An Abkhaz Miscellany (with an Old Georgian Excursion)
Paper prepared for delivery at the Caucasian Linguistics Conference
Istanbul, 29 Nov - 1 Dec 2012

When I began my weekly lessons on the structure of Abkhaz back in late 1975 in Tbilisi, where I was spending the academic year learning Georgian, my impression was that, in contrast to Georgian with its multiplicity of morphological variations, Abkhaz presented a picture of satisfying regularity, something that is always encouraging for the learner. The perverse thought occurred that, given the complexity of the language's basic structure (especially that of the verbal complex, in which the syntax of the entire clause is essentially encapsulated, not to mention the tongue-twisting phonetics that demands such lingual dexterity on the part of speakers), regularity of overall patterning might be necessary for the language to function. However, in becoming better acquainted with the language, I soon realised that Abkhaz is no exception in its ability to frustrate one's expectations. And so, I have decided to share with you an array of examples which have surprised me as I have been garnering data for what I hope in the fulness of time will be a comprehensive grammar of the language. I shall end with an excursion into Old Georgian, where the idea for the proposal which I shall advance there arose as I was pondering one such case of unexpected syntactic arrangement in Abkhaz.

Given that the adjective for 'all' is:

1   zagʲa   (N.B. stress is marked in bold)

it is no surprise to find that the phrases for 'the whole (of the) spring' and 'the whole (of the) autumn' end with this element (most adjectives standing after their nouns), as seen in:

2   [a.]ɑ(.)pə(.)n(.)ra ⁄ (a.)ta(.)gɑ(.)la(.)ra   zagʲ(a)

    the.spring   the.autumn

    'the whole (of the) spring/autumn'

Knowing this, one would predict parallel sequences for 'the whole (of the) summer/winter', but what one finds instead are the following:

3   ɑ.l.pχa(.)n(.)ra.kʼ   ⁄   ɑ.l.dzə(.)n(.)ra.kʼ

    the.?whole.summer.one   the.?whole.winter.one

    'the whole (of the) summer/winter'

The mysterious l-prefix, which evidently (in part, at least) carries the sense of 'whole', also turns up in:

4   ɑ.l.ʂəkʷsa.nə.kʲ

    the.?whole.year.?.one = 'the whole (of the) year'

Presumably, the notion of completing a singularity implicit in these temporal expressions is reflected in the presence of the first cardinal -kʼ at the end of the last three words, but the precise force of the l-prefix is unclear. Even those adjectives

which precede their nouns in Abkhaz are not infixed after the article, as is the case here, although cardinals can be so placed. e.g.

5   a.pʃtɕʷ'a.kʲ   / la.z.la.kʲ   a.tɕʷa.w.pʼ

    the.4.apple.one   her.1.eye.one it.sleep.STAT.FIN(-PRES)

    'the 4 apples (under discussion)' / 'One of her (2) eyes is closed in sleep'

Also, it is not entirely clear why the element -nə- appears in the third form above, as it is obviously not part of the root, though the nasal alone surfaces in the word meaning '(in) that year', viz.

6   a.ẑəkʷs /   a.ẑəkʷsa.n

    the.year   the.year.ADV(?= in)

    '(the) year' / '(in) that year'

Cf. its use to underline the notion of 'in/on' with certain words, as in:

7   kʷ'ṫ'ɔl   a.kata(.n) /   a.tsʼa a.mts'a(.n) / a.mya   /   a.mya.n[1]

    Kʷ'it'ol the.village.in the.tree it.base.at   the.road   the.road.on

    '(in) the village of Kʷ'it'ol' / '(at) the foot of the tree' / 'the road' / ' on the road'

    Regarding the different treatment afforded to (let's call them) the major vs minor seasons, one can point to a similar split in Georgian, where for the expression 'in SEASON' the major seasons take the postpositional suffix -shi 'in', whilst the minor seasons require -ze 'on', viz.(.)

8   zapχul.ʃi   /   zamtar.ʃi   /   ga(.)zapχul.zɛ   /   ʃɛ(.)mɔ(.)dg(.)ɔm(.)a.zɛ

    summer.in   winter.in   spring.on   autumn.on

    'in (the) summer / winter / spring / autumn'[2]

But, to return to expressions for 'whole of PERIOD', Abkhaz possesses other strategies. Consider the structure of the phrase 'for a whole year':

9   ẑəkʷsa.na.dza.k'   /   ẑəkʷs.na.qʲ'a.kʲ[3]

    year.PREV.reach.one   year.?PREV.?ROOT.one

    'for/over the course of a whole year'

cf.

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[1] Is this nasal a remnant of the North West Caucasian oblique case-marker, which is -n in Ubykh and -m in Circassian? As for the individual components in the words for the seasons, the suffix -ra is most commonly found marking abstract nouns or the verbal noun (Masdar), and in the word for 'autumn' we effectively have the masdar of the verb for 'bring in', where -ga- is the root 'convey', -ta- the preverb 'in(to)', and -la- a root-suffix underscoring the illative nature of the action' — ta.ga.la.n alone can mean '(in) autumn'; a.pχɔ is the adjective 'warm', and a.pχə.n alone can mean '(in) summer'; a.dzə is Abkhaz for 'water', whilst a.dzə.n alone can mean '(in) winter'; the elements in the word for 'spring' are uncertain.

[2] Closer to home for speakers of European languages, French treats 'spring' differently from the remaining seasons for the expression 'in SEASON', printemps takes preposition à (au printemps 'in (the) spring'), whilst the rest require en (en été/automne/hiver 'in (the) summer/autumn/winter'.

[3] My informant treats this as one word, but the sequence is written as two words (being viewed as noun followed by adjective) in the three dictionaries consulted (viz. Shakryl & Kondzharija 1986; Genko 1998; Kaslandzia 2005).

10   mtʃabʒa.na.dza.kʼ   /   mtʃabʒ.na.qjʼa.kː

      week.PREV.reach.one   week.?PREV.?ROOT.one

      'for/over the course of a whole week'

Here the components -na.dza- clearly derive from the preverb+root stem for the verb 'reach -dza- thither -na-, extend upto', forming what could be deemed an adjective (given that the first cardinal attaches to it at the end of the phrase), though the dictionaries do not include such an adjectival entry. This contrasts with their presentation of the second formant just illustrated, which also occurs in the phrase 'for an hour', viz.

11   saət.na.qjʼa.kː

      hour.?PREV.?ROOT.one = 'for an hour'

for in two of the dictionaries (viz. those by Shakryl & Kondzharija, and Genko) it is given in the form naqjʼa, whilst Kaslandzia has naqjʼakʼ. Since the citation-form of adjectives typically starts with the article a-, its absence here suggests that the word is felt to be somehow deviant. If the first component is indeed the same preverb as seen in -na.dza-, then one would expect the second to be a verbal root, but the language does not provide a convenient source, the verb a.qjʼa.ra meaning 'brandish(ing)' — a relationship with the adjective a.qjʼa.qjʼa 'flat' must surely be considered unlikely.

Before we leave the notion of 'whole (of time)', we should note the form given by Kaslandzia as -ntʷʼarakʼ as in the phrases:

12   jaxja.nt ʷʼa.ra.kː   /   jatsa.nt ʷʼa.ra.kː

      today.?PREV.ROOT.?MASD.one   yesterday

      'the whole of today/yesterday'

Do we possibly have here the verbal root -t ʷʼa- 'sit' preceded by a preverb, which might be a variant of the orientational preverb 'thither' we met above or which could be the locational preverb -n- 'on (a flat surface)'[4]?

Of course, verbal roots, either alone or in combination with some other component and grammaticalised as adjectives or as conjunctional or postpositional elements, are encountered elsewhere in Abkhaz. So, for example, -tsapxjadza 'each/each time that' derives from the root -pxjadza- 'count, regard, deem' in association with the central element in a.tsa(.)ra 'one unit (of X)', its simple adjectival or pseudo-conjunctional[5] roles being illustrated in the following pair of examples:

13   [a.]aʒ ʷa.tsa.pxjadza   a.tak'   a.qʼa.tsʼa.ra

      ART.word.unit.count   ART.answer   its.PREV.make.MASD

      'giving answer to/answering each word'

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[4] As in a.gaæt j.a.na.w.pː 'It j- is -w.pʼ in -a- the newspaper a.gaæt'.

[5] 'Pseudo-' because conjunctions prototypically govern subordinate clauses, defined as sequences containing a finite verb, whereas conjunctional elements in Abkhaz govern NON-finite verb-forms.

14 s.ɣazɐ   də.z.bɯ.ɣ.tsə.pχʲɑdzɐ   ɑ.pɯrɑ
    my.friend   him.I.see.PAST-NFIN-AOR.unit.count   ART.money

    ɣ.ja.s.tɑ.lɑ.wɑ.jtˑ
    it.him.I.give.ITER.DYN.FIN(-PRES)

    'Every time I see my friend, I give him money'

For the notion 'while' we have the sequence –nɑ.tsʼə, which consists of the verbal root -tsʼə- 'pass', as seen in:

15 ɑrɐ s.gɑlɑ.wə.j(.)ʒtɑ(.)j   ɥ.sɑːt.kˑ   ɣ.tsʼ.wɑ.jtʼ
    here I.stand.STAT(-NFIN-PRES).since[6]   2.hour.one it.pass.DYN.FIN(-PRES)

    'Two hours have passed since I've been standing here'

preceded by the orientational preverb for 'thither', already met above, to produce an example like:

16 ɑrɐ sɐ.qʼɑ.nɑ.tsʼə   ɑdʒᵂ.gʲə   də.ɥnɯɯn.lɑ.ɣ.jtʼ
    here I.be.PREV.pass one-person.even (s)he.PREV.not.enter.PAST.FIN(-

                                                                   AOR)

    'While I was there, no-one entered'

And again in both the postposition -n(.)dza 'upto; until' and the conjunctional suffix -a:(.)n(.)dza 'before; until' we seem to have the root for 'reaching, extending to', accompanied by the simple nasal (?)preverb, also encountered earlier; the additional element in the conjunctional suffix could be the orientational preverb for 'hither' or the verbal root for 'come', both of which are -a:-. Consider:

17 wɑtɕᵂʼɑ.n(.)dzɐ / ɐ.rbɑɕʲ   tʂ.nɑ.t.ɣ.ɑ(.)n(.)dzɐ
    tomorrow.until   the.cock PREV.it.cry.PAST(-NFIN-AOR).before

    χə.ntᵂˑ sɑ(.)rɐ mɑpʼ ɣ.s.tɕᵂə.w.kʼ.wɑ.jtˑ
    3.times me   no   it.me.from.you(-MASC).hold.DYN.FIN(-PRES)

    'until tomorrow' / 'Before the cock crows, you will deny me thrice'

   The verb meaning 'cry' in the last example is peculiar in not taking a Column 1 pronominal prefix, which is the pronominal prefix cross-referencing an intransitive subject or transitive direct object, the element tʂə- from ɑ.tʂə 'mouth, face' substituting for it. We meet it again, but this time itself prefixed with the appropriate possessive agreement-marker, in the following, where the verb may additionally be causativised:

18 s.tʂʼɑ.nɑ.s.χɑ.ɣ.jtʼ   / s.tʂʼɑ.nɑ.sə.r.χɑ.ɣ.jtʼ
    my.face.thither.I.?turn.PAST.FIN(-AOR)   my.face.thither.I.CAUS.turn.

                                                        PAST.FIN(-AOR)

    'I set off (?turning my face) in that direction'

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[6] Where the pseudo-conjunction is to be analysed as 'and.now.and'.

Cf. (19), where we have no coreferentiality between subject and possessive element at the start of the verb:

19   jə.χt̲ǯ'ɑ   ɑ.t̲ǯ'ɑ.nɑ.j.r.χɑ.ɣ.jt'

      his.arrow   its.face.thither.he.CAUS.?turn.PAST.FIN(-AOR)

      'He despatched his arrow (in that direction)'

And note the subtle change of meaning when the former of these causativised verbs has the incorporated NP removed to stand as an independent direct object:

20   s.t̲ǯ'ə   /   s.χ'ə   ɣ.nɑ.sə.r.χɑ.ɣ.jt'

      my.face   my.head   it.thither.I.CAUS.?turn.AOR.FIN

      'I turned my face/head in that direction'

   I demonstrated in an earlier paper (Hewitt 2008) how the compound root of the verb meaning 'yawn', namely:

21   ɑ.t̲ǯ'ɑ/ə(.)r(.)ħ̥ɑ(.)s.rɑ 'yawn'

seen as a finite form in the negated Aorist of (21'):

21'   sə.m.t̲ǯ'ɑ/ə(.)r(.)ħ̥ɑ(.)sə.ɣ.jt·

      I.not.mouth.CAUS.open.hit.PAST.FIN(-AOR)

      'I did not yawn'

represents a fusion of the noun ɑ.t̲ǯ'ə 'mouth/face', the Causative prefix -r-, a root -(ɑ)ħ̥ɑ- meaning 'open wide', these elements appearing unfused in:

21"   s.t̲ǯ'ə   ɣ.s.r.ɑħ̥ɑ.t̲ɕʷɑ.wɑm

      my.mouth it.I.CAUS.open.EXCESS.DYN.not(-FIN-PRES)

      ' I do not open my mouth too wide'

plus the intransitive [sic!] root for 'hit' (-s-) — that is to say that an essentially transitive verb-phrase (transitive by virtue of causation) loses any transitive force as a result of fusion with an intransitive root. Now, looking at the verbs for 'sneeze' and 'cough', one would probably analyse them as in (22):

22   [ɑ.]ɑj.m.sɑ.rɑ   /   [ɑ.]ɑj.m.ħʷɑ.rɑ

      ART.REC.PREV.sneeze.MASD   ART.REC.PREV.cough.MASD

And, since in the Aorist the negative marker would normally split preverb from root, that is where one would expect the relevant element -m- to appear, but one's expectations are not borne out, for what we find are:

22'   s.m.ɑj.m.sɑ.ɣ.jt'   /   s.m.ɑj.m.ħʷɑ.ɣ.jt'

      I.not.REC.PREV.sneeze.PAST.FIN(-AOR) I.not.REC.PREV.cough.PAST.FIN

                                                                                        (-AOR)

      'I did not sneeze/cough'

(i.e. with the negative preceding the reciprocal affix).

The verb for 'hiccup' also contains the same reciprocal affix but couples it with a different preverb (-t̲ɕʷ(ə)-). However, what follows the preverb is itself complex, consisting of the preverb -k̲ʲ'ə- and root -s-, which together produce an intransitive

[sic!] verb meaning 'touch'. Negating the Aorist of 'hiccup' is achieved either by treating the four components just listed as a compound root or by placing the negative between the reciprocal plus first preverb and the second preverb followed by the root proper, which indicates another fusion of this latter preverb with the root proper, e.g.

23 s.m.aj.tɕ^w.kʲ'a.sə.ø.jt'   / s.aj.tɕ^wə.m.kʲ'a.sə.ø.jt'

  I.not.REC.PREV.PREV.hiccup.PAST.FIN(-AOR) I.REC.PREV.not.PREV.

                hiccup.PAST.FIN(-AOR)

  'I did not hiccup'

Placing the negative between second preverb and root proper produced a sequence of questionable acceptability for my informant, viz.

23' ?s.aj.tɕ^w.kʲ'am.sə.ø.jt'[7]

which is the form which, to my mind, one would logically expect.

 The last three examples alone are sufficient to demonstrate how morpheme-boundaries can be blurred, leading to uncertainty in the application of the language's rules and thus ultimately to reanalysis, which, I suppose, is the general theme of my paper.

 One of my early publications on Abkhaz (Hewitt 1979) examined how Abkhaz produces its equivalent of the relative clause[8]. The phenomenon whereby ALL elements within the 'clause' (?verbal phrase) coreferential with the head-noun typically carry the appropriate relative affix had already been described, e.g.

24 z.anə.j   z.abə.j   ø.z.ba.ø.z

  whose.mother.& whose.father.& them.who.see.PAST.NFIN(-PAST-INDEF)

  a.χats'a

  the.man

  'the man who saw his (literally = whose) mother and father'

this being the relative formed on:

24' a.χats'a j.anə.j   j.abə.j   ø.jə.ba.ø.jt'

  the.man his.mother.& his.father.& them.he.see.PAST.FIN(-AOR)

  'The man saw his father and mother'

What turned out to be surprising in that study from 1979 was the extent of relative-marking in embeddings, a good example of which would be:

25 ħ.χə j.a.ħa.r.χ^wa.wa.jt'   a.bʒa.t^w

  our.head them.it.we.CAUS.help.DYN.FIN(-PRES) the.voice.ADJ

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[7] To add to the picture, for 'snore' Abkhaz literally says 'the sound of X's throat carries', viz.

  ja.χ^wda a.bʒa   ø.ga.wa.jt'

  his.throat its.sound it.carry.DYN.FIN(-PRES) 'He is snoring'

whilst the root for 'belch' is -ʁ^waħa-, e.g.

  d.ʁ^waħa.wa.jt'

  (s)he.belch.DYN.FIN(-PRES) 'She/He belches'

[8] For a parallel study of the construction in Adyghe see Hewitt (1979a).

bʒ.œnda.kʷa   nœs.gʲə   z.t̠ʒ.ɑj.d.kʼa.la.ɣ.nə
voice.fence.PL   then.&   whose.self.REC.against.hold.SUFF.PAST.ABS

a.pə(.)kʷ(.)sə(.)la(.)ra ɣ.qʼa.z.ts'ɑ.r   ɣ.zə.l.g̠a.wɑ[9]
ART.obstruction   it.PREV.which.make.if it.which.PREV.can.DYN(-NFIN-
                                                                    PRES)

ħ.aʒʷa.ħʷɑtʷ'   ərgan.kʷa
our.word.say.ADJ   organ.PL

'We use the vocal chords as well as our speech-organs, which, having held
themselves (literally: whose-selves) against each other, can make (literally: have
such a capacity that which [i.e. they] make) an obstruction'

Whilst this layering of relative markers is in itself eye-catching, consider where it
leads in the following example garnered from a folktale:

26   jə.z.kʼa.ɣ.z   ɣ.z.kʼ'.wa.z
      which.which.hold.PAST.NFIN(-PAST-INDEF)   it.which.hold.DYN.NFIN(-
                                                                    IMPERF)

      ɥ.dʒma.kʲə
      2.goat.one

      'two tenacious goats' (literally: 'goats which were holding onto that which which
      = they had caught')

The more deeply embedded verb here (jə.z.kʼa.ɣ.z) contains two relative markers, one
-z- referencing the higher head-noun ('two goats') and the other referring to its own
verb's unspecified lower head ('that which'). The source for this double relative, which
is surely a typological peculiarity worthy of special note, is:

26'   ja.r.kʼa.ɣ.z   ɣ.r.kʼ'.wa.n
      which.they.hold.PAST.NFIN(-PAST-INDEF)   it.they.hold.DYN.FIN(-
                                                                    IMPERF)

      'They were holding on to that which they had caught'

    From example 17 one would correctly surmise that parts at least of the Bible must
have been rendered into Abkhaz. In fact, though, as far as I am aware, the Old
Testament still awaits translation and only one version of the entire New Testament
currently exists (viz. that produced by writer Mushni Lasuria in 2004), two other
versions of the Gospels are available to enable a comparison of how different
translators respond to the challenge. There is the 1912 edition by Gulia and others,
which was printed employing the script in use at the time and which was republished
in 2006 with the same script in a large-format, sumptuous edition for the Abkhazian
Church by the Russian Orthodox Church's publishing-house in Moscow; this edition
was then reprinted in 1998 in the modern script, which, of course, underwent a slight

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[9] For the structure of the complement of this verb see Hewitt 2005.377-8.

spelling-reform just a year later in order to introduce consistency into the marking of labialisation. And secondly there is the translation prepared in the 1970s/1980s by Zaira Khiba for the Institute for Bible Translation (based in Sweden), of which, regrettably, only the Gospel of John has been published (1981). While recently perusing the three versions of St. Mark's Gospel, I lighted upon a construction which came to me (at least) as something of a surprise.

The construction in question occurs in the rendition of Mark 7.18, where the English translation in the King James' Bible faithfully renders a straightforward question in Ancient Greek as:

27   'Are ye so without understanding also?'

A similarly run-of-the-mill question could, thus, reasonably be expected in Abkhaz. Now, Yes/No-questions are formed in Abkhaz by attaching one of the suffixes -ma or -w to the non-finite form of the relevant tense, if the verb is positive (i.e. non-negative). And it is the former suffix which is so attested in the translations by, respectively, Gulia et al. and Lasuria, viz.

28   ʃʷa(.)r.gʲa   abas [a.]a.w.ma   agʲa.ʑ.ʃʷ.z.aj(.)la.m.kʼ.a.wa

          you(-PL).too thus it.be.STAT(-NFIN-PRES).QU anything.that.you(-PL).POT.

                                                PREV.not.understand.SUFF.DYN(-NFIN-PRES)[10]

          'Is it thus that you too are unable to understand anything?'

29   abas [a.]a.w.ma   ʃʷa(.)r.gʲa   agʲa.ʑ.ʃʷ.z.aj(.)la.m.tsa.wa

          thus it.be.STAT(-NFIN-PRES).QU you(-PL).too anything.that.you(-PL).POT.

                                                PREV.not.discriminate.DYN(-NFIN-PRES)

          'Is it thus that you too are unable to be discriminating about anything?'

Both these examples, incidentally, nicely exemplify Abkhaz's love of clefting. What then do we find in the third alternative? This:

30   ʃʷa(.)r.gʲa   abas agʲ.ʃʷa.z.aj(.)la.m.kʼ.a.wa.na.w

          you(-PL).too thus anything.you(PL).POT.PREV.not.understand.SUFF.

                                                                DYN.ABS(-PRES).?

Whilst there is no clefting here, it would appear that (despite the presence of the negative -m-) we have a question formed not on the non-finite Present tense stem, for this would normally produce example 31:

31   agʲ.ʃʷa.z.aj(.)la.m.kʼ.a.dza.wa.j

          anything.you(PL).POT.PREV.not.understand.SUFF.EMPH.DYN.QU

          'Don't you understand anything?'

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[10] A deeper analysis would mark -aj- as the reciprocal governed by the preverb - la- 'from in', the elative nature of the expression being underlined by the root-suffix -a- attached to the root -kʼ-, which strictly means 'hold, grasp'.

where the question is formed by the regular suffix -j for a negated verb, but rather on the Present Absolute (in -ẃɑ.nə). This Absolute, like the language's other Absolutes, has gerund-like functions, as seen in:

32   kʼɑtɑ.kʼ   d.n[ɑ].ɑ.lɑ.lɑ.wɑ.nə   [ɑ.]ɑj(.)pɕ[11]

    village.one he.PREV.it.in.enter.DYN.ABS(-PRES) it.like

    jə.j.pɑ.lɑ.ɕ.jtʼ   ʒʷɑ.ɥɑ.kʼ   ɑ.tɕʷ[ɑ]ɑj(.)lɑ(.)bɑː(.)rɑ

    they.him.PREV.meet.PAST.FIN(-AOR) 10.HUM.one ART.leprosy

    ɕ.zə.χ.̣wɑ.z

    it.whom.affect.DYN.NFIN(-IMPERF)

    'As He [Jesus] was about to enter a village, He was met by ten lepers'

or again:

33   ɑ.ħɑskʲʼən   ɕ.pɑj.qʼɑ.wɑ.nə   ɕ.s.ɑ(.)ħɑ.ɕ.jtʼ

    the.grass   it.PREV.he.cut.DYN.ABS(-PRES) it.I.hear.PAST.FIN(-AOR)

    'I heard that he would cut the grass'

A second example of the type of construction under discussion (viz. as seen in 30) was found in the same author's unpublished translation of a Life of Christ, viz.

34   ʃʷɑ(.)rɑ   jə.ʃʷ.zɑm.dər.wɑ.nə.w[12]   sɑ(.)rɑ

    you(-PL)   it.you(-PL).POT.not.know.DYN.ABS(-PRES).?   I

    s.ɑb   jə.j.tʷɑ.w   ɑ.tɕʼɑ sɑ.qʼɑ(.)zɑ(.)rɑ

    my.father which.him.belong.STAT(-NFIN-PRES) it.in   my.being

    ɕ.ɕ.ɑχʷtɑ.w

    it.that.its.part.STAT(-NFIN-PRES)

    'Do you not then know that it is fitting for me to be in what belongs to my Father (= place of worship)?!'

Both contexts suggest surprise on the part of the questioner (Christ in both instances here) that the addressees have evinced an ignorance that he had not anticipated. This is different from the question-formation produced by adding the suffix -ʃ to a standardly formed interrogative which indicates agitation or some kind of emotional engagement on the part of the questioner, e.g.

35   wə.j.fɑ.r   ħʷɑ   s.ʃʷɑ.wɑ.jtʼ   ɕ.l.ħʷɑ.ɕ.jtʼ

    you(-MASC).he.eat.if saying I.fear.DYN.FIN(-PRES) it.she.say.PAST.FIN(-AOR)

    sə.j.fɑtɕʼqʲʼɑ.rə.w.ʃ

    me.he.eat.really.FUT1(-NFIN).QU.SUFF

    '"I'm afraid he'll eat you," she said. "Will he actually eat me, do you really

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[11] This postposition could have been introduced in the earlier part of the discussion, as it can be analysed as deriving from the reciprocal prefix -ɑj- and the verb-root -pɕ- 'look'.

[12] When the verb 'know' is negated, it automatically takes the Potential prefix. For a discussion of potential-marking see Hewitt (1979b and 2008).

suppose?"'

But we have to ask if it is actually the case that what we have in the two strange examples adduced here (namely 30 and 34) is in fact a question formed by suffixing -w to the Present Absolute? If we switch the temporal reference of the two verbs to the past, we get:

30'/34'   ɑ.g̑.ʃʷə.z.ɑ̥j(.)lə.m.k̓.ɑ.wɑ.nə.zə.w   /   jə.ʃʷ.zam.dər.wɑ.nə.zə.w

where the only difference is the appearance of the element -zə- between Absolute ending and what is manifestly the interrogative suffix. We now clearly see the interrogative suffix attaching to a non-finite verb-form (indicated by this -zə-), but of what is it the non-finite equivalent? It must be the Past tense of a stative verb whose non-finite Present would thus end in -w. Therefore, our puzzling interrogative verb-forms must be analysed as ending in an underlying sequence -w-w, the first token being the Stative marker, the second the interrogative suffix, the two homonymous formants merging to produce the appearance of a peculiarly formed question. In the following expanded variant it is, or course, the Stative marker alone which appears in the clefted structure, for the question-formant here attaches to the main verb (= the copula):

36   jə.ʃʷ.zam.dər.wɑ.nə.w   [ɑ.]ɑ.w.mɑ   jə.ʒə.q̓ɑ.w

                         it.be.STAT(-NFIN-PRES).QU it.how.be.STAT(-

                                                                 NFIN-PRES)

      'Is your not knowing (it/them) how it is?

The non-finite Present seen here would presuppose the existence of the finite form given in 36':

36'   jə.ʃʷ.zam.dər.wɑ.nə.w.p̓

from which it must be formally derived, although the independent copula in the next example seems to be preferred when it comes to forming an albeit imperfect finite equivalent:

36"   jə.ʃʷ.zam.dər.wɑ.nə.w   [ɑ.]ɑ.w.p̓   nɑs.g̑ə

                         it.be.STAT.FIN(-PRES)   then.too

      'So, it would seem you don't know (it/them)'

But the meaning is now virtually synonymous with that of the Inferential, seen in:

37   jə.ʃʷ.zam.dər.wɑ.z(.)ɑː.pː

      'You apparently don't know (it/them)'

which latter is naturally commoner to express inferentiality than the preceding collocation of example 36"[13].

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[13] Strange as it may seem, it is even possible to form questions on Inferentials, and the interrogative verb in the first variant should perhaps also be analysed as illustrating the merger of the two w-suffixes discussed above:

w.ɑ.pχ̑ɑ.z(.)ɑː.pː   [ɑ.]ɑ(+)kʷ̓ə.w[.w]   /   [ɑ.]ɑ(+)kʷ̓ə.w.mɑ /
you(-MASC).it.read.INFER.FIN(-PRES) it.be.STAT(-NFIN-PRES).QU it.be.STAT(-NFIN-

We are left, however, in the construction under review with the oddity of having a Present Absolute functioning as the stem of a Stative verb (viz. the copula). What must be happening in the peculiar interrogatives presented here is that the higher predicate, represented by the copula, represents the target of the question. It follows from this that the precise semantic reading will be akin to such English sequences as: (a) 'Is ‹you also being unable to understand/be discriminating in anything› actually the case?!', or (b) 'Is ‹your not knowing that it's appropriate for me to be in what belongs to my Father› actually the case?!'. I suggest that the relevant question-type be interpreted as a rhetorical device to convey the sense of, for the first example, 'I would never have believed that you also are, as it transpires, unable to understand/be discriminating in anything!', or, for the second example, 'I would never have believed that you do not, as it transpires, know that it's appropriate for me to be in what belongs to my Father!' I am not aware that this construction has been described before.

Moving from questions to passives, Abkhaz (like all members of the North West Caucasian family) has no formal diathetic opposition to distinguish a passive voice from the active voice for transitive verbs. It does possess a stative passive, whereby a dynamic verb is turned into a stative, losing the agent in the process, the stative verb expressing the result of the relevant verbal action. Consider:

38   zagʲa   ø.qʼa.tsʼa.w.pˑ

everything it.PREV.do.STAT.FIN-PRES

'Everything is/has been done'

from something like:

39   zagʲa   ø.qʼa.r.tsʼa.ø.jtʼ

it.PREV.they.do.AOR.FIN

'They did everything'

A passive-equivalent can also be produced by employing the root -χa- 'become' and placing the root (or stem) of the verb being so 'passivised' in the preverbal slot of the derived verb. Consider firstly how from the adjective for 'big' in:

40   a.daˑw

ART.big

'big'

PRES).QU

wˑa.pχʲa.z(.)ɑːrəˑw

you(-MASC).it.read.INFER.NFIN(-PRES).QU

'You(MASC) have apparently read it — is that so?/Am I right in thinking that you've read it?'

Note that use of the ma-interrogative seems not to be entirely acceptable in questions of the type seen in exmples 30 and 34. A WH-question on an Inferential can be found in Salaqʼaia (1975.146), viz.

wəˑʃ.pɑ.ʒɑ.z(.)ɑːrəj

you(-MASC).how.QU.create.INFER.NFIN(-PRES).QU

'How were you(MASC) created, if created you were?'

the verb 'become big' is produced in:

41   ɑ.raj   jə.də.r.gɑlɑ.wɑ   ɑ.yнɑ

    this   which.they.CAUS.stand.DYN-NFIN-PRES   the.house

    ɡ.daw.χɑ.wɑ.jt'

    it.big.become.DYN.FIN-PRES

    'This house which they are building is getting big'

And then note how a parallel structure serves as a passive in:

42   ɑ.dӡнəʃ   jə.q'ant^{w'}   d.pɑ.ʃ^{w}ɑ.χɑ.ɡ.jt'

    the.Devil   him.from/by   (s)he.PREV.tempt.become.AOR.FIN

    'He/She was tempted by the Devil'

Cf. the active voice of (43):

43   wə.ntc^{w}ɑ   de.tc^{w}əɟ.pɑ.wm.ʃ^{w}ɑ.n

    your(-MASC).God   him.bad.PREV.you-MASC-not-tempt-PROH

    'Do not (sorely) tempt your God!'

Now, let us examine the translation of the Greek verb ἐβαπτίζοντο 'they were being baptised' (Mark 1.5) in the three existing translations of the Gospels; all three agree on the verb-form in 44:

44   r.tӡa.r.nɑt.wɑ.n

    their.self.they.baptise.DYN.IMPERF

    (literally) 'They were baptising themselves' (= Greek ἐβαπτίζοντο)

but, when we note that two of the said translations (viz. the 1912 edition, and Zaira Khiba's unpublished version) add the agent-phrase

45   jɑrɑ   jɑ.lo   vs   jɑrɑ   jə.q'ant^{w'}

    him   him.by (1912)   him.from (Khiba)

we surely have no option but to conclude that what we have here is yet another (?pseudo-)passive, equating to 'they were being baptised by him (sc. John the Baptist)'.

    Of course, use of the reflexive to form passives is by no means unusual in the world's language — one only has to think of Russian, but it will be interesting to see if Abkhaz at some stage goes on to develop distinctive passive verbal morphology somehow incorporating its reflexive marker. But, for now, I would like to present what I hope is an original suggestion relating to a puzzling phenomenon in Old Georgian[14], this suggestion having occurred to me while reflecting upon the Abkhaz construction just presented.

    The oldest surviving form of Georgian is characterised by the presence of the agreement-prefix χ- to mark on verbs the presence of either a 2nd person subject or a

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[14] Not having set foot in Georgia proper since 1987 and no longer in receipt of Georgian publications, as was the case from 1976 to 1989, I may not be aware of new developments in the field of the linguistic study of Georgian (Old or Modern).

3rd person (predominantly INdirect) object (for a similar distribution of this fricative in modern-day Svan, see Shanidze 1920 for his seminal paper on Old Georgian, and, for the distribution in Svan, Topuria 1931 or 1967.4ff. and Tuite 1997.23ff.); since the Georgian letter in question is called χan.i, the texts where this feature is attested are called χanmet'.i 'with extra χan.i'; this term was introduced by Giorgi the Athonite in the 11th-century to characterise such cross-referencing on the Georgian verb in the oldest existing texts, for, by Giorgi's time, the feature in question had already fallen out of use in the language (apart from a handful of remnants that survive to this day). The basic pattern is easy to demonstrate. Bear in mind that both direct and indirect objects stand in the Dative case alongside transitive verbs in the Present tense (representing the Ist Series of TMA forms, or 'screeves', as they are known to kartvelologists), and the subject (agent) goes into the Nominative, whilst in Simple Past (or Aorist, representing the IInd Series[15]) the subject is in the Ergative case, the indirect object remains Dative, but the direct object shifts to the Nominative. The system can be seen in operation in examples 46 through 48':

46   ʃen   dzɒɣl.s   (mɔ.)χ.ɣ.k'l.ɒv   (<= *(mɔ.)χ.χ.k'l.ɒv)
      you[NOM]   dog.DAT   PREV.you.it.kill.TS(-PRES)
      'You kill the dog'

vs

46'   ʃen   dzɒɣl.i   mɔ.χ.ɣ.k'ɒl
      you[ERG]   dog.NOM   PREV.you.it.kill(-AOR)
      'You killed the dog'

47   k'ɒts.i   kɒl.s   dzɒɣl.s   (mɔ.)ɣ.χ.u.k'l.ɒv.s   (<= *(mɔ.)χ.χ.u.k'l.ɒv.s)
      man.NOM   woman.DAT   dog.DAT   PREV.it.her.OV.kill.TS.he(-PRES)
      The man kills the dog for the woman/woman's dog'

vs

47'   k'ɒts.mɒn   kɒl.s   dzɒɣl.i   mɔ.ɣ.χ.u.k'l.ɒ
      man.ERG   woman.DAT   dog.NOM   PREV.it.her.OV.kill.he(-AOR)
      'The man killed the dog for the woman/woman's dog'

It should be stressed that a 3rd person direct object would ONLY have been marked by the fricative in the Present (Ist Series), as seen by comparing the following pair.

48   k'ɒts.i   dzɒɣl.s   (mɔ.)χ.k'l.ɒv.s
      man.NOM   dog.DAT   PREV.it.kill.TS.he(-PRES)

[15] In Modern Georgian the 1st screeve-series consists of the Present Indicative, Imperfect Indicative, the Present Subjunctive (the three constituting the Present Sub-Series), the Future Indicative, the Conditional and the Future Subjunctive (these three constituting the Future Sub-Series); the IInd Series consists of the Aorist Indicative and Aorist Subjunctive. In Old Georgian no Future Sub-Series had yet been developed, the Present or Aorist Subjunctive being drawn into service, but there were in addition Present, Imperfect and Aorist Habituals.

'The man kills the dog'[16]

vs

48' k'ots.man   dzaɣl.i   mɔ.ɣ.k'l.a

man.ERG   dog.NOM   PREV.it.kill.he(-AOR)

'The man killed the dog'

N.B. this precise series of examples is, of course, unattested in the sources but was manufactured on the basis of established morpho-syntactic patterning to illustrate the system.

This basic pattern of cross-referencing is complicated by the fact that the extra χ- appears where it is not expected. Consider the conjugation of the past tense (Aorist) of the copula (slightly adapted from Imnaishvili & Imnaishvili 1996.I.54):

TABLE 1

Conjugation of the Past Tense (Aorist) of the *khanmet'i copula*

χ.w.i.q'av <= *χ.u.i.q'av[17]	I was
χ.i.q'av[18]	you were
χ.i.q'ɔ <= χ.i.q'v.a	X was
χ.w.i.q'v.ɛn.i.t[19]	we were
χ.i.q'v.ɛn.i.t	you(PL) were
χ.i.q'v.nɛs	they were

Here the extra element is unexpectedly present throughout the paradigm. The problem, then, is how to account for this distribution.

The explanation I wish to propose takes as its starting-point acceptance of the long-hypothesised kinship between, on the one hand, the i-prefix, which is one component in forming the largest group of intransitive verbs in Georgian, many of them regularly functioning as fully-fledged passives, and, on the other hand, the i-prefix that serves to mark the so-called Subjective Version (in Georgian *sataviso ktseva*) — see, for example, Shanidze (1926) or Deeters (1930.82) on what he styled the 'Charaktervokal i'. The Subjective Version appeared (and still appears) in active-voice paradigms of transitive verbs in Series I and II, if the direct object is part of the subject's body or belongs to the subject, or if the subject is acting upon the direct object in his own interests. From this it is clear how close Georgian's (indeed, Kartvelian's) Subjective Version is to the Ancient Greek middle voice (see the

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[16] For other attested examples see Imnaishvili & Imnaishvili (1996.50).

[17] Actually the proto-form is assumed to have been *v.χ.i.q'av, but the attested form was produced by metathesis of the first two components.

[18] Presumably from *χ.χ.i.q'av, where the other χ- marked the 2nd person subject.

[19] The en-suffix is another lost feature from Old Georgian whereby the plurality of the Nominative nominal was recapitulated in IInd Series verb-forms, if the verb was transitive, where the Nominative argument was the direct object, or intransitive of the i-prefixal variety (as here), where the Nominative NP was the subject.

recently deceased Karl-Horst Schmidt's 1965 paper for a detailed comparison), and, of course, in many paradigms Greek's middle voice was formally identical to the passive voice, which latter is reckoned to have developed from it. A parallel identity in screeves can be seen by comparing Old Georgian's Aorist active and passive forms for the verbal root *-vs-* meaning 'fill' in Table 2 (again adapted from Imnaishvili & Imnaishvili 1996.445 and here presented in their post-khanmet'i conjugation) — the case of the 3rd person subject-argument distinguishes the active from the passive. Note that the 1st and 2nd person pronouns do not alter for case, but *man/mat* are the Ergative forms of the 3rd person singular and plural pronouns respectively, whilst *igi/igini* are the equivalent Nominative (or, if one prefers, Absolutive) forms; the suffix *-(e)n-* takes up the plurality of the Nominative argument, be it transitive direct object or intransitive subject[20] — please pay attention to the divergent underlying morphology:

TABLE 2

Active vs Passive Forms of the Aorist of *-vs-* 'fill'

ACTIVE	PASSIVE
aɣ.v.ø.i.vs.ə me igi	aɣ.v.i.vs.ə me
aɣ.ø.ø.i.vs.ə šen igi	aɣ.ø.i.vs.ə šen
aɣ.ø.i.vs.o man igi	aɣ.i.vs.o igi[21]
aɣ.v.ø.i.vs.ən.i.t tšwen igini	aɣ.v.i.vs.ən.i.t tšwen
aɣ.ø.ø.i.vs.ən.i.t tkwen igini	aɣ.ø.i.vs.ən.i.t tkwen
aɣ.ø.i.vs.n.əs mat igini	aɣ.i.vs.nəs igini

Two interesting (post-khanmet'i) forms, cited from the same source (p.312), can be seen in (49) and (50) (again where the underlying morphological breakdown demonstrates the distinction):

49 herodɛ   š.ø.i.mos.a   sa(.)mos(.)əl.i   sa(.)məp(.)ə.j
    Herod(ABSOL) PREV.it.SV.don.he(-AOR) clothing.NOM   regal.AGR
    'Herod donned royal apparel' (Acts 12.21 = Active voice)

vs

50 š.i.mos.a   mə(.)sam(.)ə.d ts'midaj   əsə ts'igni
    PREV.PASS.clothe.it(-AOR)   third.ADV   holy.AGR   this book.NOM
    t'q'av.itə   zrox.isa.jtə
    skin.INST   cow.GEN.INST
    'This holy book was bound (clothed) for a third time in bovine leather' (Sinai Polycephalon 282.3 = Passive voice)

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[20] The active conjugation means 'I etc. filled it/them up', whilst the passive conjugation signifies 'I etc. was filled'.

[21] The original here mistakenly presents the subject-pronoun in the Ergative (viz. man), rather than the Nominative (igi).

Before laying out my proposal to explain the apparently unwarranted appearances of the χ-prefix in khanmet'i texts, we need to review the neat hypothesis that accounts for the differing morpho-syntax that was presented above as characterising transitive verbs shifting between the 1st and the IInd Series of screeves. The hypothesis (see Aronson 1979) is that the original opposition between the two Series was one of aspect (not tense). Series II was perfective in aspect and required Ergative(-Absolutive) alignment. Anti-passivisation is then assumed to have applied to produce aspectually imperfective verb-forms, which, crucially were thus intransitive, the original direct object present in the Ergative alignment of Series II being demoted to the indirect object position and thus requiring to be marked by the Dative case. Once the original direct object was thus transformed into an indirect object, it would, if 3rd person, naturally be marked in the anti-passivised screeves, which ultimately (but long ago) gave rise to the Ist Series transitive verbs, by the χ-prefix, seen in such examples as 46 and 48 above; and, even if by the time the khanmet'i texts were composed, the Dative entity concerned had been reinterpreted as the verb's DIRect object (as it is analysed today), the presence of the χ-prefix will have been a reflection of its earlier INdirect-object status.

Now, suppose that at some stage after anti-passivisation had applied a pseudo-passive construction of the type illustrated above in 44 for Abkhaz existed in the language. The element tav- 'head' (tav.s in the Dative) can be assumed to have played the role of reflexive pronoun (as it still does to this day). Being a 3rd person argument, it would have been marked in 1st Series' verbs by the χ-prefix. Because of its predictability when functioning in this way alongside verbs that presumably (because of the sense required by the feature of reflexivity) always carried the Subjective Versioniser i-, it could well have been dropped, thereby leaving the prefixal sequence χ-i- to be reinterpreted as a complex reflexive marker, indivisible when the subject was 3rd person, and perhaps seemingly so when the subject was 2nd person (one of the two χ- prefixes being dropped), but split by metathesis in the presence of the 1st person subject-prefix. As intransitive (passive) conjugational paradigms came to be developed, the prefixal intransitives/passives in Series I (and even in II) will have been marked not, as in Late Old and Modern Georgian, by i-alone but by the complex unit χ(+)i-, which would have been unexceptional in all three persons, since the reflexive nuance would naturally have applied to them all. Coincidentally, it so happens that a form of the verb seen in the last two examples (49 and 50) is attested in the khanmet'i corpus. The example comes from Luke 16.19 (cited from Kadzhaia 1984.110), where I leave the relevant χ(+)i-sequence (in both verbs in the quote) unglossed:

51 k'ats.i   vinme   χ(+)i.q'o   mdidar.i   da χ(+)i.mossb.od.a
    man.NOM certain ?.was(-AOR) rich.AGR and ?.dress.TS.EXT.he(-

IMPERF)

dzɔts'ɑul.itɑ   dɑ   bisɔn.itɑ

purple.INST and fine-linen.INST

'There was a certain wealthy man, and he (was) dressed in purple and fine linen'

(cf. the middle voice ἐνεδιδύ σκετο in the original Ancient Greek text here)

Interestingly, the second verb in 51, clearly exhibiting intransitive/passive morphology, translates the middle-voiced form ἐνεδιδύ σκετο of the Greek text[22]. We know that the verb is intransitive/passive because its active voice counterpart would be as presented in 52 (in both its khanmet'i and post-khanmet'i guise):

52   (χ(+))i.mɔsɛb.d.ɑ

'X was donning (article of clothing) Y'

Here the active-voice root-extension -d- replaces the -od- of the intransitive/passive 1st Series paradigms to produce the transitive (active-voice) Imperfect stem.

It remains to point out the reason why the χ(+)i-sequence is found throughout the paradigm of the Aorist of the copula, with which we began this section of our discussion. Originally, the copula had no true (intransitive) Aorist of its own but borrowed the prefixal intransitive/passive Aorist from the root q'(a)v- 'make, do' — semantically, 'that which was made' comes into existence and thus 'was', i.e. 'existed', in the same way as what has become the Future of the copula in Modern Georgian, namely i.kn.ɛb.ɑ 'X will be', is similarly in origin the Present prefixal passive of another root for 'make, do', namely k(m(ɛ))n-), cf. the Present tense khanmet'i-paradigm for this passive in Table 3 (once more slightly adapted from Imnaishvili & Imnaishvili 1996.54):

TABLE 3

Present Khanmet'i Tense of 'be made'

χ.w.i.kmnɛb.i ⇐ *χ.u.i.kmn.ɛb.i[23]	I am made
χ.i.kmnɛb.i	you are made
χ.i.kmnɛb.i.s	X is made
χ.w.i.kmnɛb.i.t	we are made
χ.i.kmnɛb.i.t	you(PL) are made
χ.i.kmnɛb.i.ɑn	they are made

The hypothesis advanced above may be compared with that very tentatively proposed by Tuite (1991.43-49), who suggested that the problematic occurrences of χ- in prefixal intransitives/passives marked a 3rd person agent, despite the fact that

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[22] We can see that the form is middle and not passive in Greek by virtue of taking direct objects in the Accusative case. Two renderings of this passage are available in Modern Georgian; one of them the active-voiced, subjective versional form ɣ-i.tsɣ.ɑm.d.ɑ 'he used to don them' (with clothing standing in the Dative as the verb's direct objects), whilst the other uses the Stative form ɣ-ɛ.tsɣ.ɑ 'he used to wear them' (with the clothing standing in the Nominative as the Stative verb's subject).

[23] Again, metathesis of the first two elements is assumed to have occurred.

most agents were (and, indeed, are still) deleted in Georgian during the application of the passive transformation, and, in any case, not all agents would have been 3rd person. During his discussion of the phenomenon, Tuite (rightly, I think) rejected the proposal (citing Gamq'relidze 1979.47 as a source) that the prefix might even have marked 3rd person direct objects for IInd Series' active transitives, for which usage there is absolutely no evidence[24], and then been simply raised to subject-status under passivisation. Of course, even if the prefix could have so marked 3rd person direct objects for IInd Series' active transitives, the passivisation-argument could not have explained its presence with 1st person subjects in prefixal intransitives/passives, a difficulty not faced by the retained reflexive analysis put forward here, since, as stated above, reflexivisation would have characterised all three persons.

And with this proposal I close this personal selection of interesting grammatical features by observing how privileged I think we should feel in still having at our disposal such wonderfully rich and challenging languages as those in the Caucasus which we have elected to make the object of our individual researches.

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[24] Apparently, Uturgaidze (2002.21ff.) argues that the prefix will originally have marked a 3rd person DIRect object with transitive verbs also in Series II but that this usage must (for some strange reason) have been lost early in the literary language. I am grateful to Tamar Makharoblidze (personal communication) for drawing this hypothesis to my attention.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABS = Absolute
ABSOL = Absolutive
ADJ = Adjective
ADV = Adverb(ial)
AGR = Agreement
AOR = Aorist
ART = Article
CAUS = Causative
DAT = Dative
DYN = Dynamic
EMPH = Emphatic
ERG = Ergative
EXCESS = Excessive
EXT = Extension
FIN = Finite
FUT1 = Future 1
GEN = Genitive
HUM = Human
IMPERF = Imperfect
INST = Instrumental

ITER = Iterative
MASC = Masculine
MASD = Masdar
NFIN = Non-finite
NOM = Nominative
OV = Objective Version
PASS = Passive
PAST INDEF = Past Indefinite
PL = Plural
POT = Potential
PRES = Present
PREV = Preverb
PROH = Prohibition
QU = Question
REC = Reciprocal
STAT = Stative
SUFF = Suffix
SV = Subjective Version
TS = Thematic Suffix

Doncaster (UK)
11 November 2012