɑmɑ   dɛdɑ-s   pul-s   dɑ-ʔø-h-p'ir-d-ɑ
       father$_{NOM}$ mother-DAT   money-DAT   PREV-3p$_B$-3pIO$_B$-promise-INTR- 3p$_A$[=AOR]
       'Father promised mother money'[29]

It is hardly surprising that speakers commonly 'regularise' matters in terms of case-marking, interpreting 'father' as transitive subject and 'money' as direct object, despite the resulting incompatibility between the syntax of case-marking and the intransitive verbal morphology, to give:

(47′)   mɑmɑ-m   dɛdɑ-s   pul-i
        father-ERG   mother-DAT   money-NOM

        dɑ-ø-h-p'ir-d-ɑ
        PREV-3p$_B$-3pIO$_B$-promise-INTR-3p$_A$[=AOR]

There are cases of transitive verbs that take an indirect but no (overt) direct object:

(48)   mɑmɑ-m   dɛdɑ-s   ø-s-tsɛm-ɑ   vs.   mɛlɑ-m   bude-s
       father-ERG   mother-DAT   3p$_B$-3pIO$_B$-hit-3p$_A$[=AOR]   fox-ERG   nest-DAT

       mi-ø-ø-ɑ-gn-ɔ   vs.   k'ɑts-mɑ   nɑ(-)p'ir-s
       PREV-3p$_B$-3p$_B$-LV-locate-3p$_A$[=AOR]   man-ERG   shore-DAT

       mɔ-ø-ø-ɑ-t'ɑn-ɑ
       PREV-3p$_B$-3p$_B$-LV-reach-3p$_A$[=AOR]

       'Father hit mother' vs. 'The fox located the nest' vs. 'The man reached the shore'

To account for these cases one logically reconstructs a fully transitive sequence with originally overt direct object which will have been omitted over time as a result of predictability; for 'hit' this will have been the entity brought in contact with the indirect obect, though the construction for this verb too is often 'regularised' by marking the entity struck as a normal direct object (Shanidze 1979) – for the other two verbs here it is, admittedly, not so easy to imagine what the missing

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28.   Any analysis of the verb at that stage of development would presumably not have included any zero-marking of the (then non-existent) direct object.

29.   Again, in origin, perhaps what Georgian had here was expressible as 'Father made a promise to mother in respect of money', with /pul-s/ not representing a direct verbal argument. Some other verbs (in the Aorist) that pattern this way are: /dɑ-ʔø-ø-ɛ-nuk'v-ɑ/ 'X$_{NOM}$ be sought Y$_{DAT}$ of Z$_{DAT}$', /ʃɛ-ʔø-ø-ɛ-tsil-ɑ/ 'X$_{NOM}$ vied with Y$_{DAT}$ over Z$_{DAT}$',/mɔ-ʔø-ø-u-q'v-ɑ/ 'X$_{NOM}$ narrated Y$_{DAT}$ to Z$_{DAT}$', /dɑ-ʔø-ø-ɛ-sɛsχ-ɑ/ 'X$_{NOM}$ took Y$_{DAT}$ in loan from Z$_{DAT}$'.

direct object might have been. And the final verb in (48) often surfaces without either direct or indirect object, making it appear to be a monovalent intransitive despite its tripersonal morphology – note, however, that the Active Hypothesis is equally at a loss to explain the case-marking here:

(48′)   ʃuɑ(-)ʁɑmɛ-m   mɔ-ø-ø-ɑ-tʼɑn-ɑ
        midnight-ERG   PREV-3p$_B$-3p$_B$-LV-reach-3p$_A$[=AOR]
        'Midnight came'

For engaging in the sort of argumentation I am advancing to rationalise these anomalies I face charges in some linguists' dock of falling 'into the old trap of recapitulating diachrony in synchrony' or of having to resort to inserting 'phantom arguments' into underlying structure (Tuite 1997). In fact, this is a trap into which I am happy to consign myself to lodge there until such a time as a more plausible explanation becomes available – as yet there is none that I find appealing. One of the examples underlying the criticism of resorting to 'phantom arguments' concerned a transitive verb-form unaccompanied by any overt subject/agent:

(49)   nɛtʼɑv   sul   ʃɛn-tɑn   m-ɑ-m(-)qʼ(-)Op-ɑ
       would that always you$_{DAT}$-with   me-NV-make-be-3p$_A$[=AOR]

which is a translation-equivalent of 'Would that I be with you always!' but more literally equates to 'Would that [?God/Providence] let me be with you forever!' The fact that none of Tuite's informants 'ever invoked God, or any other extraterrestrial for that matter, as an explanation for the morphology' is irrelevant; how many native speakers of English, if asked to provide an analysis, would explain the response 'Bless you!' to a sneeze as an abbreviated form of 'God bless you!'? How many would help an enquiring linguist or foreigner by interpreting the formula 'Bless!', which is articulated (largely by believers) in other contexts, as being the subjunctive form of the verb with 3rd person subject? Not many, I would wager. And just because one researcher's informants offer no concrete subject for this verb does not mean that there is no evidence for one, if one only looks for it. Consider two examples on consecutive pages in the play *ubedureba* 'Misfortune' from the 1981 2-volume collected works of the distinguished Georgian writer Davit K'ldiashvili, wherein the first lacks an overt subject for a clearly transitive verb in Objective Version, whilst the second instantiation of the same root (this time with Neutral Version) happily includes the (anticipated) subject, viz.

(50)   imɛd(-)dɑ(-)kʼɑrg(-)ul-i   mtʼɛr-i   ø-g-i-m(-)qʼ(-)ɔp-ɔ-s
       hopeless-NOM   enemy-NOM   3p$_B$-you$_B$-ov-make-be-AOR-SUBJ-3p$_A$
       'May [?God] render your foe hopeless!' = 'May your foe be rendered hopeless!'

vs.

(51) ʁmɛrt-i   dɑ   ʃɛn-i   sɑ(-)lɔts(-)ɑv-i   k'ɑrg-ɑd
     God-NOM   and your-AGR   shrine-NOM   good-ADV

     g-ɑ-m(-)q'(-)ɔp-ɛb-s
     you_B-NV-make-be- TS-3p_A[=FUT]

     'God and your shrine will render you well = keep you safe'

In the case of such subject-lacking expressions as:

(52) k'ɑts-s   tsiv-i   ɔpl-i   dɑ-ø-ø-ɑ-sχ-ɑ   vs.
     man-DAT   cold-AGR   sweat-NOM   PREV-3p_B-3p_B-LV-pour-3p_A[=AOR]

     k'ɑtʃ'kɑtʃ'-s   gɑ-ø-ø-ɑ-tsiv-ɑ   dɑ
     magpie-DAT   PREV-3p_B-3p_B-LV-make-cold-3p_A[=AOR] and

     gɑ-ø-ø-ɑ-tsχɛl-ɑ   ʃiʃ-isɑ-gɑn
     PREV-3p_B-3p_B-LV-heat-3p_A[=AOR]   fear-GEN-from

     'The man came out in a cold sweat' vs. 'The magpie came over all hot and cold
     from fear'

it is not immediately obvious what the lost subject/agent might have been. The verbs
in the latter example also combine as the compound noun /tsi(-)ɛb-tsχɛl(-)ɛb(-)ɑ/
'fever', suggesting a postulation that the original subject might have been the illness
that produces the fever in the indirect object, whereas in the former example it might
have been something as general as 'the circumstances' and, interestingly, the Nomi-
native-marked direct object in the first example of (52) can be moved up to subject-
slot and be marked (sc. for the quoted Aorist) by the Narrative/Ergative, to give:
/tsiv.mɑ ɔpl.mɑ/, to match exactly the English 'Cold sweat poured over X', with the
difference that the Georgian structure implies transitivity and, in this variant, leaves
the direct object slot unfilled. One final example in this section would be:

(53) bɑvʃv-s   muts'uk'-ɛb-i   gɑ(-)mɔ-ø-ø-ɑ-q'ɑr-ɑ
     child-DAT   spot-PL-NOM   PREV-3p_B-3p_B-LV-throw-3p_A[=AOR]
     'The child came out in spots'

where, presumably, it will have been the particular illness associated with the spots
that was the original but now lost subject. For both this last and the first example
in (52) we have exact parallels in Abkhaz:

(53′) ɑ-χʷə'tʃ'ə   (jə-)'jə-kʷ-nɑ-psɑ-ø-jt'   vs.   ɑ-pχ'dzə   'χʲʃʷɑʃʷɑ
      the-child   it/them-him-on-it-throw-PAST-FIN[=AOR]   ART-sweat   cold

      ø-'jə-kʷ-nɑ-tʷɑ-ø-jt'
      it-him-on-it-pour-PAST-FIN[=AOR]

      'The child came out in a rash vs. cold sweat'

with /-nɑ-/ 'it' referring to the externally absent agent. This, incidentally, is but one instance (though not the first encountered in this article) where what is attested in one Caucasian language/family is mirrored elsewhere in the region, a subtlety unappreciated by those who would question the idea of a Caucasian 'Sprachbund'.

5.1   With a little thought allied to an acceptance of the relevance of (in)transitivity and ergativity to Georgian one can understand the non-standard examples of case-assignment reviewed above. But, how to account for the use of the Ergative case with unambiguously intransitive subjects in Series II? Extension of the Ergative case within Kartvelian is nothing new for Laz and Mingrelian: the relevant case-marker in these Zan sisters is /-k/, and for Laz it has spread to transitive subjects in all screeve-series, whilst in Mingrelian it marks all Series II 'subjects'. The crucial factor in these cases of extension is subjecthood. There is general acceptance that, whatever particularities today characterise the four Kartvelian sister-languages, the starting-point will have reflected the pattern still found in Georgian. Depending on the screeve, the Nominative case in this system can mark both subjects and direct objects; the Dative, similarly, can mark both types of argument as well as indicate an indirect object; the Ergative, on the other hand, is the only mono-functional case, its role being exclusively that of a subject-marker (specifically of transitive subjects in Series II). Is it not reasonable to suppose that this exclusivity has simply led in non-standard varieties to its spread to intransitive subjects (whether semantically Active or Inactive)? This is surely what happened in Mingrelian, where the shift has been completed. The only complication is that, as it is today's direct object of inverted verbs in Mingrelian that is so marked in Series II, the extension of the /k/-desinence to this argument must have taken place when the argument in question was still interpreted as an intransitive subject, e.g.,

(54)   tsirɑ-s   kɔ-ø-ɛ-ʔɔr(-)ɔp-u [kɛʔɔrɔp] dʒimuʃiɛr-k
        girl-DAT PREV-3p$_B$-IO PREF-love-3p$_A$[=AOR]   Dzhimushier-ERG/NOM
        'The girl fell in love with Dzhimushier' (Q'ipshidze 1994: 75$_{25}$)

The case in /-k/ in Mingrelian has, thus, lost its Ergative function and become a IInd-Series allomorph for the Nominative, with the result that the original Nominative(-Absolutive) is transformed into an Accusative case. For comparison, (54) in Georgian would be:

(54′)   gɔgɔ-s   ʃɛ-ø-u-q'vɑr-d-ɑ   dʒimuʃiɛr-i
        girl-DAT PREV-3p$_B$-OV-love-INTR-3p$_A$[=AOR]   Dzhimushier-NOM

5.2   If the Active Hypothesis has no central relevance in Georgian, is the same true of Kartvelian as a whole? Consider monovalent intransitive forms in Series III, concentrating, for purposes of exposition, on the Perfect, as nothing

irregular manifests itself in the other two screeves. The regular morphology basi-cally fuses the past participle with the Present tense of the copula:

(55) [Georgian] dɑ-v-brun-ɛb-ul-v(-)ɑ(-)r vs.
 PREV-1p$_A$-return-TS-PTC-am$_A$

 [Mingrelian] dɔ-b-rt-[ɛl-]ɛ(-)k vs.
 PREV-1p$_A$-return-PTC-am$_A$

 [svan, Lashkh dialect] ɑn-mɛ-t'ɛχ-e:l-χw(-)i [ɛmt'ɛχe: lχwi][30]
 PREV-PTC-PREF-return-PTC-SUFF-am$_A$

 'I have (apparently) returned'

Separately, the participles and copulas are: Georgian /dɑ-brun-ɛb-ul-i v-ɑ-r/, Mingrelian /dɔ-rt-ɛl-i v-ɔ-r-ɛ-k/, Svan /ɑn-mɛ-t'ɛχ-e:l-i χw-i/[ɛ-m-t'ɛχ-e:l-i χw-i]. Whilst one occasionally finds in Georgian an example where an inverted transitive formation is recast to follow this intransitive pattern because of the lack of an overt direct object (understandable if transitivity is relevant, but hardly so, were Activity to lie at the root of inversion), e.g.,

(56) [mɑ-s] dɑ-ø-u-tʃɔk-[n-]i-ɑ vs. [i-s] dɑ-tʃɔk-il-ɑ
 X-DAT PREV-3p$_B$-ov-kneel-?-PERF-3p$_A$ that-NOM PREV-kneel- PTC-is$_A$[=PERF]
 'X has (apparently) knelt down',

what is not attested in Georgian is inversion in Series III for essentially intransitive verbs (viz. those whose Ist and IInd Series' screeves are formed in one of the three ways – suffixal, prefixal, markerless – outlined earlier). Take the verb of motion and the three common dynamic (semantically Active) intransitives 'sit down', 'stand up' and 'lie down'. In Georgian we have the anticipated conflation of participle with copula:

(57) [i-s] ts'ɑ-s(-)ul-ɑ vs. dɑ-m-dʒd-ɑr-ɑ
 X-NOM PREV-go-PTC-is$_A$[=PERF] PREV-PTC.PREF-sit-PTC.SUFF- is$_A$[=PERF]

 vs. ɑ-m-dg-ɑr-ɑ vs. dɑ-ts'(-)ɔl-il-ɑ
  PREV-PTC.PREF-stand-PTC.SUFF-is$_A$[=PERF] PREV-lie-PTC-is$_A$ [=PERF]

 'X has (apparently) gone vs. sat down vs. stood up vs. lain down'

How do the corresponding forms behave in Mingrelian?

(57') [ti-s] mid[ɑ]-ø-u-rt-um-[u-]ø[31] vs. d[ɔ]-ø-u-χ-un-[u-]ø vs.
 X-DAT PREV-3p$_B$-ov-go-?-PERF-3p$_A$ PREV-3p$_B$-ov-sit-?-PERF-3p$_A$

 gɛ-ø-u-dg-in-[u-]ø vs. d[ɔ]-ø-u-ndʒ-ir-[u-]ø
 PREV-3p$_B$-ov-stand-?-PERF-3p$_A$ PREV-3p$_B$-ov-lie-?-PERF-3p$_A$

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30. Topuria (1967: 204).

31. The pronunciation [midurtum] reflects that of a series of informants once resident in Ocham-chira (Abkhazia), notably P'ant'e Basilaia, all of whom I thank for their time, patience and expertise.

All are inverted. For the last Q'ipshidze offers the regular (sc. for Kartvelian intransitives) combination of participle and copula: /dɔ-[n]dʒ-ir-[ɛl-]ɛ-ø/, which is in fact the only possibility given in Kadzhaia's 2002 dictionary. Another verb where the regular and inverted patterns coexist is 'return', so that one can compare with the Mingrelian variant of (55) this alternative:

(58) [ti-s]   dɔ-m-[i-]rt-in-[u-]ø
     X-DAT   PREV-1p$_B$-ov-return-?-PERF-3p$_A$

I would argue that the inverted forms are neologisms that have replaced/are replacing the original formations. And, at first glance, one might be forgiven for concluding that, given the semantics of the illustrated verbs, it will be their Activity which is motivating this shift. But before one rushes to such a conclusion, one should consider:

(59) [ti-s]   gɛ-ø-u-r-in-[u-]ø   =   [Georgian]   [i-s]
     X-DAT   PREV-1p$_B$-ov-stand[32]-?-PERF-3p$_A$ X-NOM

     m-dg-ɑr-ɑ
     PTC.PREF-stand-PTC.SUFF-is$_A$[=PERF]
     'X has (apparently) been standing'

where Mingrelian manifests inversion (against Georgian's monovalent intransitive and thus non-inverted patterning) despite the fact that 'be standing', describing more of a state than an action, is hardly a prototypical example of a verb of Active semantics. For this verb too Q'ipshidze quoted the regular intransitive form /gɛ-r-in-[ɛl-]ɛ-ø/, though this was never offered by my informants, who, when asked to produce stative Perfects for 'be sitting/lying', tended to employ an entirely different morphological form,[33] though at least one accepted the inverted paradigm /ø-u-ndʒ-ir-[u-]ø/ 'X has been lying', which is the preverbless variant of the form in (57'). In Svan all three stative Perfects exhibit inversion (Gagua 1976: 118–27), but their dynamic equivalents[34] and the verb of motion do not:

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32. Actually this is the copular root, and it acquires the meaning 'stand' when combined with the preverb /gɛ-/.

33. /tinɑ nɔ-dʒ-[ɑn-u(-)]ɛ-ø/ 'X$_{NOM}$ has been lying'; /tinɑ nɔ-χ-u-(-)ɛ-ø/ 'X$_{NOM}$ has been sitting'. This paradigm is based on a different type of participle, the correspondingly built screeve in Georgian being restricted to certain western dialects, dialects (perhaps significantly) abutting the Mingrelian-speaking area.

34. Consider:

zurɑl   ʒi   ɔ-l-g-ɛn-ɛl-[l-]i
woman$_{NOM}$ up   PREV-PTC.PREF-stand-?-PTC.SUFF-3p$_A$-COP[=PERF]
'The woman apparently rose' (Shanidze 1939: 244).

(60)   χ-ɔ-g-n-ɑ   vs.   χ-ɔ-q'v-n-ɑ   vs.   χ-ɔ-sɢvr-ɑ
       3p$_B$-ov-stand-?-3p$_A$[=PERF] 3p$_B$-ov-lie-?-3p$_A$[=PERF] 3p$_B$-ov-sit- 3p$_A$[=PERF]
       'X$_{DAT}$ has (apparently) been standing vs. lying vs. sitting'

Since Active semantics cannot be motivating inversion with these verbs in Mingrelian and Svan, what is?

   5.2.1   Readers might have observed that many (if not quite all) of the Perfects for the relevant verbs contain an element, glossed by a question-mark, immediately after the root. Georgian Medial Perfects also optionally contain /-n-/, unless its presence creates an infelicitous consonant-complex, and Mingrelian Medials also manifest a similarly optional /-in-/:

(61)   [ti-s]   ø-u-ngɑr-[in-]u-ø = [Georgian]   [mɑ-s]   ø-u-t'ir-[n-]i-ɑ
       X-DAT   3p$_B$-ov-cry-?-PERF-3p$_A$ X-DAT   3p$_B$-ov-cry-?-PERF- 3p$_A$
       'X has (apparently) cried'

Two of the Svan verbs in (60) also carry such a nasal. Now, we know that the Causative marker in Georgian is basically /-in-/. In Svan /-in-/-un-/-wn-/ and in Mingrelian /-in-u-/ (also/-(in-)ɑp-u-/)[35] fulfil this role. Cross-linguistically Causative formants sometimes serve merely to buttress a verb's transitivity. Series III inversion characterises verbs traditionally deemed to be transitive. If some transitive verbs 'lost' an argument and were thus in danger of being (mis)interpreted as intransitive, what better location to employ the Causative formant in this transitivity-strengthening role? The nasal seems to be moribund in Georgian IIIrd Series Medials (Donald Rayfield, p.c.), but in places the language has resorted/is resorting to an alternative. Consider how a few verbs differentiate a transitive from a ditransitive usage in Series III:

(62)   mɑ-s   bɛrdzn(-)ul-i ø-u-sts'ɑvl-i-ɑ
               Greek-NOM   3p$_B$-ov-learn-PERF-3p$_A$
       'X has (apparently) learnt Greek'

(62′) mɑ-s   ʃv(-)il-is-tvis   bɛrdzn(-)ul-i   ø-u-sts'ɑvl-ɛb-i-ɑ
       X-DAT   child-GEN-for   Greek-NOM   3p$_B$-ov-teach-TS-PERF-3p$_A$
       'X has (apparently) taught the child Greek'

The root in this pair of examples is the same but takes on the meaning 'teach' in association (sc. in Series III) with the Thematic Suffix /-ɛb-/. Now, there are a number of Medial derivatives whose structure seems to have altered over the years during which the Georgian Academy's 8-volume Dictionary was being compiled/

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35.   /-Ap-/ is cognate with /-ɛb-/, the commonest of Georgian's Thematic Suffixes.

published (1950–64). Compare two virtually synonymous forms appearing respectively in volumes III (1953) and VII (1962):

(63) mɑ-s   dɑ-ø-u-dzɑχ-n-i-ɑ   vs.   ʃɛ-ø-u-dzɑχ-ɛb-i-ɑ
      X-DAT PREV-3p$_B$-OV-shout-?-PERF-3p$_A$ PREV-3p$_B$-OV-shout-TS-PERF-3p$_A$
      'X has (apparently) shouted (in somebody's direction)'

The shift in directional preverb should not motivate any other morphological change, and yet the 1953-nasal yielded to Georgian's commonest Thematic Suffix in 1962. Is the reason that the structure's essential transitivity needs to be underlined, the original force of the nasal suffix has been forgotten, and /-ɛb-/ is perceived as best serving this function thanks to the sort of role it plays in pairings such as (62)–(62′)? We have seen inverted forms containing post-radical elements other than/-in-/in Mingrelian. Perhaps, therefore, we should interpret /-um-/-un-/and/-ir-/ as Thematic Suffixes performing the same function postulated for /-in-/ in the relevant verbs.

5.2.2   If IIIrd Series inversion correlates with transitivity, which incidentally happens to be prototypically associated with the Active semantics of agency, one could conceive of a situation in which the inverted construction could have spread to intransitive verbs whose subjects shared the semantic feature of also acting volitionally; thereafter, the pattern might possibly have infected related verbs, even if they were charaterised by Inactive semantics (since, after all, dynamic notions like 'stand up' easily pair with statives like 'be standing'). This would account for the situation attested in Mingrelian, and ultimately the explanation for all cases of IIIrd Series inversion would be that, however counter-intuitive it might appear for some of the verbs concerned, all such verb-forms are essentially bipersonal transitives (accompanied, where necessary, by an understood 'internal' direct object to correlate with the obligatory Set A agreement-affix within the inverted verb-form). The puzzle is why it is the IIIrd Series forms for the stative notions 'be seated, standing, lying' (and not their dynamic correlates) that are construed this way in Svan. Future research may provide the answer. Meanwhile it has been argued that, however unexciting it might be, the traditional categories of ergativity and transitivity still provide the best framework for understanding the aspects of Georgian, Mingrelian and Abkhaz verbal morphology, argument-structure and associated case-marking which have been examined above.

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