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## Volume 54

*Studies in Evidentiality*

Edited by Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald and R. M. W. Dixon

# Studies in Evidentiality

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## CHAPTER 11

# Evidential category and evidential strategy in Abkhaz

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### 1. Abkhaz: General information<sup>1</sup>

Abkhaz, together with Circassian and the recently extinct Ubykh, belongs to the small Abkhazo-Adyghean (or West Caucasian) language family. West Caucasian is one of three indigenous language families spoken in the Caucasus, the others being East Caucasian, or Nakh-Daghestanian, and Kartvelian, or South Caucasian.

Abkhaz consists of three dialect groups: the northern one, including Tapanta Abaza, the southern one, or Abkhaz proper (with such dialects as Abzhywa, Bzyp, Sadz and Ahchypsy), and Ashkharywa, which, though closer to the southern group, can in general be regarded as intermediate between the northern and the southern groups.

Abkhaz has an elaborately developed verbal system. The verb is characterized by polypersonalism, the verb-form being able to encode up to 4 arguments. The striking feature of Abkhaz is that it operates its ergative strategy without the use of overt case-marking, the ergativity being expressed by virtue of form and position of class/person prefixes. Verbs are grouped into dynamic or stative, which differ, in particular, in the number of tenses: stative verbs lack the majority of tenses possessed by their dynamic counterparts. Verbs distinguish also finite and non-finite forms.

Polysynthesis is another salient feature of Abkhaz; the verb-form consists of a long string of prefixes (expressing grammatical and directional meanings), while less numerous suffixes serve as bearers of temporal, aspectual and some other meanings.

Abkhaz tenses form two symmetrical groups, the formal criterion for the distinction between them being the use of either *-t'* or *-n* as the ending of fi-



nite forms of dynamic verbs. The general scheme of the dynamic verb tenses is as follows:

First Tense Group:	Present, Aorist, Future I, Future II, Perfect.
Second Tense Group:	Imperfect, Past Indefinite, Future Conditional I, Future Conditional II, Pluperfect.

Abkhaz is the only West Caucasian language which has a category of grammatical noun class, subdivided into the class of humans (HUM) and non-humans (NHUM). The former is further subdivided into masculine (MASC) and feminine (FEM). The class system finds its expression in verbal, pronominal and number systems.

## 2. Evidential category and evidential strategy

Abkhaz has a straightforward and in most cases grammatically autonomous (i.e. not overlapping with other categories) system of coding evidentiality. In Abkhaz evidentiality is an obligatory grammatical category.

The Abkhaz evidential forms were briefly discussed already in the first Abkhaz grammar written by the Russian general and linguist Baron Peter Uslar. Uslar (1887:23) seems to have noticed the presence of Inferential II forms only (with suffix *-za[a]rən*), which he mistakenly identified as belonging to the domain of the conditional mood ('zavisimoe ot uslovija' = 'dependent on condition'). The Georgian linguist Lomtadze in her two important articles (1954; 1955, cf. also 1988) discussed the origin of inferential markers in Abkhaz(-Abaza). The Abkhaz linguist Chkadua (1970:201–202) regards inferentials as intermediate formations between the temporal forms of indicative and the mood forms. According to her colleague Aristava (1982:86), though the inferential category in Abkhaz is not regarded in the specialist literature as belonging to the 'mood' domain, it can be qualified as one of the forms of the indicative, "combining the objective-real meaning with the subjective-problematic meaning".

The 1979a article by Hewitt is specially devoted to the inferential category in Abkhaz. Hewitt discusses the semantics of Abkhaz inferentials and possible explanations of the origin of this category. In his Abkhaz grammar, Hewitt (1979b:196) describes the inferential mood under the sub-rubric of 'authority for assertion', specifying it as expressing an assertion made as a result of inference or hearsay.

The evidential category is a pan-Caucasian phenomenon, present in one or another form in the majority of, if not all, Caucasian languages. From a broader areal perspective, the Caucasus is known to form a so-called 'evidentiality belt' encompassing also Asia Minor and the Balkans. Donabedian (2001:429) calls this area the 'Balkan-Caucasian continuum'.

Of recent publications on evidentiality in Kartvelian languages, see the discussion of Svan by Sumbatova (1999) and of Georgian by Boeder (2000). On evidentiality in Daghestanian languages see, in particular, publications on Tsakhur edited by Kibrik and Testelefs (1999), on Lak by Friedman (2000), and a more general survey by Tatevosov (1998).

Evidential category in Abkhaz, according to Aikhenvald's classification, can be generally determined as a basic two-term system A2 (cf. Aikhenvald, Chapter 1), i.e. 'non-firsthand and everything else', though evidentials in Abkhaz have also unwitnessed and reported readings.

### *Evidential Category*

*Inferential.* Verb stem + inferential suffixes *-zaap'* (Inferential I)/*-zaarən* (Inferential II).

*Evidential Strategy.* Besides having a distinct morphological category, Abkhaz also uses a range of other grammatical and lexical means to express the evidential strategy. These are: (a) the quotative particle *h<sup>o</sup>a* (cf. §4.1) and (b) the reportative verb *a-h<sup>o</sup>a-ra* 'to tell, say' (§4.2).

## 3. Inferential

### 3.1 Formal expression

Inferential meanings are expressed by adding to the verbal stem of the compound suffixes *-z+aa+p'* or *-z+aa+rən+n*, sometimes referred to as Inferential I and II. The frequency of the suffix *-zaarən* is much lower than that of *-zaap'*. Both forms are neutral as to the tense distinctions and can refer either to past, present or future, the bearer of temporal (and aspectual) meaning being the stem provided by appropriate suffixes. In the verb-form inferential markers occupy the right-most position, reserved for the ending slot. The rare exception to this rule is the adding to the verb-form of the emphatic particle *-aj* (cf. example (9) below).



### 3.2 Semantics of inferentials

Three main meanings of Abkhaz inferentials can be singled out: (a) *unwitnessed (reported)*, (b) *commentative* and (c) *mirative*. Within the scope of these three terms, a variety of subtler contextually determined nuances can be encountered, such as uncertainty as to the information conveyed, speculation, conjecture, logical deduction, tentative conclusion, summary or judgment, surprise discovery, sudden realization, a guess, etc. On the other hand, the non-inferential, zero-marked term would refer to 'everything else'.

The speaker uses inferential forms to emphasize the fact that they do not take responsibility or authority over the assertion, or that they were not a witness or direct participant in the event described, or to give additional background information to the narrated event. The Inferential can refer to situations when certain (past) facts or events are inferred, assumed, presumed or logically deduced from their observable results. The speaker can be an actual observer of the action, but, as a norm, not a direct or conscious participant of the event. Inferential forms can be translated into English as 'apparently', 'evidently', 'seemingly', 'as it turns/turned out'.

Below are examples of a range of evidential nuances, grouped under the sub-rubrics of *unwitnessed*, *commentative* and *mirative*.

#### 3.2.1 Unwitnessed (Reported)

Here the Russian term *zaglaznoe naklonenie* ('out-of-sight mood') is justified, as 'unwitnessed' refers to events of which the narrator was not a direct observer or a witness, their knowledge being based on what they heard from other people (hearsay), or came to know in a way other than direct observation. Sometimes the reported aspect of inferentials is reinforced by expressions like *jə-z+la-r-h°a-wa a-la* 'as they say'. The following are some of the nuances of the 'unwitnessed/reported'.

- (1) a-laša+ra-x', a-mca-x' d-an-aa-j-ø,  
ART-light-DIR ART-fire-DIR (s)he-when-hither-come-AOR:NFIN  
lə-la-k°a ø-q'apš'-za jə-q'a-n, d-c°əwa-zaarən.  
her-eye-PL it-red-ADV it-be-PAST (s)he-cry-INFER2  
'When she came up to the light, to the fire, her eyes were very red; apparently, she had been crying.' (DG)

- (2) l-x°əč'ə d-anə-l-ba-ø a-c°əwa-ra  
her-child him/her-when-she-see-AOR:NFIN ART-cry-DN  
d-a-la+ga-zaap'.  
(s)he-it-begin-INFER1  
'When she saw her child, she reportedly started crying.' (Aristava 1982:88)
- (3) ø-až°ə+t°+w-aa jə-z+l-a-r-h°-wa a-la,  
ART-old+human-PL it-how-about-they-tell-PRES:DYN:NFIN it-by  
a-p'ap' jə-w+aa+h°-c°a a-h°a øə-r-q'aa-nə, a-la  
ART-priest his-helper-PL ART-pig it-CAUS-shriek-PABS ART-dog  
ø-r-zə-j-š'-zaap'.  
it-them-for-he-kill-INFER1  
'As it was recounted by old people, having made the pig cry, the priest reportedly killed (and served) the dog for his helpers.' (Anshba 55)

#### 3.2.2 Commentative

When used in the 'commentative' function, the inferential forms serve to concentrate the listener's attention on certain focal points of the unfolding intrigue or to give background-information known to the narrator, but not to the listener. Though sometimes the inferential form in this function contains a tinge of inference or the unwitnessed (reported), the main meaning of the form in question is rather provision of background information or comment, which allows us to regard 'commentative' as a relatively independent meaning, on a par with inference and unwitnessed.

(4) A giant observes the battle of two protagonists and then makes a tentative conclusion:

- "ar+t ø-nə-(a)j+ba-r-c°a-wa-zaap",  
these they-PREV-REC-CAUS-perish-PROGR<sup>2</sup>-INFER1  
ø-jə-h°a-n, až°  
it-he-say-PINDEF one:HUM  
d-aa-š'tə-j-xə-n j-ar/a mag°  
him/her-hither-from.ground-he-take-PINDEF his-right boot  
d-ta-jə-r-t°+a-ø-jt'.  
him/her-inside-he-CAUS-sit-AOR-DYN:FIN  
'"They are apparently killing each other," having said (this), he picked up one of them and put him into his right boot.' (Marr 13)



Note that in (4) the inference (assumption) is based on a direct observation by the protagonist, who however, until a certain moment, was not a direct participant, but only an outside observer of the action.

(5) In a story about a person who gained power over a mermaid by cutting off and hiding a lock of her hair, the verb forms used are non-inferential until the narrator comes to an important remark that the person's little daughter saw where her father hid the mermaid's hair:

a-x°əč°ə jə-l-ba-zaap'.  
ART-child it-she-see-INFER1

'The child, as it turned out, saw it.' (Anshba 79)

The choice of this particular verb to be marked by an inferential marker is strategically important, as this knowledge led to a dramatic consequence. Cunningly, the mermaid makes the naïve child tell her the whereabouts of her hair, takes possession of it, kills the child and disappears.

(6) A young man is visited in his dreams by a devil woman who insists on marrying him. The man tells his friend about the nightmare and adds that he is going to kill the she-devil. Soon the news about the man's suicide comes. The story ends with the narrator's comment, which might as well reflect the victim's friend's thoughts:

pxə3-la jə-jə-ba-wa+z a-ph°əs  
dream-INSTR it-he-see-IMPERF:NFIN ART-woman  
d-l-aj+x+sə-z ø-ž+s'a-ø, rəcha, jə-xə  
(s)he-her-shoot-PINDEF:NFIN it-think-PABS:NFIN poor.soul his-head  
j-a-g°ə+də-j-c'a-zaap'.  
it-it°3-PREV-he-put-INFER1  
'Having thought that he was shooting at the woman in his dream, he, poor soul, as it turned out, shot himself.' (Anshba 81)

### 3.2.3 *Mirative*

An inferential can, depending on the context, acquire mirative overtones, which imply a sudden realization or a surprise discovery, a surprise confirmation of a certain knowledge or reputation.

(7) The Prince of Abkhazia is visiting a peasant. The latter is entertaining the high guest with stories, while the prince sometimes asks about the details. Apparently they were speaking loudly, because the host's child started crying in its cradle. The prince is surprised, as he was not aware of the presence of the child. He exclaims:

sa+ra jə-s-ajha+bə-w a-wa+j°-dəw-c°q°a abra  
I it-me-elder-PRES:STAT:NFIN ART-man-big-really here  
də-q'a-zaap'.  
(s)he-be-INFER1  
'It turns out (unexpectedly) that there is really a great person here who is more important than me!' (DG 175)

Mirative semantics can be reinforced by the use of emphatic words or the emphatic particle *-aj*.

(8) A person, having met another character called Arsana after some time, is perplexed by the fact that Arsana's hair had turned grey. Though the person does not doubt the actual exactness of his observation, he expresses his surprise at this fact by means of the inferential form combined with the emphatic interjection *ž'əm*:

arsana, wə-xə ø-šla-zaap', ž'əm.  
Arsana your-head it-grey-INFER1 INTERJ  
'Arsana, your hair (lit. head) is apparently grey, man!'  
(Aristava & Chkadua 1966: 154)

(9) The use of the emphatic suffix *-aj*:

j-a+ba-ž'a-sə-m-s'a-wa - a-g°ə+m+s°a  
it-INTER-PREV-I-not-evaluate-PRES:DYN:NFIN ART-brave  
w-ak°-zaap'-aj.  
you-be-INFER1-EMPH  
'Why shouldn't I be surprised – you are evidently (really) a brave soul.'  
(Hewitt & Khiba 1998: 96, 207)

## 3.3 Correlation of inferentials with other grammatical categories

### 3.3.1 *Tense*

As previously stated, the inferential markers are temporally neutral, the bearer of temporal meanings being the stem. Inferentials I and II possess a symmetrical tense system, Inferential I being used in the first tense group, Inferential II in the second. In contrast to indicative forms, inferentials lack Future I and Future Conditional I, respectively. In narrations, the inferentials refer primarily to present and past events, future inferentials being quite rare.

(a) *Dynamic Verbs.* Dynamic verbs designate actions rather than states. Their marker in positive declarative forms in the First Tense Group is *-jt'*, which oc-



cupies the right-most position in the verb-form (if not followed by the emphatic clitic *-aj*). In the inferential form, the inferential marker replaces the finite marker, cf. Present *də-r-ga-wa-jt* 'they are taking her/him' vs. *də-r-ga-wa-zaap* 'apparently they are taking her/him', Aorist *də-r-ga-ə-jt* 'they took her/him' vs. *də-r-ga-zaap* 'apparently they took her/him', Future II *də-r-ga-š-t* 'they will take her/him' vs. *də-r-ga-ša-zaap* 'apparently they will take her/him', etc. In the Second Tense Group the finite marker is *-n*, which is replaced in the inferential form by the suffix *-zaarən*, cf. Imperfect *də-r-ga-wa-n* 'they were taking her/him' vs. *də-r-ga-wa-zaarən* 'apparently they were taking her/him', Past Indefinite *də-r-ga-n* 'they took her/him and...' vs. *də-r-ga-zaarən* 'apparently they took her/him and...', Future Conditional II *də-r-ga-ša-n* 'they would (have) take(n) her/him' vs. *də-r-ga-ša-zaarən* 'apparently they would (have) take(n) her/him', etc.

Note that the Future II inferential form is rather rarely used, and the Future Conditional II inferential is only theoretically possible, being regarded as 'artificial' (cf. Chkadua 1970:75).

(b) *Stative Verbs*. Stative verbs possess an elementary tense system, consisting of present and past, cf. *də-c°a-wə-p* '(s)he is sleeping' vs. *də-c°a-zaap* 'apparently (s)he is sleeping', *də-c°a-n* '(s)he was sleeping' vs. *də-c°a-zaarən* 'apparently (s)he was sleeping'.

(c) *'Derived' Future Tenses*. Stative verb stems can form future tenses when the suffix *-zaa* is added, but in this case they acquire formally dynamic morphology (cf. Hewitt 1979b:204). Such formations are said to lack inferential forms, though the 'Derived' Future I marker *-zaa-p* (cf. *də-q°a-zaa-p* '(s)he will be') is actually the same Inferential I suffix used in the (original) temporal function (see §3.11). Use of the 'Derived' Future I form with a temporal rather than inferential meaning is quite rare, and here too the shade of inferentiality is not altogether absent.

- (10) *mj°a-k*      *ə-a-lə-j-x-wa-jt*,      *abrəj a-mj°a*  
 way-INDEF.SG it-it-PREV-he-take.off-PROG-DYN:FIN this ART-way  
*sə-k°-zaap*...  
 I-be.on.top-INFER1  
 'He chooses a certain way, I shall be following this way.'  
 (Aristava & Chkadua 1966:156)

- (11) *Sa+ra s°-sə-la-z*,      *Sa+r-g'ə s°a+ra*  
 I you(PL)-(in)me-be.amidst-IMPER:STAT I-and you(PL)  
*s-s°ə-la-zaap*.  
 I-(in)you-be.amidst-INFER1  
 'Abide in me, and I shall abide in you.'  
 (John 15.4; cited from Lomtadze 1988)

The Inferential II suffix can also express temporal (future) semantics, which is especially clear in sentences containing conditional clauses:

- (12) *ha+ra ha-q°a-m-za+r*,      *j-ag'araan*  
 we we-be-not-COND it-many times  
*ə-aj+mə-r-c°a-x'a-zaarən*      *arəj s°ə-dg'əl*  
 they-PREV-CAUS-rob-PERF-INFER2 this your(PL)-land  
 'If it were not for us, they would probably have robbed your land many times.' (Ixxu asarkial 18)

These examples are remarkable in the sense that here the evidential forms shift from pure evidential semantics void of any temporal dimension to the expression of tense with some evidential extension.

### 3.4 Negation

Negation adds nothing specific into the formation of evidential forms. In dynamic verbs the negative particle *-m-* occupies a pre-radical position (in present tense a (less preferable) variant is possible with the negation suffix postposed). As in other languages with negated inferentials, in Abkhaz too the scope of negation is the action itself, not the source of information, cf. *d-rə-m-ga-wa-zaap* 'him/her-they-not-carry-PROG-INFER1 'apparently they are not taking him/her', *d-rə-m-ga-x'a-zaarən* 'him/her-they-not-carry-PERF-INFER2 'apparently they have not taken him/her', etc. In stative verbs: *də-c°a-m-zaap* '(s)he-sleep-not-INFER1 'apparently (s)he is not sleeping'.

### 3.5 Person

Inferentials in Abkhaz can be used without restriction with all persons, first person included. When used with the 1st person, the inferential suffix emphasizes the distance or detachment between the speaker and their action(s). This can refer to such situations as dreams, actions carried out under the influence of alcohol, or when the speaker's actions have been performed without their



conscious control and come to them as a surprise. The combination of the 1st person with Inferential often creates mirative overtones. Even when directly and consciously involved in a certain situation, by using an inferential in the first person, the speaker undergoes a kind of personality split and, making a mental sidestep, makes a comment on their own action(s) as if observed or judged by an outside observer. Examples:

(13) This is a variant of the sentence in (4), this time with the 1st person plural. Being directly involved in the fight, the speaker comments on the situation:

*ha+ra h-nə-(a)j+ba-r-c°a-wa-zaap'.*  
we we-thither-together-CAUS-exterminate-PROGR-INFER1  
'We are apparently killing each other.'

(14) *jə-s-s°a-x'a-zaap', wə-m-ba-wa-j, nās, a-para-k°a.*  
it-I-pay-PERF-INFER1 you-not-see-PROGR-INTER then ART-money-PL  
'Don't you see, apparently I have already paid the money.'  
(Chkadua 1970:203)

### 3.6 Mood

Inferentials do not combine with those moods whose markers occupy the same (final) slot as the inferential suffixes. These are Conditional, Optative, Intentional, (present) Debitive, and Subjunctive. Inferentials and Imperative are also mutually exclusive, as the latter is based on non-finite forms. At the same time, there are no restrictions on combining inferentials with those moods which are marked with prefixes rather than suffixes.

#### 3.6.1 The potential category

The potential category, which expresses (im)possibility or (in)capability, is formed by means of the potential prefix *zə-*. Inferential and potential markers can coincide within one verb-form:

(15) *jə-s-z-aj+lə-m-k'+aa-ə-jt'* vs. *jə-s-z-aj+lə-m-k'+aa-zaap'*  
it-I-POT-PREV-NEG-ROOT-AOR-DYN:FIN it-I-POT-PREV-NEG-ROOT-INFER1  
'I did not understand it.' 'Apparently I did not understand it.'

Analytic formation of potential, making use of the auxiliary verb *a-l+ša-ra* 'to be able, capable', is also possible:

(16) *a-ca-ra ə-jə-l+ša-wa-jt'* vs. *a-ca-ra ə-jə-l+ša-wa-zaap'*  
ART-go-DN it-he-able-PROGR-DYN:FIN ART-go-DN it-he-able-PROGR-INFER1  
'He can go.' 'Apparently he can go.'

#### 3.6.2 The debitive mood

The debitive mood, whose semantics is the expression of necessity or obligation, is formed by the Conditional plus the present or past form of the copular verb. The debitive is incompatible with the inferential unless it is formed analytically (as, in particular, in the past tense), whereby the debitive marker is placed on the main verb, and the inferential marker on the auxiliary.

(17) *jə-ca-r ə-ak°ə-n* vs. *jə-ca-r ə-ak°-zaarən*  
it/they-go-COND it-be-PAST:STAT:FIN it/they-go-COND it-be-INFER2  
'It/they had to go.' 'It/they apparently had to go.'

The same principle applies with other auxiliary verbs under the debitive construction. The debitive inferential is also possible when the debitive is formed by means of the 'transformative' suffix *-t°ə*:

(18) *jə-ga-t°ə-wə-p'* vs. *jə-ga-t°ə-zaap'*  
it-carry-DEB-PRES:STAT:FIN it-carry-DEB-INFER1  
'It must be taken.' 'Apparently it must be taken.'

#### 3.6.3 The pretensive mood

Pretensive mood is formed by adding the pretensive suffix *-s°a* 'as if' to the stem of the main verb plus an appropriate form of the auxiliary verb. Its main semantics is to express a semblance of an action or state.

(19) *la+r-g'ə d-aa-gəla-s°a* *ə-l-wə-ə-jt'.*  
she-and (s)he-hither-stand.up-as.if it-she-do-AOR-DYN:FIN  
'She also pretended she were standing up.'

(20) *la+r-g'ə d-aa-gəla-s°a* *ə-l-wə-zaap'.*  
she-and she-hither-stand.up-as.if it-she-do-INFER1  
'She also apparently pretended she were standing up.'

#### 3.6.4 The nonvolitional mood

Abkhaz has morphological devices to express involuntary, nonvolitional or unintentional actions, which can also include the first person. For this purpose the prefix *-amxa-* is used, which denotes actions performed without the will of the referent. Inferentiality can combine with this category.



- (21) *s-amxa-c°a-ø-jt'* vs. *s-amxa-c°a-zaap'*.  
 I-NVOL-sleep-AOR-DYN:FIN I-NVOL-sleep-INFER1  
 'Involuntarily I fell asleep.' 'Apparently I involuntarily fell asleep.'

### 3.6.5 The detrimental mood

Actions which occur to the detriment of the person affected, are marked by the prefix *-c°a-*:

- (22) *jə-s-c°ə-j-ga-ø-jt'* vs. *jə-s-c°ə-j-ga-zaap'*  
 it-I-DETR-he-take-AOR-DYN:FIN it-I-DETR-he-take-INFER1  
 'He took it from me against my will.' 'Apparently he took it from me against my will.'

### 3.7 Restrictions on clause types

Formally inferentials are finite verbs and occur exclusively in declarative (both positive and negative) main clauses. Inferentials are not possible in relative (subordinate) clauses, which include nonfinite verb-forms. The only exceptions concern finite clauses containing the emphatic suffix *-aj* (phonetically *-ej*), one of the few elements, which can appear after the finite marker. Cf. *d-ca-jt'* '(s)he went' vs. *d-ca-jt'-aj* '(s)he did go!' vs. *d-ca-zaap'-aj* '(s)he evidently did go!'. Adding the emphatic suffix does not change the finite status of the form in question.

Inferentials are however quite normal in compound sentences where both clauses contain finite forms:

- (23) *aʒ°ə jə-zə j-aša-w j-ag°ə jə-zə*  
 one:HUM he-for it-bitter-PRES:STAT:NFIN it-another he-for  
*jə-xaa-zaap', aʒ°ə jə-zə jə-xaa-w j-ag°ə*  
 it-sweet-INFER1 one:HUM he-for it-sweet-PRES:STAT:NFIN it-another  
*jə-zə j-aša-zaap'.*  
 he-for it-bitter-INFER1  
 'What is bitter for someone, appears to be sweet for the other, what is sweet for someone, appears to be bitter for the other.'  
 (Aristava & Chkadua 1966: 155)

Inferentials are not possible in interrogative or imperative clauses, which are based on nonfinite verb-forms. On the other hand, inferentials can be used in echo-questions formed with the help of the interrogative clitic *ba*, used when the questioner is seeking confirmation for the statement, and which do not per se require a non-finite form. Consider, for instance, a statement con-

taining an inferential form and a reaction to this statement in the form of an echo-question: *a-j°nə-q'a d-ca-zaap'* 'apparently he went home'; *a-j°nə-q'a d-ca-zaap' ba?* '(you say) he apparently went home?'. Note that the clitic *ba* in echo-questions brings in a tinge of disbelief.

Inferentials can be combined with quotatives (see example (37) in §5.2).

### 3.8 Aspect

There are no obvious restrictions on the co-occurrence of inferentials with any of the aspectual forms, aspectual affixes occupying the slot preceding the final position reserved for inferentials. Consider repetitive forms with the suffix *-la*: *d-ca-la-wa-zaap'* '(s)he apparently goes regularly'; excessive forms with the suffix *-c°a*: *də-pxa+š'a-c°a-zaap'* 'apparently (s)he is extremely shy'; intensive forms with the suffix *-ʒa*: *jə-l-g°a+a+pxa-ʒa-zaap'* 'apparently she liked it very much'; emphatic forms with the suffix *-c°q°a*: *jə-l-g°a+a+pxa-c°q°a-zaap'* 'apparently she really liked it', etc.

### 3.9 Stylistic remarks

Inferentials are quite usual in all kinds of narratives, especially in stories, fairy-tales, legends, personal accounts, everyday conversations, and various literary genres, including prose and poetry. Sometimes folklore texts are introduced by an inferential form signaling the fact that the narrator heard the story from somebody else and does not vouch for its actual truth. Consider, for instance, the initial phrase of the story no. 384 in Anshba's collection of Abkhaz folklore:

- (24) *jə-q'a-zaarən xac'a-k'ə-j ph°əs-k'ə-j.*  
 they-be-INFER2 man-INDEF.SG-and woman-INDEF.SG-and  
 'There lived reportedly a husband and wife.' (Anshba 1995: 262)

Depending on the context, inferential forms can underline a slight irony, uncertainty, or distance from the assertion the speaker makes. As well, they can be used as a 'challenging' device to make a narration more vivid, or to focus attention on important parts of the story.

### 3.10 Discourse-pragmatic aspects

From the point of view of pragmatic functions, inferentials are characterized by a high degree of focality: they are more usual in the focus/comment part of the sentence than in its topical part, which can be seen in the following examples:



- (25) *sa+ra a-sk'ol-ax' s-ca-wa-zaap'.*  
 I ART-school-DIR I-go-PROGR-INFERI  
 'Apparently I am going to school.' (the focus is on the inferential verb)

vs.

- (26) *sa+ra s-ak'-zaap' a-sk'ol-ax' jə-ca-wa.*  
 I I-be-INFERI ART-school-DIR who-go-PRES:DYN:NFIN  
 'Apparently it is I who is going to school.' (the topic is the inferential form of the copular verb)

### 3.11 Historical and etymological remarks

Lomtatidze (1955: 183), Aristava and Chkadua (1966: 155–156) and Hewitt (1979a) proposed the temporal origin of the inferential suffixes in Abkhaz and indicated, in particular, their historical connection with future tenses. More specifically, Hewitt (1979a: 91) suggested that the suffixes of Inference I and II were originally the markers of Future I (in the First Tense Group) and Future Conditional I (in the Second Tense Group) of stative verbs. It is from the stative Future and stative Future Conditional that they penetrated the dynamic forms to express the new category, Inferentiality. Following is a discussion of the origin of inferential markers in some more detail.

#### 3.11.1 Suffix *-z+aa+p'*

The Inferential I suffix consists of three segments: *-z+aa+p'*. The last of these is most probably related to the suffix *-p'* of dynamic verbs belonging to the First Tense Group, which serves as the marker of both finiteness and of Future I tense (*s-ca-p'* 'I shall (shortly) go'). As well, it is probably etymologically connected with the finite marker *-p'* of present stative forms: *s-t'a-wə-p'* 'I am sitting' (cf. Lomtatidze 1988: 142). Lomtatidze (1988: 154) quite plausibly suggested the origin of the element *-p'* in all these formations from the copular verb *ak'-be'*, which has undergone the phonetic transformation *k' > p'*.

There is less clarity as to the etymology of the compound segment *-z+aa*, regarded by Spruit (1986: 105) as the dynamic intransitive root *zaa* 'to be'. Beside inferentials, this element is found in such verbal formations as:

Deverbal Noun (Masdar) of *a-q'a-zaa-ra* 'to be, exist';

Stative and Inversive Verbs: *a-ma-zaa-ra* 'to have, possess';

'Derived' Future II Stative *də-q'a-zaa-š-t'* 'he will be';  
 and Dynamic Subjunctive: *də-q'a-zaa-j+t'* 'let him/her be!'; *d-ca-zaa-jt'*  
 'let him/her go!'

Stative Conditional of *jə-ma-zaa-ra-zə* 'in order for him to have'  
 Purpose, Stative Purposive: *də-š'ta-zaa-r(a)+t'* 'in order to be lying'.

It seems that the intrusion of the element *aa* into the inferential suffix *-zaap'* is a relatively late phenomenon, as it does not figure in Tapanta Abaza, cf. Tapanta inferential/probability suffix *-za+p'*. This can also be confirmed by comparison with Abkhaz Conditional suffix *-za+r* (cf. *s-ca-za+r* 'if I go'), which contains the same fricative element as in *-z+aa*.<sup>4</sup> As well, as pointed out by Lomtatidze (1988: 141), the element *z+aa* used as a stative deverbal noun marker has a less common variant *za*, which must represent its older form (cf. such parallel forms as the deverbal abstract noun *aps+ta-za-ra* and *aps+ta-zaa-ra* 'life' in early Abkhaz texts (John 3.16), as well as stative deverbal noun forms with *-za-ra* as used in the Abkhaz-Russian Dictionary published by Marr in 1926, instead of modern *-zaa-ra*). These facts suggest the reconstruction of the Common Abkhaz inferential suffix *\*-za+p'*, preserved unchanged in Tapanta Abaza, but later complicated in southern Abkhaz by the additional element *aa*.

With reference to the etymology of *-za-* in the aforementioned Tapanta Abaza suffix *-za+p'*, Genko (1955: 139) suggested its derivation from the (unattested) verb *\*-za*, envisaged in such (Abkhaz-)Abaza compounds as *pə-za* 'leader' (cf. *pə* 'nose, front'), *za-nə-za* 'spleen' (cf. *za* 'side, rib'), etc. Shakryl (1961: 73) regards *\*-za* as one of the markers of participial forms, whereas Aristava and Chkadua (1966: 154) see in *-za-* a temporal suffix. According to a plausible suggestion by Chkadua (1970: 290), this element was originally a feature of stative verbs only, but was later expanded to dynamic verbs as well. She proposes interpreting the main meaning of *-za-* as the expression of anteriority.

Lomtatidze (1954: 267) connects together *-z < \*-za-* as the marker of durativity (cf. such stative imperative forms as *də-q'a-z* 'let him be!'), the element *-za* in various temporal and aspectual forms, as well as the 'participial' suffix *-za*<sup>5</sup> in formations like *a-š'ta-za-j'ə* (ART-ground-*za*-agent suffix) 'the path finder'. And in her 1955 article (p. 222–223), Lomtatidze proposes etymologically connecting the element *-za* in conditional and other morphemes (thus, also in inferentials) with the past tense non-finite suffix *-z*.

As to the original meaning of the suffix *-za* in all these formations, Lomtatidze regards it as the expression of durativity. But such a conclusion probably needs a more thorough argumentation.



Concerning the element *-aa-*, Lomtadze (1954:267) suggests its original meaning was the marker of the future tense, a claim which also needs to be substantiated. On the other hand, the element *-aa-* is probably historically related to the suffix *-aa-* known as 'root-extension', found in such forms as *a-xə+r+k'+aa-ra* 'enclosing around', *a-š't+pr+aa-ra* 'flying out from beneath', etc.

### 3.11.2 Suffix *-z+aa+rə+n*

This suffix contains the segment *-z+aa*, discussed above and the element *-rə+n*. As suggested by Hewitt (1979a:90), the latter is most probably the Future Conditional I (i.e. a past tense of the Future I) suffix of the Second Tense Group (*s-ca-rə+n* 'I would go'), to which the 'modal' element *-z+aa* was added. The first element in *-rə+n* is the future suffix, the original unreduced form (*-ra*) can be seen in such non-finite forms as *s-an-ca-ra* 'when I shall go' (cf. Hewitt 1979a:90; Lomtadze 1955). The final *-n* is probably the past tense marker of stative verbs (cf. *sə-q'a-n* 'I was'). The Common Abkhaz form of this suffix can be reconstructed as *\*-za+rə+n*.

Whatever the concrete etymological solutions for the elements which form the inferential suffixes, there seems to be little doubt that they came to be used to mark the new category of inferentiality due to the semantic expansion of originally future temporal meanings.

## 4. Evidential strategy

Besides having the distinct evidential category described above, Abkhaz employs other means to express evidential-like meanings, such as reported, inferred, distanced, etc., which do not form a separate category and thus fall under the rubric of evidential strategy. These are: (a) the quotative particle *h<sup>o</sup>a*, and (b) the reportative verb *a-h<sup>o</sup>a-ra* 'to tell, say'.

### 4.1 Quotative particle *h<sup>o</sup>a*

The quotative particle *h<sup>o</sup>a* is an archaic past absolutive of the verb *a-h<sup>o</sup>a-ra* 'to say', whose original form must have been *\*jə-h<sup>o</sup>a* 'having said it'. The particle *h<sup>o</sup>a* is fully grammaticalized, which is corroborated by the fact that it no longer takes the object marker *jə-*, which is obligatory in the past absolutive of transitive verbs, cf. a more regular past absolutive form *jə-h<sup>o</sup>a-nə* 'having said it'. The grammaticalized character of this particle is even more obvious in the Bzyp dialect, where it is often used in a delabialized form (*ha*). The lack of the object

marker in *h<sup>o</sup>a* is explained by its usual post-referential position, in which the 3rd person object marker regularly disappears (N.B. even the full form ending in *-nə* will lose the initial *jə-* if its referent immediately precedes it). The origin of the quotative particle *h<sup>o</sup>a* can thus be seen as the fossilization of the past absolutive form of the verb *a-h<sup>o</sup>a-ra* 'to speak' in an objectless post-referent form *ə-h<sup>o</sup>a* (thus *d-ca-j-t' \*jə-h<sup>o</sup>a* 'having said that (s)he left...' > *d-ca-j-t' ə-h<sup>o</sup>a* > *d-ca-j-t' h<sup>o</sup>a* '(s)he reportedly left').

The quotative particle serves (a) to mark the reported speech (both direct and indirect), and (b) to mark information received indirectly, e.g. via language or hearsay. In both cases the invariant meaning of this particle is the reference to the indirect source of information. Formally, the cases in (b) represent indirect statements embedded into the matrix clause. In (a), the source is explicitly indicated, while in (b), the source of knowledge is unspecified. Therefore, in (b), the speaker assumes less responsibility for the information than in (a).

Consider the following examples. In (27), the particle marks the direct quote containing the hosts' words, while in (28) and (29) the main meaning of the particle is to mark the non-firsthand information conveyed by the narrator.

#### (27) Direct quotation:

"*a-sas-c<sup>o</sup>a ə-aa+j-ə-[j]t*" *h<sup>o</sup>a*  
 ART-guest-PL they-come-AOR-DYN:FIN QUOT  
*jə-r-aj-g<sup>o</sup>ə+r+γa-n jə-r-pə+la-ə-jt*.  
 it-they-together-happy-PINDEF they-them-meet-AOR-DYN:FIN  
 'With the words "The guests arrived!" they happily met them.'  
 (Anshba 239)

#### (28) Indirect quotation:

*d-aa-ʒa-wa-m h<sup>o</sup>a*  
 (s)he-come-EMPH-PROGR-NEG QUOT  
*ə-j-a-s-h<sup>o</sup>a-ə-jt*.  
 it-him-about-I-say-AOR-DYN:FIN  
 'I told him that (s)he will not come.'

#### (29) Embedded indirect statement:

*jə-q'a-n aʒər-jə-pa-c<sup>o</sup>a h<sup>o</sup>a j<sup>o</sup>ə-ʒ'a*  
 they-be-PAST:FIN Adzhyr-his-son-PL QUOT two-HUM  
*ə-aj+š'-c<sup>o</sup>a*.  
 ART-brother-PL  
 'There lived two brothers (reportedly known as) Sons of Adzhyr.'

The quotative particle can co-occur with the Inferential, cf. example (37).



## 4.2 Reportative vs. introductory verb

The functions of the introductory verb *a-h°a-ra* 'to say, speak' are close to those of the particle *h°a*, with which it is etymologically connected. As an introductory verb indicating the author of a quotation, *a-h°a-ra* can take all forms and tenses of dynamic verbs. When used as a reportative device, in narratives, stories, fairy-tales, etc., the verb *a-h°a-ra* is always in Aorist, usually in 3SG HUM:MASC (*jə-jə-h°ə-ə-jt'* lit. 'it-he-say-AOR-DYN:FIN'), but sometimes in the 3PL, which in Abkhaz does not distinguish gender or grammatical noun class (*jə-r-h°ə-ə-jt'* 'it-they-say-AOR-DYN:FIN'). The form *jə-r-h°ə-ə-jt'*/*jə-jə-h°ə-ə-jt'* displays certain grammaticalization features: though it is formally third person singular human/masculine, its reference to number or grammatical class is purely grammatical (i.e. the actual source of the information can be a female, or more than one person), and it can be translated with an impersonal as 'they say', (French) '*on dit*', or 'reportedly'. Its chief meaning is to indicate the reported, unwitnessed nature of the described event. In narrations, the introductory and reportative verbs often co-occur within one clause, the introductory verb, which refers to the author of the quote, coming first, and the (sometimes homophonic) reportative verb, expressing the unwitnessed, reported, non-firsthand character of the described event, following it. Consider the following examples:

a. Direct quotation with the introductory verb *a-h°a-ra* 'to say':

- (30) *"s-an d-aa-ə-jt', a-p'at'əw*  
my-mother (s)he-come-AOR-DYN:FIN ART-respect  
*ə-lə-k°-s-c'a-r-a-wə-p", ə-jə-h°a-ə-jt'.*  
it-her-PREV-I-put-COND-be-PRES:STAT-FIN it-he-say-AOR-DYN:FIN  
'My mother came, I have to show my respect for her,' he said.'  
(Anshba 239)

b. Reportative verb *jə-jə(r)-h°ə-ə-jt'* 'he/they said':

- (31) *də-q'a-n, ə-jə-h°ə-ə-jt', č°k°əna x°əč°ə-k'.*  
(s)he-be-PAST:FIN it-he-say-AOR-DYN:FIN boy little-INDEF.SG  
'There was reportedly (lit. 'he said') a little boy.'  
(32) *amnej, wəbrəj ə-jac°a-nə jə-q'a+lə-ə-jt',*  
that(by.you) that(yonder) it-star-PABS they-become-AOR-DYN:FIN  
*ə-r-h°ə-ə-jt'.*  
it-they-say-AOR-DYN:FIN  
'Those ones reportedly (lit. 'they said') turned into stars.' (Anshba 40)

Both reportative and introductory verbs can co-occur with the Inferential, cf. example (37). Note also that in some varieties of Abkhaz, and regularly in the Bzyp dialect, the vowel *a* of the verb 'to say' (*h°a*) in the Aorist changes into *ə* (hence *ə-jə-h°ə-ə-jt'* instead of *ə-jə-h°a-ə-jt'*).

## 4.2.1 Distancing

In the narrative speech the reportative verb can signify the speaker's intention to distance themselves from the information they convey or to emphasize the distance from the source of information. In order to achieve this, the speaker often repeats the reportative verb.

Examples:

- (33) *x-f°ə-k' a-γəč°-c°a, ə-jə-h°ə-ə-jt', aj+c+nə*  
three-HUM-INDEF.SG ART-thief-PL it-he-say-AOR-DYN:FIN together  
*γəč°+ra jə-ca-ə-jt', ə-jə-h°a-ə-jt'.*  
theft they-go-AOR-DYN:FIN it-he-say-AOR-DYN:FIN  
'Three thieves reportedly together went thieving.' (Anshba 40)

The distinction between the introductory and reportative verb is illustrated by the following examples. (34) is a dialogue between a man and a woman, (35) represents an utterance by a goat (in a fairy-tale). All speakers have different noun class marking:

- (34) Man: *"h-aj+c-nəq°a-p" h°a ə-jə-h°a-ə-jt',*  
we-together-walk-FUT1 QUOT it-he-say-AOR-DYN:FIN  
*ə-jə-h°a-ə-jt'.*  
it-he-say-AOR-DYN:FIN  
Woman: *"sa+ra jə-s-taxə-w wa+ra w-a-wə-p"*  
I what-I-want-PRES:NFIN you you-be-PRES:STAT-FIN  
*ə-l-h°a-ə-jt', ə-jə-h°a-ə-jt'.*  
it-she-say-AOR-DYN:FIN it-he-say-AOR-DYN:FIN  
'Man: "Let's walk through life together", he reportedly said.  
Woman: "The one I want is you", she reportedly said.' (Anshba 246)
- (35) *"sa-ra s-s°ap°ə ə-p-c°a-wə-p', axa s-nəq°a-n,*  
I my-foot it-PREV-break-PRES:STAT-FIN but I-walk-PABS  
*r-apx'a s-gəla-n s-ca-wa-t", ha*  
their-front I-stand-PABS I-go-PROG-DYN:FIN QUOT



*ø-a-h°ə-ø-jt'*,                      *ø-jə-h°ə-ø-jt'*,                      *anəj*  
 it-it(goat)-say-AOR-DYN:FIN it-he-say-AOR-DYN:FIN that  
*ø-ab*.  
 ART-billy-goat  
 "My foot is broken, but (anyway) I do walk and, standing before them  
 (the herd), I (keep on) going," having said, the billy-goat reportedly said."

In (34) and (35) the introductory verb refers to the authors of the quoted words and reflects their gender/noun class (*ø-jə-h°ə-ø-jt'* 'he(HUM:MASC) said', *ø-l-h°ə-ø-jt'* 'she(HUM:FEM) said', *ø-a-h°ə-ø-jt'* 'it (NHUM) said'). By contrast, the reportative verb, which is formally the aorist form of 3SG HUM:MASC (*ø-jə-h°ə-ø-jt'*), does not indicate a specific referent, and serves only to mark the hearsay source of an utterance.

Consider also the example where both inferential and the 'distancing' reportative verbs are used in one sentence, obviously putting extra emphasis on the 'distanced' character of the information:

- (36) *wəs wa+j°ə+s'a-s ø-jə-ma-zaarən, ø-jə-h°ə-ø-jt'*.  
 such character-as it-he-have-INFER2 it-he-say-AOR-DYN:FIN  
 'He apparently did possess such a character, as they say.' (Anshba 242)

Some narrations can be excessively loaded with reportative verbs and quotative particles, creating a specific 'hearsay' or 'distanced' narrative style.

## 5. Evidentiality: Some typological and areal remarks

### 5.1 The origin of evidentiality

The cross-linguistic comparison of the origin of evidential systems shows that in the majority of cases they result from a semantic extension or transformation of temporal (more specifically, perfect) tenses. Comrie (1976: 110) provides an explanation for the connection between evidentiality and the perfect tense: 'the semantic similarity (not, of course, identity) between perfect and inferential lies in the fact that both categories present an event not in itself, but via its results'.

Abkhaz seems to be one of the few languages where evidentiality is historically based on future, not on perfect. Other cases include Romanian, where the presumptive is formed from the bases of the future or conditional auxiliary or the subjunctive of the future particle plus the non-finite form *fi* 'be' and the gerund or past participle of the main verb (cf. Friedman 1998). Con-

sider also Afghan Persian dialects, where a periphrastic 'future tense' is used as a basis for inferential presumptive or speculative modes (Perry 2000: 243). A close analogue to the Abkhaz suffix *-zaap'* seems to be the evidential suffix *-boti/-beti* in Hill Patwin, a Wintun language of North America, which is analyzed as a combination of the auxiliary *-bo/-be* 'to be (locational)' with the definite future suffix. In some contexts the original future sense of this evidential suffix can still be seen. Despite its origin, the suffix was generalized to apply to predicates in the present or past tenses (cf. Whistler 1986: 70–71). Consider also evidentials in Akha (Tibeto-Burman), where some markers evolved from copulas with (assumptive and speculative) future meanings (Thurgood 1986: 221–222), the West Greenlandic sentential affix with inferential semantics *-(sima)ssa* 'inferred', which contains the future marker *-ssa* (Fortescue, this volume), and some Latin American varieties of Spanish, where, under the influence of Quechua, the future is developing an evidential reading (Escobar 1997).

That future as much as perfect can be used for the formation of an evidential category is not by itself something extraordinary.<sup>6</sup> In his 1979a paper Hewitt explains the connection between inferentiality and the future tense:

[I]f an action is inferred to have occurred, to be occurring or to be likely to occur, the possibility remains that the inference may be proved wrong by the subsequent acquisition of more information. This is precisely and necessarily the case with each and every pronouncement concerning an event in the future; the same lack of certainty attaches to statements about the future which attaches to descriptions of events not witnessed, or being witnessed, by the speaker personally. (p. 91)

There is thus nothing unusual in the future tense serving as a basis for the formation of the inferential category. What is interesting is that perfect seems to be by far a much more frequently used tense than future as a basis for an evidential category, as demonstrated by the majority of languages in which this category occurs. The connection between perfect and evidential, called 'pan-Eurasian evidential perfect' by Nichols (1986: 253), is sometimes even regarded as a linguistic (near) universal (cf. Bulut 2000: 148; Johanson 2000: 63).

In the Caucasian linguistic area, where the evidential category is found in the majority of the indigenous languages (i.e. both North Caucasian and Kartvelian), I am aware of only Abkhaz where this category is historically based on the future tense. The closely related Circassian shows an intermediate situation: in Common Circassian the inferential suffix *\*-ya-n* was built on the ba-



sis of the perfective suffix *-ya* plus the future marker *-n*, cf. Adyghe *k<sup>o</sup>a-ya-n*, Kabardian *k<sup>o</sup>a-ya-n-s* 'apparently he went' (Kumakhov 1989:199).

It seems that the semantic invariant which unites the perfect and future tenses, and which makes it possible to use them to form the evidential category, is the *time distance* between the event and the speech act describing this event, and the impossibility of verifying the information about the (past or future) event by direct observation.

## 5.2 Distancing category

Among the views concerning the nature of evidentiality two major opinions prevail: to regard this category as referring to (a) the source of information, or (b) to the speaker's attitude towards the information. Without going into discussion of these (conflicting) views which reflect the complex phenomenon of evidentiality, I would emphasize the role of *distance* as critical in the explanation of the nature of evidentiality, which has been pointed out by a number of authors. Chkadua (1970:201–202) implicitly points to the role of distance while describing the semantics of inferentials in Abkhaz. In her treatment of evidentiality, Kozintseva (1994:95) speaks about 'self-distancing of the speaker from the situation, about which a surprise is being expressed'. Kibrik and Testelet (1999:230–233) in their description of evidentiality in Tsakhur use the term 'effekt otstraneniya' (the effect of keeping away), while Lazard (1985) demonstrates the relevance of the notion of distance in explaining the various meanings as conveyed by the Persian 'distant past'.

The importance of the notion of distance as an essential semantic component inherent in the phenomenon of evidentiality and probably also of some other categories (such as mirativity) perhaps necessitates the postulation of a special *distancing* strategy or category (the corresponding noun being *distancive*). The term would mean that by using certain grammatical or lexical means the speaker can distance himself from the information he conveys, disclaim responsibility for the truthfulness or exactness of his statement or defer authority over his statement to somebody else. In terms of time specification, the speaker might refer to past or future events which are either already not directly observable, or are not yet observable. In distancing terms, evidentiality can be regarded as one step forward from objective reality (*realis*) towards subjective reality (*irrealis*).

### *Distancive:*

- neutral/unmarked: the speaker assumes full authority over his statement, he is, or speaks as being, a direct witness of an event.
- distancing: the speaker disclaims responsibility for his statement either by shifting it to someone else (reported speech), or by using evidential markers.

For example, in Abkhaz narrations the neutral/unmarked degree is characterized by present, simple past/aorist, or other tenses, cf. *d-aa-wa-jt* '(s)he is coming/comes', *d-aa-ø-jt* '(s)he came', etc. The distancing is expressed (a) by using quotatives (*d-aa-jt* *h<sup>o</sup>a* *ø-jə-h<sup>o</sup>ə-jt*/*jə-s-aha-jt* 'he said/I heard that (s)he came') or (b) by using the inferential form (*d-aa-zaap* 'presumably/it looks as if/apparently (s)he came'). The following example shows a combination of inferential, quotative particle and introductory and reportative verbs, which has an accumulative distancing effect:

- (37) "waž<sup>o</sup>ə d-aa-zaap" *h<sup>o</sup>a* *ø-jə-h<sup>o</sup>ə-ø-jt*,  
 now (s)he-come-INFER1 QUOT it-he-say-AOR-DYN:FIN  
*ø-jə-h<sup>o</sup>ə-ø-jt*.  
 it-he-say-AOR-DYN:FIN  
 "Now (s)he apparently came," he reportedly said.

## 5.3 Areal aspects

While dealing with languages within one linguistic area it is always a dilemma whether to treat a certain shared trait as a contact-induced or independently formed phenomenon. In the case of evidentiality in the Caucasus, this dilemma seems to be almost unsolvable, as the majority, if not all indigenous Caucasian languages possess the evidential category in one form or another. At least in some Caucasian languages evidentiality is an inherited category. In other cases, when it can be shown to be a relatively recent phenomenon, its appearance can be tentatively attributed to the influence of genetically related neighbouring languages. As well, some Caucasian idioms had quite close contact with Turkic languages which have this category and from which it could have been borrowed.

There is a tendency in the Balkans, Caucasus and Central Asia to hold the Turkic languages responsible for the development of the evidential category. In a number of cases this explanation can obviously be justified, cf., for in-



stance, Friedman (2000:357) for the description of the situation in the Balkans. According to Bulut (2000):

With regard to Turco-Iranian language contact, the Turkic influence has been held responsible for certain changes in the tense-aspect system of a number of Iranian languages, which led to the formation (grammaticalization) of the so-called inferential categories. (p. 147)

Kozintseva (2000:414) thinks that the development of evidentiality in Eastern Armenian is partially explained by areal contact with Iranian and Turkic languages (cf. also Donabedian 2001). Discussing evidentiality in Georgian, Boeder (2000:277) regards Turkish influence as a possible stimulating factor in the development of this category in both Georgian and the related Megrelian. As for the other Kartvelian language, Svan, which was developing without any direct influence from Turkish, Boeder suggests here the mediating role of Megrelian: if the Megrelian evidential system was developed partly due to Turkic language contact, this “may have been a mediating model for Svan” (Boeder 2000:277; cf. also Friedman 2000:357).

Whereas for certain cases the Turkic influence can indeed be regarded as relevant, the problem is that in some Caucasian languages the evidential category is likely to have been formed before any significant contact with Turkic languages had taken place. This is certainly the case with the West Caucasian languages. In both Abkhaz and Circassian evidentiality is an inherited category, which can be reconstructed for both Proto-Abkhaz and Proto-Circassian periods (see §§3.11 and 5.1 above). The time depth of both proto-languages can be estimated at ca. 8th–9th centuries AD. Though Proto-Circassian might have had some areal contacts with the Kypchak branch of the Turkic languages, like Crimean Tatar or early Karachay-Balkar, these were not prominent in the time of the existence of Proto-Circassian. On the other hand, Proto-Abkhaz had contacts with Byzantine Greek, Alanic (Proto-Ossetic) and Kartvelian languages, but not with Turkic languages. Any discernible Turkish presence in Abkhazia can be traced back to a period not earlier than 16th century, when Ottoman Turkey had established its hegemony over the Caucasian Black Sea coast. This means that at least Circassian and Abkhaz formed this category independently of any foreign (specifically Turkic) influence.

It is surprising that Ubykh, the West Caucasian language geographically situated between Circassian and Abkhaz, which both possess the evidential category, does not have any traces of evidentiality (cf. Charachidzé 1989:402). Interestingly, in an Ubykh text translated from Abkhaz and published by Dumézil (1967:147–156), the Abkhaz inferential form *ak'ə ə-l-taxə-zaap'* ‘one it-she-

want-INFER1’ = ‘she apparently wants something’ is translated into Ubykh as *za-g°ara q'aša-γə-n čə+ma* ‘she probably wants something’, i.e. with epistemic *čə+ma* ‘probably’. Given that Ubykh served as a ‘bridge’ between the Circassian- and Abkhaz-speaking areas, the majority of Ubykhs being bi- or even tri-lingual, it seems surprising that Circassian and Abkhaz have failed to induce the formation of the evidential category in Ubykh, otherwise heavily influenced by its sister-languages (especially by Circassian).

The evidential system in Georgian differs from that of other Kartvelian languages. As noted by Hewitt (1979a:87–88), in Georgian the semantic feature of evidentiality is restricted to the perfect tense-group (i.e. perfect and pluperfect), ‘and even then these tenses are not, of necessity, endowed with this feature’. By contrast, in Svan, Megrelian and Laz evidentiality is not restricted to perfect tenses, extending to other tenses as well (cf. Hewitt 1979a: 87–88). In this sense evidentiality in Georgian is typologically closer to that present in the neighbouring Armenian, where it is also restricted to perfective tenses. Incidentally, by analogy with split ergativity in Georgian and some other languages, which have ergative construction in past tenses and nominative in non-past tenses, one can, in a similar fashion, call the Georgian or Armenian type of evidentiality ‘split evidentiality’.

The situation in Megrelian, which possesses a fully generalized system of inferentials not restricted to perfect tenses, more closely resembles the situation in the neighbouring Abkhaz, rather than in the related Georgian. The question arises, therefore, whether the influence of Abkhaz (as much as Turkish), could be held responsible for the formation of the tense-neutral type of evidentiality system in Megrelian.

## Notes

1. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to G. Hewitt, Z. Khiba and L. Kulikov for useful comments and suggestions on the first draft of this chapter.
2. The suffix *-wa-* is regarded either as a dynamic, or as a present tense marker. According to Hewitt (1979a:89, fn) it must more correctly be determined as the non-stative marker. I gloss it here as ‘progressive’, as it refers to continuous non-stative actions.
3. A dummy object required by the preverb.
4. The digraph *aa* represents an underlying voiced laryngeal (*h*) realized as a long *ā*. Abkhaz does not tolerate vocalic clusters, therefore the combination *za+aa* [*za+ā*] inevitably yields *z+aa* [*zā*].
5. In Circassian its possible cognate is the present absolutive suffix *-ze*: *k°e-ze* ‘going’.



6. A rare case of evidentiality based on the 3sg present form of the verb 'to be' in Chinese Pidgin Russian is described by Nichols (1986).

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## Texts

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Correspondences between the special symbols adopted here in the Caucasian transcription and the SIL IPA:

SIL-IPA	Caucasian	Description
b	b	voiced bilabial stop
p <sup>h</sup>	p	voiceless (aspirated) bilabial stop
p'	p'	voiceless glottalized bilabial stop
dz	ʒ	voiced dental affricate
dz <sup>w</sup>	ʒ <sup>o</sup>	voiced dental labialized affricate
dʒ	ʒ'	voiced retroflex alveolar affricate
dʒ'	ʒ'	voiced alveolar palatalized affricate
ts	c	voiceless dental affricate
ts <sup>w</sup>	c <sup>o</sup>	voiceless dental labialized affricate
ts'	c'	voiceless dental glottalized affricate
ts' <sup>w</sup>	c' <sup>o</sup>	voiceless dental glottalized labialized affricate
d	d	voiceless dental stop
d <sup>w</sup>	d <sup>o</sup>	voiceless dental labialized stop
g	g	voiced velar stop
g'	g'	voiced velar palatalized stop
g <sup>w</sup>	g <sup>o</sup>	voiced velar labialized stop
h	h	voiceless laryngeal
h <sup>w</sup>	h <sup>o</sup>	voiceless labialized laryngeal
j	j	palatal semi-vowel
j <sup>w</sup>	j <sup>o</sup>	palatal labialized semi-vowel
k <sup>h</sup>	k	velar voiceless (aspirated) stop
k <sup>h</sup> '	k'	velar voiceless (aspirated) palatalized stop
k <sup>hw</sup>	k <sup>o</sup>	velar voiceless (aspirated) labialized stop
k'	k'	velar voiceless glottalized stop
k' <sup>w</sup>	k' <sup>o</sup>	velar glottalized palatalized stop
k' <sup>w</sup>	k' <sup>o</sup>	velar glottalized labialized stop
q'	q'	uvular glottalized stop
q' <sup>j</sup>	q' <sup>w</sup>	uvular glottalized palatalized stop
q' <sup>w</sup>	q' <sup>o</sup>	uvular glottalized labialized stop
ʃ	ʃ	retroflex voiceless alveolar fricative
ʃ'	ʃ'	voiceless alveolar palatalized fricative
ʃ <sup>w</sup>	ʃ <sup>o</sup>	voiceless alveolar labialized fricative
t <sup>h</sup>	t	voiceless (aspirated) dental stop
t <sup>hw</sup>	t <sup>o</sup>	voiceless (aspirated) labialized dental stop
t'	t'	glottalized dental stop
t' <sup>w</sup>	t' <sup>o</sup>	glottalized labialized dental stop
w	w	bilabial semi-vowel
χ	x	uvular voiceless fricative
χ'	x'	uvular voiceless palatalized fricative



## SIL-IPA Caucasian Description

$\chi^w$	$\chi^o$	uvular voiceless labialized fricative
$z_\ell$	$\check{z}$	retroflex voiced alveolar fricative
$z^j$	$\check{z}'$	voiced alveolar palatalized fricative
$z^w$	$\check{z}^o$	voiced alveolar labialized fricative
$\emptyset$	$\emptyset$	Schwa