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OSSETIC[1]

1. General information

1.1. Ossetic is a Northeast Iranian language spoken by some 480000 people (according to the 1979 census) mainly living in the central parts of the Caucasus area, i.e. in the Republic of North Ossetia – Alania of the Russian Federation and the Republic of South Ossetia. Ossetic communities are also found in the Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria and the Stavropol region of the North Caucasus, and in Tbilisi and at various other places in East Georgia. In Central and Eastern Anatolia Ossetic is spoken in a few scattered settlements, that were originally founded by Moslem fugitives who in the 1860's emigrated from their native country in the Caucasus, and along with Circassian and other Caucasian tribes settled in Ottoman Turkey; no information on the number of the Anatolian Ossetes is available.

Present-day Ossetic falls into two distinct main dialects[2]: Digor (D. *Digoron* [I. Dïguron] *ævzag*) or West Ossetic, mainly spoken in the western parts of North Ossetia, and Iron (*Iron ævzag*) or East Ossetic (formerly often named Tagauric, from the tribal name of the Tagaurs), which is the language of the majority of the nation. The language of South Ossetia is a sub-dialect of Iron. The local idiom of the Uællagkom region of East Digoria is a kind of transitional dialect, basically Digor in its structure, but sharing some features with Iron. There is some local variation within each dialect. The literary language is based on Iron.

1.2. In vocabulary as well as in particulars of phonology and grammatical structure the two dialects diverge from each other to a considerable extent, so that they are mutually barely intelligible. Some of these divergences may date

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[1] Special abbreviations used in this article for the typically Ossetic cases are: adess. = adessive; allat. = allative; com. = comitative; equal. = equative; iness. = inessive.

[2] Where no dialect is indicated (D., I.), Iron is meant.

from ancient times and reflect older dialectal differentiation; the inflection of the verb "to be" (3.3.8), some personal endings (3.3.1.3) and the system of demonstrative pronouns (3.2.7.3) can be quoted as possible examples. But in all essentials both dialects are closely related as regards both their historical development and their basic grammatical structure, and there is convincing evidence to show that they are descended from a protodialect that has remained fairly uniform until comparatively recent times. About older dialectal differentiation we know practically nothing and must be satisfied to admit the probability of its existence.

On the whole Digor represents a more archaic stage of development than Iron; their relationship can be described in the terms of a focal versus a marginal dialect. Innovations have apparently radiated to the west and the south from the Iron centers of the Ordžonikidze plateau. This is especially clear in the field of phonology, as will appear from **2**. The Digor case inflection has developed more slowly than that of Iron, but the general trend has been the same. The rule of premodification is less fixed in Digor than in Iron. In creating a symmetric bidimensional system of proverbs (cf. infra 3.3.5) Iron is evidently one pace ahead of Digor. In contradistinction to Iron, Digor still retains vestiges of tmesis of the verb and the preverb. An archaic feature of Digor is also the exclusive use of the present optative to express repeated action in the past, whereas in Iron the past optative is found with this meaning. Instead of the Caucasian vigesimal system of counting, which the Ossetes in general have adopted, the decimal system is still found in certain variants of Digor. It is also noteworthy that South Ossetic shares some lexical isoglosses with Digor; such characteristic innovations of Iron as the palatal affricates and the 'hardening' of γ to q only spread to South Ossetia in the first half of the last century.

(See MILLER 1903, 3 ff.; ABAEV, OJaF, 357 ff.; ABAEV, O dialektah, 1964, ISAEV 1966.)

1.3. Ossetic is the last remnant of the North East Iranian ('Scytho-Sarmatian') dialects which in antiquity were spoken over vast areas of South Russia. For historical reasons we assume that the linguistic continuity of Old Ossetic (Alanic) with the cognate languages was severed very early. In contradistinction to the other Iranian languages, which constitute a continuous linguistic area, Ossetic has developed in entirely non-Iranian surroundings for nearly two millennia. This isolation and the marginal position of the language can in part explain its archaic character.

In our times Ossetic is flanked on all sides by non-IE (Caucasian, Turkic) languages. To the north and the west it borders upon Circassian-Kabardian and

the Turkic languages of the Nogais and the Karachai-Balkars, in the east upon the Nakhian languages (Ingush-Chechen). In the south the Ossetes live in close contact with the Georgians. In the North Caucasus, bilingual contacts between Ossetic and the adjacent languages are common, in some places the normal situation. In South Ossetia the bulk of the population is bilingual, speaking Georgian as well as Ossetic. The omnipresence of Russian is self-evident. The extent of these language contacts in the past and the social circumstances under which they have taken place remain mostly hidden from us, but we may presume that they are of a very long standing.

There has been a tendency, especially among Soviet scholars, to stress the importance of these contacts for the development of Ossetic, and no doubt bilingualism has been instrumental in bringing about certain changes in the structure of the language. Among features which can be attributed to Caucasian influence we may count the glottalic stops, the development of a system of local cases, and the bidimensional system of local preverbs. In addition, there is a number of mutual borrowings at the lexical and phraseological level, as well as numerous loan translations. In its structure, however, Ossetic has remained essentially an Iranian language. The morphology of the verb is entirely Iranian. The Caucasian ergative construction has found no echo. Alien to Ossetic are also the noun classes of the NE Caucasian languages. The almost complete preponderance of suffixes over prefixes is an old Iranian trait.

The Ossetic vocabulary contains a considerable number of Turkic loanwords. To a large extent these belong to Azerbaijani, which formerly served as a lingua franca in Daghestan and the North Caucasus; through the medium of Azerbaijani numerous Arabic and Persian words have been adopted. A long-lasting symbiosis with the neighbour peoples of the Karachai-Balkars has resulted in extensive mutual borrowing. But at least since Khazar times contacts must have existed with various Turkic languages. The chronology of the Turkic loanwords and their immediate source is therefore often difficult to determine and unsufficiently explored.

(See MILLER 1903, 7-11; ABAEV, OJaF; ABAEV 1965; TEDEEVA 1975; 1983; BIELMEIER 1977, with bibliographic references to earlier literature; THORDARSON 1986.)

1.4. The first Ossetic book to appear in print was, as far as we know, the catechism of the archimandrite Gai that was printed in Moscow in 1798 (Načol´noe učenie čelovĕkom˝ hotjaščim˝ učitisya knig˝ Božestvennago Pisanija; Church Slavonic text with Ossetic translation); it is printed in the Cyrillic script, with some adaptations. At the beginning of the 19th cent. Ivane Ialγuziʒe (1775-1830) translated the Gospels and other religious books and

Šota Rustaveli's Vepxist'q'aosani from Georgian into Ossetic; Ialɣuziʒe used the Georgian (xucuri) script, with some adaptations and additional letters. His language was South Ossetic (Ahvlediani 1960, 80 ff.). About the middle of the century a writing system was created by the Russian scholar A.J. Sjögren on the basis of the Russian alphabet (1844); this was in general use until the 1920's. In 1923 a Latin script was introduced; it was replaced in North Ossetia in 1938 by a new variant of the Russian alphabet. In 1939 the Georgian alphabet (mxedruli), with some modifications, was adopted by the South Ossetians; it was abandoned in 1954 in favour of the North Ossetic Cyrillic script.

Table I: Writing systems and transcription.
I. The modern Ossetic alphabet (letters found only in Russian loanwords are enclosed in parenthesis).
II. The Latin alphabet in use in Ossetia in the 1920's and 1930's.
III. The South Ossetic alphabet (Georgian mxedruli) in use until 1954.
IV. The transcription used in this book.

I	II	III	IV	I	II	III	IV
A a	A a	ა	a	Пъ пъ	Ph ph	ჳ	p'
Æ æ	Æ æ	ჱ	æ	Р р	R r	რ	r
Б б	B b	ბ	b	С с	S s	ს	s
В в	V v	ვ	v	Т т	T t	თ	t
Г г	G g	გ	g	Тъ тъ	Th th	ტ	t'
Гъ гъ	H h	ღ	γ	У у	U u	ჳ, ჳ	u
Д д	D d	დ	d	Ф ф	F f	ფ	f
Дж дж	Dž dž	ჯ	ǯ	Х х	X x	ხ	x
Дз дз	Dz dz	ძ	ʒ	Хъ хъ	Q q	ყ	q
Е е	E e	ე	e	Ц ц	C c	ც	c
(Ё ё)				Цъ цъ	Ch Ch	წ	c'
(Ж ж		ჟ	ž)	Ч ч	Č č	ჩ	č
З з	Z z	ზ	z	Чъ чъ	Ch čh	ჭ	č'
И и	I i	ი	i	(Ш ш		შ	š)
Й й	J j	ჲ	i	(Щ щ)			
К к	K k	კ	k	(ъ)			
Къ къ	Kh kh		k'	Ы ы	Y y	ჷ	ɨ
Л л	L l	ლ	l	(ь)			

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М м	M m	ə	m	(Э э)
Н н	N n	б	n	(Ю ю)
О о	O o	ᴔ	o	(Я я)
П п	P p	ჳ	p	

Until the latter half of the 19th cent. literature was mainly religious. The national poet Xetægkatɨ K'osta (1859-1906) is usually regarded as the creator of the literary language; his poetry is in Iron; Mamsɨratɨ Temɨrbolat, some years his senior, whose language was also Iron, emigrated to Turkey in 1865 and never attained the position of his younger contemporary. Since the turn of the cent., and especially after the establishment of Soviet power, a vigorous literature has emerged, almost exclusively in Iron.

2. Phonology

2.1. Vowels.

2.1.1. Iron has the following vowel phonemes: /i ɨ e æ a o u/ (our transcription), or, more accurately: /i ɨ e ɐ rather than æ) a (or *a*) o u/.

The vowel phonemes of Digor can be presented as follows: /ī (to all appearances distinct from) i e æ a o u/, or, more accurately: /i ɪ e ɐ *a* o u/.

Iron /i/ is high front, /ɨ/ high central but somewhat lower than /i/, it shows considerable variation according to the surroundings, having a more back variant (approximately ʉ) in the neighbourhood of velars; /e/ is half-close mid front, /æ/ low mid central, /a/ low central or back (there is some local variation), /o/ mid back rounded, /u/ high back rounded. /i e a o u/ are strong (long) vowels; /ɨ æ/ are weak (short) vowels.

Digor /ī/ ("the long i") is high front, /i/ ("the short i") high front but not as close as /ī/; /e/ is mid front between half-close and half-open, /æ/ low mid central, /a/ low central or back, /o/ mid back rounded, /u/ back rounded and fairly close. /ī e a o/ are strong (long) vowels; /i æ u/ are weak (short) vowels. In writing /ī/ and /i/ are not kept distinct.

(See SOKOLOVA II, 10 ff.; HENDERSON 1949; ISAEV 1966, 5 ff).

2.1.2. The historical background of the vowels will be discussed in broad outlines in the following. Generally speaking, in the development of the OIran. vowels Ossetic shows a striking conservatism. Among questions that still need elucidation those regarding ancient stress and its effects upon vowel quantity are especially worth mentioning.

In principle final syllables in *ă, ĭ, ŭ, have been lost. Final *-ā is apparently retained as -æ in both dialects in the plur. suffix -tæ (nom.), and in Digor in the nom. sing. of a class of nouns where in Iron it has been elided: D. fidæ "father", I. fɨd < *pitā; D. madæ "mother", I. mad < *mātā, etc. But I. also –æ, e.g. in dɨuuæ "2", D. duuæ < *duvā. In part D. -æ is secondary, but no doubt prior to the modern dialect division, e.g. D. æfsīnæ "mother-in-law (of the wife), mistress of the house", I. æfsin < *abi-šaiθnī, cf. Av. aiβi-šaētan- "inhabitant (of a house)"; D. arcæ "spear", I. arc < *ṛšti-, cf. Av. aršti-. In monosyllables final vowels are retained: ma, næ "not" < *mā, *na.

OIran. final *-yā(-) seems to result in I. -ɨ, D. -i: I. xolɨ, D. xuali "carcass" < *xvārya- (from *xvar- "to eat"); I. dæsnɨ, D. dæsni "clever, a wizard" < *daš(i)nya- (Av. dašina- "dexter", OIA. dakṣiṇa- "dexter, clever"). The gen. ending I. -ɨ, D. -i is apparently from an old gen. in *-ah (cf. below 3.2.4.2). OIran. final *-aya(-) results in -æ, that is preserved in both dialects: zærdæ "heart" < *zṛdaya-, arfæ "thanks, salutation" < *āfraya-. But āya(-) apparently becomes I., D. -æi, cf. I. mæi, D. mæiæ (with secondary -æ) "moon" < *mā(h)ya- (Av. māhiia-); the abl. ending -æi, if from an old ā-stem gen. -abl. *-āyāh (or a conflation of gen. -abl. and instr. in *-ayā? Cf. below 3.2.4.5).

2.1.3 OIran. initial and medial *a (*ha-) is retained as æ before a single consonant: I., D. æz "I" < *azǎ(m?); I., D. dæs "10" < *dasa.

Before two consonants initial and medial *a (*ha-) becomes a: I., D. avd "7" < *hafta; I., D. arv "heaven" < *abra- (Av. aβra- "cloud"). If there is a morpheme boundary between the two consonants, ancient *a (*ha-) is represented by æ: I., D. kæs-tær "junior, the youngest one" (< *kasu- + tara-. Av. kasu- "small"); I. æm-bɨrd, D. æm-burd "company" < *ham-bṛta-, and other compounds in *ham-C-.

Initial and medial *a (*ha-) becomes æ before two consonants if there follows another syllable; this rule also applies to nouns that in Digor appear with a final -æ = Iron -Ø: I. cæst, D. cæstæ "eye" < *časti-.

In words which in old (predialectal) Ossetic had become monosyllables OIran. initial and medial *a (*ha-) is represented by o if it is followed by nC: I., D. fonʒ "five" < *panča. But I., D. fændag "road" < *pantāka-; I. fænʒæm "5th" < *pančama-.

In a number of words OIran. non-final *a becomes D. u, I. ɨ, probably due to u- umlaut: I. cɨppar, D. cuppar "4" < *čaθvāra-; I. mɨd, D. mud "honey" < *madu-. This phenomenon occurs mostly in the neighborhood of labial consonants.

OIran. *a becomes D. ī, I. i through i-umlaut: I., D. innæ (beside annæ) "another" < *anya-, I. sɨγzærin, D. suγzærinæ "gold" < *suktā ("burnt") zaranyā.

OIran. *a* frequently becomes D. *i*, I. *i̵* in the neighbourhood of *n*, e.g. before *nC*: I. *finttæs*, D. *finttæs* "15" < **pančadasa;* I. *ti̵nʒi̵n*, D. *itinʒun* "to stretch" < **vi-θanǰ-*.

OIran. *a* becomes D. *u*, I. *i̵* before *-fn-* which is simplified to *n*: I. *fi̵n*, D. *fun* "sleep" < **fafna-* < **xvafna-* (probably with assimilation of *xv-f* > *f-f*).

2.1.4. OIran. initial and medial **ā (*hā-)* is retained as *a*, except before a nasal, where it becomes *o*: I., D. *art* "fire" < **āθr-;* I., D. *max* "we, us, our" < **a(h)māxam;* but I., D. *nom* "name" < **nāman-*, I., D. *don* "water" < **dānu-*. In the mediaeval documents (see above 2.3.1.3.4) ancient **-ān-* is still preserved as *-an-: dan* "water"; *ban* "day" = I., D. *bon* < **bānu-* etc. (in the Yas word list); ταπαγχὰς... = mod. Oss. (D.) *dæ bon xuarz* "good day (greeting)" (in the Tzetzes text).

Before *-y-* OIran. **ā* seems to be shortened in I. *mæi*, D. *mæiæ* "moon, month" < **mā(h)ya-;* I. *ræi̵n*, D. *ræiun* "to bark", cf. OIA. *rāyati* "idem", Av. *gāθrō.raiiant-* "der die (heiligen) Gesänge herschreit..." (Bartholomae), with shortening of **-āy-;* apparently also in the abl. ending *-æi* if it derives from an old abl. -gen. **-āyāh* (cf. below 3.2.4.5). But note I. *zai̵n*, D. *zaiun* "to bear, be born", OIA. *jāyate*, NP. *zāyad*, but Av. *zaiia-;* I. *nai̵n*, D. *naiun* "to bathe", OIA. *snāyate*, but Av. *snaiia-;* etc.

Before **v* OIran. **ā* is retained as *a*: I. *dauæg*, D. *idauæg*, "guardian spirit" < **vi-dāvaka* (Benveniste 1959, 132); the equat. ending *-au* < **-āva-* (HENNING 1942, 45 ff.).

Before certain suffixes and frequently in compounds **a* is weakened (shortened) to *æ:* before plural *-t(æ)*, I., D. *marɣ* "bird", plur. *mærytæ;* I., D. *don (*dān-)*, plur. 1. *dættæ*, D. *dænttæ;* before the suffix of ordinal numbers I. - *æm* < **-ama- (ævdæm* "7ᵗʰ" from *avd)*, D. *-æimag* < **-mayāka- (fænʒæimag* "5ᵗʰ" from *fonʒ);* etc.; in compounds: *ævd-særon* "seven-headed" *(avd + sær);* *ræst-vændag* "having a straight way" *(rast* "straight" + *fændag* "road"); etc. Before case suffixes vowel weakening occasionally takes place: adess. *færsi̵l* "on the side" *(fars);* abl. *ræstæi* "rightfully" *(rast);* etc.

2.1.5. Where in Digor an *a* follows a labiovelar (stop, spirant), in Iron it has become *o*; the velar is (virtually) delabialized: D. *k'uard (/k'ard)* = I. *k'ord* "group"; D. *xuarz (/xarz/)* = I. *xorz* "good". Where Digor has a labiovelar stop +*æ*, Iron usually has a labiovelar stop + *i̵*: D. *k'uærun (/k'ærun/)* = I. *k'ui̵rin* *(/k'i̵rin/)* "to strike". D. */x̣/*, written *xu*, + *æ* corresponds to I. *xæ*: D. *xuærun* = I. *xærin* "to eat"; but also D. */x̣æ/* = I. */x̣i̵/-* D. *xuæzdær* = I. *xui̵zdær*. Cf. below 2.3.2.

2.1.6. At a prehistoric stage OIran. *i and *ī; *u and *ū merged into short i, u respectively. This stage of development has been retained in Digor, whereas in Iron medial i and u have further merged in i̵: I. ci̵ry, D. ciry "sharp" < *tigra-; I. æxsi̵r, D. æxsir "milk", cf. OIA. kṣīra- (the only example of *ī that seems to exist); I. fi̵rt, D. furt "son" < *puθra-, I. sti̵r, D. (i/æ)stur "big" < *st(h)ūra-. In Iron the initial u of Digor becomes ui̵: I. ui̵rd, D. urdæ "otter" < *udra-; I, ui̵rdig, D. urdug "upright", cf. OIA. ūrdhva-, Av. ərəθβa-. D. initial i is lost in I.: I. ssæ̵ʒ, D. insæi "20" < *vinsati; I. bælas, D. i bælas "the tree" (the definite article, cf. below 3.2.1.5).

D. ī ("the long i") is retained as such in I., where it has merged with i < D. e. In most instances it has arisen from *a in the neighbourhood of *y: innæ "another", I., D. igær "liver" < *yakar-; - evidently also from *ai before *-θn-: D. æxsīnæ, I. æxsin "lady" < *xšaiθnī-, D. æfsīnæ, I. æfsin "mother-in-law" < *abi-šaiθnī- (cf. above 2.1.2).

2.1.7. OIran. *ai results in D. e, I. i, OIran. *au in D. o, I. u. In Digor initial e is preceded by a prosthetic i- ([j]); the initial o is preceded by a prosthetic u ([w]): I. iu, D. ieu "one" < *aiva-, I. urs, D. uors "white" < *aurša- (*aruša-, cf. Av. auruša-).

In Digor e is found as a sandhi vowel representing æ + æ, æ + i, in which case it corresponds to I. e; in indigenous I. words e is normal only as the result of vowel contraction: I. me'mbal, D. me'nbal "my friend" < mæ + I. æmbal, D. ænbal, I. festi̵n, D. festun "arise" < fæ + D. istun (I. sti̵n) < *hi-št(a)-.

There are no unequivocal instances of ancient *āi, *āu.

Vowel epenthesis means that OIran. *a became ai or *au through the influence of a following *y/i or *w/u respectively: I. midæg, D. medæg "within" < *maidyaka- < *madyaka-; I. bur, D. bor "yellow" < *baura- < *barva-.

Secondary diphthongs have arisen in various ways, e.g., through vowel metathesis: I. aidæn, D. aidænæ "mirror" < *ā-daina-; D. -æimag, suffix of ordinal numbers < *-mayāka-.

2.1.8. OIran. initial and medial *r̥ becomes ær if there follows another syllable: I., D. ærzæt "ore" < *r̥zaθa-, cf. Av. ərəzata-; if no other syllable follows, *r̥ becomes ar: mard "dead" < *mr̥ta-. In the neighbourhood of *u/v umlaut takes place: I. ui̵rni̵n, D. urnun "to believe" < *vr̥n- (cf. Av. vərənu-, etc.), I. ui̵rs, D. urs "stallion", cf. OIA. vr̥ṣṇi- (Av. varšni-) "ram". Final *r̥ becomes ær:. D. nauær "vein, sinew" (I. nuar) < *snāvr̥-.

2.1.9. OIran. initial vowels are frequently lost: I., D. *max* "we" < **a(h)māxam;* I., D. *dæl* "below" < **adari.*

(See MILLER 1903, 11 ft.; ABAEV, OJaF, passim; ABAEV, Slovar', passim; BIELMEIER 1977, 29 ff.)

2.2. Consonants.

2.2.1. The consonant phonemes of Iron can be presented as follows (our transcription):

p	p'	b	f	v	m		
t	t'	d			n	l	r
c	c'	ʒ	s	z			
č	č'	ǯ					
k	k'	g					
ku	k'u	gu					
q			x	γ			
qu			xu	γu			
(h)							

or, more accurately:

/p p' b f v m t t' d n l r ts ts' dz s z tʃ tʃ' dʒ k k' g ḳ ǩ ǧ q χ ʁ q̇ χ̣ ʁ̣ (h or ʜ?)/.

The consonant phonemes of Digor seem to be as follows (our transcription):

p	p'	b	f	v	m		
t	t'	d			n	l	r
c	c'	ʒ	s	z			
k	k'	g					
ku	k'u	gu					
q			x	γ			
qu			xu	γu			

or, more accurately:

/p p' b f v m t t' d n l r ts ts' dz s z k k' g ḳ ǩ ǧ q χ ʁ q̇ χ̣ ʁ̣/.

2.2.2. The semivowels [j, w] are in both dialects most economically treated as allophones of /i u/. They can both precede and follow the (phonetical) vowels: *ia, ua, ai, au* etc. They have a relatively high tongue position, but hardly as high as, e.g., English [j], [w]. (See SOKOLOVA II, 34 ff.; HENDERSON 1949; ISAEV 1966, 11ff.; JOB 1977.)

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2.2.3. The glottalics (ejectives; *p'* etc.) have penetrated into Ossetic from the adjacent Caucasian languages. They are frequent in loanwords: I. *k'uiri*, D. *k'uære* "week" < Georg. *k'vira* "id., Sunday".

In Russian loanwords the unvoiced stops and affricates seem as a rule to be rendered by their homorganic glottalic counterparts, although this is not always shown by the orthography: *p'alet* (thus written) "épaulette" < Russ. *èpolet; p'arti* (written *parti*) "party" < Russ. *partija.*

In a few Iranian words glottalics represent ancient voiceless stops; this is especially the case after *s*: I. *xuisk'* (D. *xuskæ*) "dry", cf. Av. *huška-;* I. *st'ali,* D. *(æ)st'alu* "star", cf. Av. *star-.*

There is some fluctuation between the glottalics and their non-glottalized (voiced, voiceless) counterparts; to a certain extent the variation is dialectal: I. *ʒix*, D. *ʒux* or *c'ux* "mouth" (loanword); I. *færsk*, D. *færsk'æ* "rib" (*cf. fars* "side").

In contradistinction to the Caucasian languages, the functional load of the glottalization is insignificant. While, e.g., in Georgian minimal pairs of the type *p'uri* "bread": *puri* "cow" are easily found, such oppositions are rare in Ossetic.

2.2.4. *p t c č k ku q qu* are aspirated non-glottalic voiceless stops: p^h etc., *b d ʒ ǯ g gu* are non-aspirated non-glottalic voiced stops. Non-aspirated non-glottalic voiceless stops occur after the spirants *f s x* and as geminates. There is some uncertainty as to the phonemic status of the latter series, but it seems most reasonable to treat them as allophones of the aspirated stops. The group [sp^h] may occur if there is a morpheme boundary between the two consonants; in that case we have the possibility of minimal pairs of the type [st]:[st^h], as, e.g., in [xæsti] (iness. sing. of *xæst* "war"): [$xæst^hi$] (iness. plur. of *xæs* "duty"), [stærin] "to lick" (where *s* belongs to the root): [$st^hærin$] "to drive up" (where *s-* is a preverb "up"). The absence of aspiration is thus wholly predictable.

Gemination of stops appears to be on a par with that of other consonants and the semivowels: *æmmadælon* "of the same mother"; *ævvænd* "of the same will" (*æm + fænd*); *æiiafin* "to throw"; *auuon* "shadow", and the like. Gemination is found in roots, where it is (synchronically) unanalysable (*ærra* "mad"; *cippar* "4"), and at morpheme boundaries, where it is predictable. In conjunction with certain derivational and inflectional affixes like, e.g., *-ag, -on;* I. *ni-*, D. *ni-, fæ-* (only D.), gemination of a preceding/following consonant is normal, frequently (in the case of suffixes) accompanied by vowel weakening (*a>æ*, i.e. *$*ā>*a$*, cf. above 2.1.4) in the preceding syllable: *færssag* "foreign" < *fars* "side"; *qættag* "forest" < *qæd* "forest"; D. *fælleʒun* "to run away" < *fæ + leʒun* (but I. *fæliʒin*); etc. For further details see ABAEV, SKETCH,

1964, 9. In the positions where gemination is found, consonant clusters are also possible. A biphonemic interpretation of the geminates suggests itself as the most economical solution. Cf. JOB 1977, 78 ff., with bibliography.

The geminate stops are variously written as *bb*, *bp*, *pp*, etc., in the modern orthography. Here they are uniformly written *pp*, etc.

In addition to the geminate stops described above, geminate glottalics occur: I. *nič'č'ɨrxin*, D. *nik'k'irxun* "to get drunk" (*ni/ni-* + *č'ɨrxin/k'irxun*).

2.3.1. The OIran. affricates are retained as I., D. *c*, *ʒ*, *(c')*. In addition, *c* derives from the following sources: **ti/y:* I. *cɨry*, D. *ciry* "sharp" < **tigra-*; I. *cær-ɨnc*, D. *-uncæ* "they live" (3 plur.) < **-anti*; **θi/y:* I., D. *æcæg* "true" < **haθyaka-*, **čy* (<IE. **kʷi-*): I. *cæuɨn*, D. *cæuun* "to go" < **čyav-* (<**kʷieu̯*), Av. *s(ii)auu-*.

In loanwords *c*, *ʒ*, *(c')* represent palatal affricates of the donor language; I., D. *pec* "oven" < Russ. *peč'*; I. *ʒug*, D. *ʒogæ* "herd" < Georg. *ǯogi*.

OIran. **s* and **š*, **z* and **ž* have merged in *s*, *z* resp.: I. *æxsæv*, D. *æxsævæ* "night", Av. *xšapan-*; I., D. *æz* "I" < **azǎ (m)*; I. *mɨzd*, D. *mizd* "reward". Av. *mīžda-*.

Initial *s-* also represents OIran. **sr-*, **sy-:* I. *sin*, D. *suɨnæ* "thigh", cf. Av. *sraoni-* "buttock"; I., D. *sau* "black", Av. *siiāuua-*.

Digor has only one series of affricates and one series of sibilants, thus remaining at the same stage of development as common old Ossetic. In the phonetic realization of the sibilants and affricates there is considerable latitude (dental-alveolar, alveolo-palatal).

In Iron a second series of affricates has arisen through palatalization and later affricization of the velar stops before front vowels: *č*, *č'*, *ǯ*. This development is recent (18th, early 19th cent.). Through paradigmatic pressure the velar pronunciation is to some extent retained as an optional variant: *lægimæ*, *lægɨ*, com., gen. of *læg* "man", beside *læǯimæ*, *læǯɨ*. As in Digor there is only one sibilant series. The phonetic realization of the sibilants shows great diversity in the various local idioms, ranging from a dental-alveolar through palato-alveolar to an alveolo-palatal pronunciation; the latter variant predominates in the Ordžonikidze area. Accordingly, the affricate and sibilant series of standard Iron may be tabulated as follows: *c c' ʒ* (representing the old affricates), *č č' ǯ*(originally allophones of *k k' g*), *s z*.

In parts of South Ossetic the old affricates were realized as *č ǯ* as late as the first half of the last cent.; in the modern pronunciation they have become palatal sibilants: *cærɨn* > *čærɨn* > *šærɨn* "to live", except after *n* and when geminated, in which case the palatal affricate is retained: *žurɨnč* "they talk"; the

glottal affricate is *c'* (no **s'* or **š'*). The secondary affricates are realized as *c* *c'* ҙ the sibilants as *s z*.

In the local variants of North Iron an analogous tendency is widespread: The old sibilants have a more or less palatal pronunciation, whereas the old affricates become dental sibilants, *s z* (**c'* > *c'*); the secondary affricates have retained a palatal pronunciation.

Both the main variants of Iron thus tend towards a system with two sibilant and one affricate series.

2.3.2. Labiovelars: OIran. **xvai-* becomes I. *xi-*, D. *xe-:* I. *xid*, D. *xed* "sweat" < **xvaid-*. Before *on* < **ān* **xv* is also delabialized: I. *xonin*, D. *xonun* "to call" < **xvān-*.

In Digor ancient **xv* is preserved before *a*, *æ*, whereas in Iron the labial element is (partly) lost (cf. above 2.1.5).

In Iron a glide [w] has developed between a velar and a following *u;* as *i*, *u* merge into *i* the labialization is transferred to the velar; through labialization a velar stop is thus protected against affricization: D. *kud* = I. *kuid (/ḳid/)* "when"; D. *k'upp* = I. *k'uipp /ḳipp/* "hump".

As regards the phonemic status of the labiovelars, cf. especially SOKOLOVA II, 48 ft.; JOB 1977, 76 ff. Cf. also above 4.2.5.2.1.5.

2.3.3. OIran. **k*, **t* are retained as *k*, *t*. In intervocalic position and after voiced consonants sonorization is the rule: I., D. *kard* "knife, sword" < **karta-*, I. *tavin*, D. *tavun* "to heat" < **tāpaya-;* I. *uad*, D. *uadæ* "storm" < **vāta-*, I., D. *zærond* "old" < **zarānt-*.

Occasionally **k* is found as *x:* I., D. *max* "we" < **a(h)mākam;* I. *simax*, D. *sumax* "you" < **yušmākam.*

OIran. **č* has been sonorized between vowels and after voiced consonants: I. *suҙin*, D. *soҙun* "to burn" < **sauča-;* I., D. *fonҙ* "5" < **panča.*

OIran. initial **p* loses its closure and becomes a spirant *f* (attested in Sarmatian proper names at the beginning of our era); I., D. *fad* "foot" < **pāda-*, etc. In intervocalic position and after *m* ancient **p* early became **b*, which is still retained after *m*; otherwise it becomes *v:* I. *æxsæv*, D. *æxsævæ* "night" < **xšapan-;* I. *æmbid*, D. *æmbud* "rotten" < **ham-pūta-*. *b* is also retained in words where a preceding vowel has been lost: adess. suffix D. *-bæl* (I. *-il*) < **upári;* preverb I., D. *ba-* < **upá-*, I. *badin*, D. *badun* "to sit" < **upa-had-*.

A secondary *p (pp)* has developed through assimilation of a labial consonant (semivowel) and preceding stop or spirant: I. *cippar*, D. *cuppar* "4" < **čaθvāra-*. Owing to lexical borrowing, *p (p')* has become a common phoneme in the modern language.

OIran. initial *b* is represented by *b:* I., D. *bon* "day" < *bānu-*, etc. In intervocalic position and after voiced consonants (except *m*) *b* becomes *v:* I. *davɨn*, D. *davun* "to steal" < *dāb-*, I. *ævzær* "bad", cf. Av. *zbar-* "to walk crookedly". After *m* ancient *b* is retained: I. *æmbarɨn* "to understand" < *ham-bār-*.

OIran. *d* is represented by *d:* I., D. *darγ* "long" < *darga-*, I. *ædisɨn*, D. *ævdesun* "to show" < *apa-(abi- ?)daiš-*.

OIran. *g* has become *γ*, except after *n* where it remains as *g*, in Iron initial *γ* has become *q* (a recent development): I. *qarm*, D. *γarm* "warm" < *garma-*, I., D. *marγ* "bird" < *mr̥ga-*; I-, D. *cong* "arm" < *čanga-*.

2.3.4. Ancient *f* is retained, as it seems, in medial as well as in initial position, except before *r* where it is lost: I., D. *ra-*, preverb < *frā-;* I. *fɨnk*, D. *fɨnkæ* "foam" < *finakā-*, cf. OIA. *phena-* "id." < *phoina-*.

OIran. *θ* has become *t:* I., D. *fætæn* "broad" < *paθana-;* *ærtæ* "3" < *θrayah;* I. *-ut*, etc., D. *-etæ*, etc. 2. plur. ending < *-θa*.

OIran. *x* is retained: I-, D. *xæræg* "donkey" < *xaraka-;* I. *ix*, D. *iex* "ice" < *aixa-*.

Sonorization of initial *f*, *x* takes place in compounds where a preceding component ends in a vowel or a voiced consonant: I., D. *æ-væd* "traceless" < *æ* + *fæd* "trace"; D. *sæ-γæccæ* "with them" < *sæ* "their" + postp. *xæccæ* "with". Sonorization of stops and affricates takes place under the same conditions. This is a synchronic rule, operating in the modern language.

2.3.5. The ancient nasals *n*, *m* are retained; in final position D. *-m* tends to become *-n: non* "name" = I. *nom; kæn-æn* "we do", l. plur. ending = I. *kæn-æm*.

Liquids: *l* is found in a number of words where it seems to reflect IE. *l*; most of these words apparently belong to a "Sprachbund" within Indo-European that comprises Baltic, Slavic and Tocharian (to some extent Germanic) besides Iranian: e.g. *læsæg* "salmon": Russ. *losos'*, Lithuanian *lašišá*, Toch. B *laks* "fish", etc.

Ancient *ri* and *ry-*> result in *l:* verbal prefix I., D. *fæl-* "around" < *pari;* I., D. *næl* "male" < *narya-;* this development is attested in Sarmatian proper names from the beginning of our era. The neighbourhood of *i* seems to be responsible for *l* in I. *alɨ*, D. *ali* "every", if from *har(v)ya- ;* I. *ænguɨlʒ*, D. *ængulʒæ* "finger" < *angurčī;* etc.

l has arisen through dissimilation: I. *fɨldær*, D. *fuldær* "more", comp. to I. *fɨr*, D. *fur* "much".

As a rule, however, ancient *r* is represented by *r*. But note **sr>s* in I. *sɨl*, D. *silæ* "female" (cf. Av. *strī-*, etc.); see above 2.3.1.

2.3.6. OIran. **y* remains as *i* after vowels; after consonants it is lost: I. *dæiɨn*, D. *dæiun* "to suck" < **day-*, I. *uæz*, D. *uæzæ* "burden" < **vazya-*.

OIran. **v* remains as *u:* I., D. *duar* "door" < **dvar-* (cf. also above 2.3.2), except before *i* where it is lost: D. *iyosun* (= I. *qusɨn*) "to hear" < **vi-gauš-*.

2.3.7. OIran. **h* is preserved as *x* before **ai:* I. *xid*, D. *xed* "bridge" < **haitu*. OIran. **hu-* > D. *xu-*, but I. *xuɨ*, i.e. [xɨ]: I. *xuɨsk'* "dry" < **huška-*. Otherwise **h* is lost: I., D. *avd* "7" < **hafta;* I. *am*, D. *ami* "here" < **ahmyā*.

Before initial vowels *h* [ɦ] is frequently heard: *hacɨ læg* "this man" = *acɨ læg; hiuɨldær* "always" = *iuɨldær*.

2.3.8. Ancient groups of consonants have been subject to profound changes especially through assimilation and metathesis.

2.3.8.1. Consonant clusters as a rule consist of two consonants only; three-consonant clusters are found where there is a morpheme boundary within the group: *æxs-t,* past part. of *æxs-ɨn* "to shoot". In general, clusters (except at morpheme boundaries) follow the pattern 'spirant (nasal, liquid) + stop/spirant (nasal, liquid)'. Clusters with a stop as the first member are rare; two-stop clusters are found in a few words: I. *fætk'uɨ,* D. *fætk'u* "apple" (lw.); I. *fædg* (*fætk*), D. *fædgæ* "a rule" (cf. Buddh. Sogd. *pδkh* "dharma", etc.; ultimately lw.?; cf. Bailey 1945, 11 f.); note, however, the remarks on the geminates above 2.2.4.

According to the basic rule *f/v, s/z, x/γ* are in complementary distribution, the voiced spirant appearing only before a voiced stop (spirant etc.) and vice versa: *avd* "7" : *aftæ* "thus"; *æzdaxɨn* "to turn": *ast* "8".

The glottalics have the same distribution as the voiceless non-glottalic stops: *sk'ærɨn* "to drive" (no **zk'*, etc.).

l, r, m, n appear before voiced as well as voiceless spirants: *ard* "oath": *art* "fire"; D. *anz* (I. *az*) "year": D. *insæi* (I. *ssæз*) "20".

The metatheses that have brought about this reorganization of Old Iranian syllabic structure must, at least in part, date back to antiquity; cf. above 3.2.4.2.3.1.1.3-4.

As a rule, the assimilatory processes have been carried somewhat further in Iron than in Digor: I. *zæxx,* D. *zænxæ* "earth"; I. *fos,* D. *fons* "cattle". In the main, however, the dialects agree as regards the basic rules of syllabic structure.

2.3.8.2. A prothetic *æ* appears in both dialects before initial *xs, rv, rf, rt, rd, fs, vs*: I., D. *æxsæz* "6" (Av. *xšuuaš*); I., D. *æfsad* "army" < **spāda-*. Before other consonant groups prothetic *æ* (in I. also *i*) is common: I. *istir/stir.* D. *æstur/stur* "great". This tendency has been pursued further by Digor than Iron.

Initial clusters may be avoided by inserting a svarabhakti vowel: I. *ʒwar/ʒæwar*, D. *ʒiwaræ* "a cross, holy" < Georg. *ǰvari*.

2.3.8.3. As in other East Iranian languages ancient **xt, ft* have been sonorized: I., D. *avd* "7" < **hafta*; I. *liɣd*, D. *liɣd* < **rixta-*, past part. of *liʒin/leʒun* "to flee" *(*raič-)*. Through paradigmatic pressure *xt, ft* have been restored: *taxt*, past part. of *tæxin* "to fly", but *taɣd* "rapid", the ancient part. form.

(See MILLER 1903, 11 ff.; ABAEV, OJaF, passim; ABAEV, Slovar´, passim; BIELMEIER 1977, 29 ff.)

2.4. Prosodic features.

2.4.1. The accent is (weakly) expiratory (stress). Word accent is subordinate to phrase accent. The flow of speech is divided into prosodic groups where a single syllabic bears the main accent; a secondary accent may fall on other syllables of the group.

Generally speaking, the accent falls on the first or second syllable of a prosodic group. The first syllable is stressed if the vowel of that syllable is strong; if there is a weak vowel in the first syllable, the second syllable is stressed. In Digor the accent may be retracted to a syllable still farther back if the vowels of the preceding syllables are weak: *ær min cǽydæ* "play for me".

Where in Iron an initial *i* has been lost, the first syllabic of the prosodic group is stressed even if the vowel is weak. This is e.g. the case where in Digor a noun phrase is headed by the definite article *i*, which in Iron has been elided. Accordingly, in Iron there exists the possibility of minimal pairs of the type *sirx tirisa* "a red banner": *sírx tirisa* "The Red Banner" (= D. *surx túrusa: i súrx turusa;* cf. below 3.2.1.5).

Proper names are as a rule stressed on the second syllable: *Soslán, Tamáræ.* Recent Russian loanwords retain their accent: *k(')ommuníst.*

2.4.2. It is hardly possible to decide precisely every imaginable type of prosodic group, and a considerable optional (stylistic) variation must be allowed for. The following seems to be clear:

A noun phrase of any length constitutes a prosodic group: *mæguír zærond læg* "a poor old man".

A compound verb also constitutes a single prosodic group: *áxuɨr kænɨn* (pret. *sáxuɨr kotta)* "to study".

A prosodic group may consist of a verb and its complements including the object(s) and the subject: *dárdmæ cæuɨn* "go far away"; *sút sættgæiæ* "chopping wood"; this is especially the case with inf. and gerund.

A noun phrase + copula constitute a single prosodic group: *xælár u* "he is a friend".

Particles and conjunctions are never independent prosodic units, but are always attached to a preceding or a following phrase: *fælæ uɨi* "but he". Most conjunctions connecting subordinate clauses with main ones ore placed immediately before the verb of the subordinate clause, and constitute with it a single prosodic group; *čɨzʒɨ kuɨ fétta, uæd záyta* "when he saw the girl, he said".

2.4.3. As regards stress features, Ossetic seems to belong to a linguistic area comprising the adjacent East and South Caucasian languages. It is reasonable to assume that vestiges of an older prosodic typology, with a distinct (free?) stress accent at the word level, are found where certain suffixes (e.g. plur. *-t(æ),* suffix *-on,* etc.) entail vowel changes (syncope, weakening) in the preceding syllable.

(See ABAEV, OJaF, 529ff.; AHVLEDIANI 1963, 49ff.; ABAEV, Sketch, 1964, 10ff.; ISAEV 1966, 26 ff.)

3. Morphemics: Morphology. Syntax

3.1. Parts of Speech.

We distinguish between three basic parts of speech: nouns, verbs, and indeclinables (particles).

A verb phrase or a whole clause can be inflected for case and number: *racydɨstɨ "æz razdæruon"æi* "they came out (crying) 'I will be first' ", where a whole clause is put in the ablative.

3.2.1. Nouns.

3.2.1.1. There is no clear-cut distinction between substantives, adjectives and adverbs. Pronouns and cardinal numbers can be singled out as separate subclasses on the basis of certain morphological and syntactic peculiarities. The same noun (nominal base) may appear as either the head or a modifier in a noun phrase, or it may be used as an adverb (predicative adverbial, modifier's modifier). Certain nouns will tend to appear primarily or exclusively as heads, while others will tend to appear as modifiers. Thus *tɨng* means either

"strength", "strong" or "strongly, very" according to its syntactic function in the sentence where it appears, *bæx* "horse" is a modifier in *bæx uærdon* "horse-cart", but a head in *stir bæx* "a big horse". "The lexicon will have to give information on such matters, as far as definite statements are possible.

3.2.1.2. The noun phrase is treated as a prosodic unit, possessing one single main stress. In complex noun phrases certain morphophonemic changes take place, such as vowel weakening (*a > æ* in *ævd-særon* "seven-headed" < *avd* "7" + *sær* "head" + *on,* derivational suffix) or sonorization of an initial consonant (*bæx ʒarm* "hide of a horse" to *carm* "skin").

The complex noun phrase is almost invariably continuous. It contains no morphological markers of concord in case or number between the members. The inflectional affixes which indicate its syntactic function occur once only. It is thus hardly relevant to distinguish between nominal compounds and complex noun phrases.

3.2.1.3. In complex noun phrases it is normally the order of the members that decides their function. As a rule a modifier precedes the noun it modifies; this applies to nouns proper, cardinal numbers and pronouns, as well as to relative clauses. The inverted word order is found in stereotype archaic phrases (*Nasran ældar* "N. the chieftain"; *Aguindæ ræsuyd* "A. the beautiful") or as a stylistic device. Inverted bahuvrīhis are quite common (word order in part optional): *ud midæg* "whose soul is inside, live"; *sær istir* "whose head is big, arrogant".

A special case of postmodification is the type 'head in gen. + modifier': I. *læʒi mard* "dead man", *sæyti mærttæ* "dead goats" *(sæy, mard)*; D. *mæ fidi zærond* "my old father" (as to the semantic function cf. Ahvlediani 1969, 49). This type of inversion has been plausibly explained (Bailey 1946, 205 f.) as originating from the ancient 'relative' (ezāfe) noun phrase structure (head + *ya-* + modifier) in that **ya- (>i)* by syntactic reinterpretation has been identified with the gen. ending. Cf. below 3.2.4.2.

The modifier as a rule appears in the gen. or nom. The other cases, as well as postpositional phrases, may be used as modifiers, in which case word order is not necessarily fixed and accordingly it cannot always be told whether such elements are to be analyzed as nominal modifiers or as sentence adverbials: *1860-1865 azti Kavkazi cæræg adæmæi ting biræ aliydi Turkmæ* "in the years 1860-65 very many of the people living in the Caucasus fled to Turkey".

The modifier may appear with the plur. ending: *ænæ-bazir-tæ mary* "a bird without wings".

The modifier may consist of the dat. of a noun + an encl. pers. pron. in the gen.; such constructions are synonymous with the poss. gen.: *mænæn mæ xo = mæ xo* "my sister". The place of the dat. in relation to the head noun is not necessarily fixed (*zærond usæn tævd donæi iæ sær nixsatta* "he washed the old woman's head with hot water", literally "old woman-for hot water-with her head washed"). Analogous constructions are found in the adjacent NW Caucasian languages.

Cardinal numbers higher than "one" and certain quantifying nouns appear with the gen. sing. of the head noun when the noun phrase as a whole functions as a nom. (subj., obj.); if the noun phrase has to be put in another case, the case ending is added to the last member in the usual way: *ærtæ bæxi min uid* "I had three horses", but *ærtæ bæx-mæ* "to three horses", *ærtæ bæx-au* "like three horses"; *k'ord xatti* "a lot of times". A similar construction is found in Circassian (*šajš* "three horses", litterally "horses-its-three"), but as Yaghnōbī shows a pattern quite analogous to that of Ossetic (numeral + the obl. case in the sing.: *tiray γowi* "three cows"), Circassian is hardly the donor language in this case. The construction probably reflects an old nom. plur. in *-ah*, which, due to its homonymity with the gen., has been identified with the latter.

3.2.1.4. The morphological marker for the syntactic position of the noun phrase is added to the phrase as a whole; unless we regard *æd-* as a case prefix (cf. below 3.2.3.3), the syntactic markers are invariably postpositioned. When two or more noun phrases are arranged paratactically, the syntactic marker appears after the last one (group inflection): D. *uosæ æmæ xaiuan-bæl æuuændgæ næ ies* "a woman and an animal should not be trusted", literally "woman and animal-on trusting not is". As group inflection is found in both Sogdian and Khotanese and, besides, seems to be a widespread Central Asian phenomenon, it is doubtful whether its occurrence in Ossetic can be ascribed to Caucasian influence; rather it appears to be a feature common in a far-flung Eurasian linguistic area, and we must recognise the possibility that group inflection was already a feature of common "Scythian".

3.2.1.5. In Digor the noun phrase may be preceded by a segment *i* as the marker of definiteness: *i bæx* "the horse", *i dúuæ mukkagæn* "for the two families". In Iron, where initial (unstressed) *i* is lost, there is no overt marker of definiteness. Instead definiteness is marked by a shift of accent: if the initial syllable of the noun phrase contains a weak vowel, the accent is shifted from the second to the first syllable; if the vowel of the first syllable is strong, the opposition definite vs. indefinite is neutralized.

As shown by BAILEY (1945, 15 ff.), *i* derives from the old rel.pron. **ya-* (**ya(h)* > *i*), which in Avestan as well as in Choresmian, and possibly in Bactrian too, may precede noun phrases in the way of a 'definite article'. We thus reconstruct a previous stage of Ossetic where ancient **ya-* was found in two types of syntactic constructions: 1) as a kind of definite article, introducing noun phrases, 2) as a link connecting a head noun with a postpositioned modifier. This is an archaic feature that Ossetic shares with Avestan and Choresmian.

3.2.2.1. There is no grammatical expression of gender. Natural gender can be expressed lexically: I., D. *næl* "male" < **narya-*, I. *sit*, D. *silæ* "female", cf. Av. *strī-* "woman".

The ancient declensional classes have disappeared. We may presume that this is the final result of a general transfer of most nominal forms to the thematic classes in **-alā-*. Some vestiges of a division between the two declensions are preserved in Digor, while in Iron they have been conflated.

3.2.2.2. The noun is inflected for number and case. The inflectional pattern is of the agglutinative type; the morphemes are added to the nominal base (stem) in a fixed order, each with its own grammatical function. As a rule the plur. morpheme precedes a case morpheme. There are few morphophonemic changes. The agglutinative character of the Ossetic noun has been ascribed to Caucasian or/and Turkic influence, but as analogous traits occur in the plur. of nouns in Sogdian (and Yaghnōbī), this seems doubtful.

In Iron the nom. case (unmarked) serves as the nominal base; there are a few marginal instances in which a final *–æ* of the nom. is dropped before the iness. and adess. endings (*zærdæ*, but *zærd-i̦*, *zærd-il̦*). In Digor nouns ending in *-æ*<**-ā* in the nom. lose this *-æ* before the plur. and the case endings except the allat. and adess. endings, before which *-æ* is kept (cf. below 3.2.4.4). In the same way, the *–æ* of the nom. plur. of both dialects is elided before the case endings.

3.2.2.3. The plur. of nouns is expressed by an ending *-t-* (nom.plur. in both dialects *-tæ*), originally a derivational suffix **-tā-* denoting "collectivity, complexity". The same suffix is used as a plur. marker in Sogdian (and Yaghnōbī). Due to its morphological independence *-t* has eluded sonorization after voiced sounds. Relics of a greater variety of plur. suffixes are found in the inflection of dem. pronouns (I. *adon* "these", *u̦idon* "those" with *-on* apparently from **-ānām*, cf. below 3.2.7.3), and in the construction of cardinal numbers (**-ah;* cf. above 3.2.1.3). *-t(ā)* as a 'Scyth.' plur. suffix is attested in the Greek

rendering of tribal names in the Ponto-Caspian area as early as the 5th cent. B.C. (Μασσαγέται Herodotus, etc.). The original 'collective' meaning is still reflected in the use of *tæ/ti* with adverbs (adverbial cases): *kuid-tæ* "how", *ami-ti* "in these places"; it is also worthy of note that number agreement between subj. and verb is not mandatory.

Before the plur. suffix syncope of weak vowels and weakening of *a > æ* is normal: I. *kusæg* "worker", plur. *kusʒitæ*; I. *uæiig*, D. *uæiug* "giant", plur. I. *uæiguitæ*, D. *uæigutæ*; I., D. *card* "life", plur. *cærttæ*. After consonant groups connecting vowels appear (I. *i*, D. *i*, *u*): I. *zing* "fire", plur. *zinʒitæ*, D. *kinʒæ* "bride", plur. *kinʒitæ*, D. *finsæg* "writer", plur. *finsgutæ*. After r, *l*, *m*, *n* and the semivowels the -*t*- of the plur. suffix is geminated; this feature is concomitant with vowel weakening in the preceding syllable: I., D. *duar* "door", plur. *duærttæ*.

In a group of kinship terms -*æl*- is intercalated between the stem and the plur. suffix: *mad* "mother", plur. *madæltæ* (D. *madæ*, *mattæltæ*). In Digor the use of -*æl*- has been extended to other nouns as well: *ʒurd* "word", plur. *ʒurttæltæ*. -*æl*- obviously reflects the ancient **-ar-* in the plur. of *r*-stems (cf. OIran. **pitarah*), although the -*l*- is not clear.

3.2.3.1. In contradistinction to the general trend of the Iranian languages Ossetic has developed a rich case system. In part the declension represents OIran. inflectional forms, in part it has originated through secondary internal developments, as postpositions or adjectival-adverbial derivatives have become productive as inflectional elements. It is reasonable to assume that influence from the neighbour languages (Nakhian?) has been instrumental in bringing about this development.

3.2.3.2. Modern grammars list the following cases in Iron: nom., gen., dat., allat., abl., iness., adess., equat., and com. (the nomenclature is that of ABAEV, Sketch, 1964). Of these the com. is lacking in Digor.

No case serves entirely as a syntactic operator; all cases have a designative content. The nom. and gen. serve primarily as syntactic operators; the other cases have primarily designative contents (adverbial, local cases).

3.2.3.3. In addition to the case endings proper Ossetic has a number of postpositions, the majority of which are nouns and behave syntactically as nouns. They mostly occur with the gen., in some instances with the nom., more rarely with the dat. or other adverbial cases. These postpositions may take case suffixes. Structurally, a noun (noun phrase) followed by a postp. is not

different from ordinary complex noun phrases; semantically, they function as a sort of secondary adverbial cases. Examples:

raz "front", *fæstæ* "behind": *ævzæræn* (dat.) *iæ razæi, xorzæn* (dat.) *iæ fæstæ* "ahead of the bad one, behind the good one";

sær "head": *bælasɨ* (gen.) *særæi* "from the treetop";

astæu "waist, middle": *Atɨnægæi* (abl.) *Kæxcgænæni* (gen.) *astæu* "between (the two places) A. and K.";

ærd (as noun functions *ærdæg*) "side": *læppu fæinardæm akast* "the boy looked in all directions" (construed with the nom.: *fæinæ* "one single"); *ardæm* "in this direction", *urdæm* "in that direction", *galiu(æ)rdæm* "towards the left", etc.

Prepositional elements with case-like functions are, e.g., *æd* "with" (<*hada), *ænæ* "without" (< *ana), *uæl* "on" (< **avari?*), *dæl* "below" (< *adari), D. *ændæ* "outside" (I. *ættæ* < *antā), *fæs* "behind" (< *pasā); prepositional noun phrases can be connected with case endings, except *æd* which for that matter has the same syntactic properties as the case endings proper. Examples: *fæs-qustæi* "behind the ears"; D. *ændæ-mæsug fæccæi* "he was (came) outside the tower"; *uæl-art* "over the fire"; *sɨzdæxt æd-don sæximæ* "she returned home with (the) water"; *ænæ sɨmax bafærsgæ* "without asking you".

3.2.4.1. The nom. (indefinite case) is used to name objects, to mark the subj. of both trans. and intrans. verbs, and to mark the dir. obj. of trans. verbs. If it is necessary or desirable to emphasize that a noun functions as the dir. obj. of a verb, that noun is put in the gen.; this is especially the case if the object denotes a definite animate being: *mæ madɨ næ fetton* "I have not seen my mother", but also *uæ læg sag amara* "your man ought to kill the stag" (where ambiguity for pragmatic reasons is unlikely). Further, the nom. functions as a predicative noun, in which case it competes with the abl., and as an adverbial, in which case its function overlaps with that of the iness. *(særd, ualʒæg, zɨmæg* "in the summer, spring, winter").

The nom. is as a rule derived from the OIran. nom.; nouns like *bærzond* "high", *zærond* "old", D. *xuæræ* "sister" (but I. *xo*) presuppose thematization of an ancient obl. case; *art* "fire" is probably due to the thematization of an ancient neuter **ātr̥*.

3.2.4.2. The gen. is used as a nominal modifier and as an obj. of trans. verbs; in both functions it competes with the nom. It serves as the subj. (agent case) of a handful of impersonal verbs: *qæuɨ, fændɨ, uɨrnɨ,* D. *ænyezuɨ mæ* "I must, want, believe, must". It is homonymous with the iness., except in the

declension of pronouns and of the Digor cardinal numbers (gen. *ieu-e-i*, iness. *ieu-em-i*). The gen. suffix I. *-i*, D. *-i* to all appearances goes back to an ancient gen. in *-ah (*-ahya* would have resulted in *-æi*; cf. Emmerick 1968, 256).

3.2.4.3. The dat. denotes the abstract motion towards somebody or something (the indir. obj. of a verb, the purpose or result of a process). Its function as a predicative complement ('final dat.') is especially worthy of note: *ævræytæ skottai dæxicæn calxæn* "you made the clouds (into) a wheel for yourself". There is considerable overlapping between dat. and allat. The dat. ending *-æn* is homonymous with the derivational suffix *-æn*, which is used for forming nouns with the meaning "destined for, apt to" and the like: *badæn* "a seat" to *badin* "to sit"; *xizæn* "pasture" to *xizin* "to graze".

Historically, both suffixes are probably identical, going back to nouns in OIran. *-ana*. Cf. also below 3.3.2.

3.2.4.4. There are three loc. cases: iness., allat, and adess., indicating both "where" and "whereto". Of these the iness. is the unmarked case, expressing in general a point in time or place ("in, into"): *aræx-iu cidis Soslan cuani Zilaxari bidirmæ* "S. often went hunting (literally: in a hunt) to the Z. plain". The ending I. *-i*, D. *-i* is apparently derivable from an ancient athematic loc. in *-yā*.

The allat. carries the notion of "at, by, near, towards": *dæ bæx maxmæ is* "your horse is with us"; *kalakmæ acidis* "he went to the town"; *æxsævæi bonmæ* "from night to day".

The adess. denotes "(up)on": *dæs saxatil* "at 10 o'clock"; *bændænil kafæg* "tightrope walker (dancing on a rope)".

The ending of the allat. is I. sing. *-mæ*, plur. *-m*, D. *-mæ*. The adess. ending is I. *-il*, D. *-bæl*. Digor nouns ending in nom. sing. *-æ* retain the *-æ* before the allat. and the adess. endings; in the same way the *-æ* of the nom. plur. is preserved (in I. the final vowel of *-mæ* is apocopated): D. *kadængæ-mæ* "to a song"; *fingæ-bæl* "on the table"; etc. In that respect the two case endings behave in the same way as postpositions construed with the nom. We may accordingly assume that they have originated in postpositional phrases, being newcomers to the language. D. *-bæl*, which in Iron has been reduced to *-il* is immediately derivable from ancient *upári*. The origin of *-mæ* is less certain, but a derivation from ancient *hama-* (instr. *hamā?*) seems reasonable.

3.2.4.5. The abl. expresses the obj. from which or in combination with which an action begins or takes place (point of departure, instrument, material, cause, general circumstances). it is frequently used as a predicative apposition:

qædgæsæi kusin "to work as a forester"; *Rostovæi ardæmæ Iron adæmæi uidisti*-"from R. and hither there lived Ossetes (they lived (as) Ossetes)". This use is undoubtedly an Old Iranian (cf. the predicative instr. in Sogdian) or even Indo-European heritage, though interference from the adjacent languages, where adverbial cases with analogous functions are used in much the same way, may have encouraged its extension in the modern language. In the abl. the syntactic functions of the ancient instr. and abl. have been conflated. The ending is *-æi* (I. *-iæ* after vowels, with dissimilation). The derivation from the gen.-abl. of the ancient *ā*-stems *(*-āyāh)*, or a conflation of this and the instr. in **-ayā* seems obvious (cf. above 2.1.2).

3.2.4.6. The equat. expresses likeness: *fatau ataxti* "he flew like an arrow", *Ironau ʒurin* "I speak Ossetic". The ending *-au* goes back to the nom. sing. masc. of an adj. in **-āvan-*, which likewise functions as an adv. in Sogdian and Khotanese.

3.2.4.7. The comit. expresses a secondary participant of an action: *Iron usimæ cærin* "I live with an Ossetic woman". The ending *-imæ* < *-iumæ* is the allat. of *iu* "one". It is evidently a newcomer in the case inventory, as appears from the fact that it is not used in Digor, where, instead, concomitance is expressed by postpositional phrases (gen. + *xæccæ): dæu xæccæ mæn znag næ fændui* "I don't want to be your enemy (enemy with you)"; prepositional phrases with *æd* can in part express the same meaning.

If the stem ends in a vowel and the case suffix begins with a vowel, an *-i-* is inserted as a glide between the stem and the suffix: *læppu-i-au* "like a boy". In Iron a final velar is affricized before an initial front vowel of the case suffix, except the adess. *-il: kalači* "in the city", but *kalakil* "on, about the city" to *kalak.*

3.2.5. A derivational suffix *-dær (*-tara-)* expresses the notion of higher degree. *mænæn mæ xo lægdær u* "my sister is more manly". The basis of comparison is as a rule expressed by the abl. ("than"): *amæi ai ræsuyddær* "the one prettier than the other". And by reduplication of *-dær* the sup. degree may be expressed: *saudærdær* "the blackest"; usually, however, this notion is expressed lexically (I. *æppæti* (gen. sing. "of all") *saudær;* D. *tækkæ* ("the very") *saudær;* etc.).

3.2.6. Numerals.

The vigesimal system of counting prevails: *fonʒissæʒi* "100 = 5 20's". The decimal system (*ærtin* "30", *sædæ* "100") is still (or was until recently) in

use in some local idioms in Western Ossetia, and has in recent times been introduced into the official language. The Caucasian background of the vigesimal system of counting seems beyond doubt.

In Iron ordinal numbers are formed by means of the suffix *-æm (*-ama-)*; in Digor the suffix *-æimag (*-mayāka-, cf.* Sogd. *-myk)*; both suffixes entail vowel weakening in the preceding syllable: I. *ævdæm*, D. *ævdæimag* "7th" < *avd.* In both dialects *-ag* serves as the suffix of the ordinal numbers "first", "second", "third": I. *ficcag*, D. *ficcag*, etc.

3.2.7. Pronouns.

3.2.7.1. The pers. pronouns of the first and second pers.sing. presuppose an earlier system of two cases, nom. and gen.-obl.: I., D. *æz < *azǎ (m?)*, I., D. *mæn < *mana* "I"; I. *di*, D. *du<*tu*, I., D. *dæu<*tava* (sonorization due to a generalized sandhi form) "you". The gen. serves as the base of declension: dat. *mæn-æn, dæu-æn;* abl. *mæn-æi, dæu-æi;* etc. The declension of the plur. pronouns is based on the ancient gen.: I., D. *max < *ahmāxam* "we"; I. *s(i)max*, D. *sumax < *yušmāxam* (or **šmāxam?*) "you"; equat. *max-au, smax-au;* adess. *max-il, smax-il;* etc.

The encl. pers. pronouns obviously go back to their Old Iranian counterparts, which have been refashioned by various levellings as the case inflection took shape: gen. I., D. *mæ, dæ, næ, uæ;* 3rd pers. gen. I. *æi/iæ;* D. *æi/æ;* I., D. *sæ* "my/me, your/you, our/us, your/you; his/him etc., their/them".

The encl. pronouns frequently anticipate a following noun phrase; the same applies to encl. adverbs: *Batraჳ æm ragæi mæsti uid soqquir uæiigmæ* "B. was long ago angry at the one-eyed giant" (with anticipatory *æm*); *biræ ჳi fædæ Mæskuii* "did you stay long in Moscow?" (with anticipatory *ჳi* "there"). It is hard to decide whether this feature is due to influences from the 'objective conjugation' of the Northwest and South Caucasian languages.

3.2.7.2. The refl. (emphatic) pers. pronouns are formed by combining the gen. of the encl. pers. pron. with the refl. elements I. *xædæg*, D. *xuædæg (< *xvataka-)* in the nom., I. *xi*, D. *xe (< *xvai-)* in the obl. cases: *mæ-x(u)ædæg* etc. "I myself" etc., gen. *mæ-xi/xe* etc. *xi/xe* is also used as an independent noun: *mæsig xi duræi kæli* "the tower collapses through its own stones" (a proverb).

3.2.7.3. In the system of dem. pronouns two degrees of proximity are distinguished. In both dialects *a- (< *a-)* refers to a 'near' object ("this"). In Iron *u- (< *ava-;* or a conflation of **ava-* and **hau-?)* is used to refer to 'distant' objects ("that"); in Digor nom. *ie,* obl. cases *uo- (< *ayam, *ava-)* is

used with this function. *u-/ie* also serve as pers. pronouns for the 3rd pers. ("he, etc."). In all the neighbouring Caucasian languages there is a three-term system of dem. pronouns. It is possible that the different lexical elements used by the two dialects to form the pron. of the remote deixis reflect an older three-term system in Ossetic.

When used as modifiers, the dem. pronouns are as a rule followed by a particle I. -*ci̱*, D. -*ci* (< **čid): aci̱ læg* "this man"; *ui̱ci̱ bælas* "that tree". I. *ai* (D. *aiæ*), *ui̱i*, properly gen. *(*ahya, *avahya)*, may function as nom. but usually as head nouns only; *a* alone occurs as a modifier in stereotype phrases: *abon* "today".

In the formation of the plur. the two dialects differ, Iron showing some archaic traits (I. *adon, ui̱don* < **-ānām)*, Digor, however, nom. *atæ*, obl. cases *an-*, nom. *ietæ*, obl. cases *uon-*. In Iron *a-, ui̱-* (sing.), *adon, ui̱don* (plur.) serve as the base of inflection; in Digor the base of inflection is *a-, uo-* (sing.), *an-*, *uon-* (plur.); in the sing. -*m-* (<**-hm-)* is inserted between the base and the case endings in dat., abl. and iness., in Digor also before the plur. iness. ending: iness. I. *am*, D. *ami* "here"; abl. I. *ui̱mæi*, D. *uomæi* "from him".

3.2.7.4. The ancient interr. stem **ka-/ča-/či-* etc. forms the basis of the interr.-rel. pronouns. As regards inflection, the dialects partly differ: I. nom. *či,* gen. *kæi*, D. nom. *ka*, gen. *ke;* "who"; but I. *ci̱*, D. *ci* "what", both from **čid* (gen. *cæi*). I. *či* (< **ke)* is not clear, formally it corresponds to D. gen. *ke*, the expected development of **kahya* is, however, *kæi*, the actual Iron gen.; D. *ka* may be an ancient fem. **kā* (with *a* instead of *æ* in a monosyllable, cf. *ma* "not" < **mā)*. The inflection is based on the stems *kæ-, cæ-*, with -*m-* inserted in the same cases as in the paradigm of the dem. pron.: I. *kæm*, D. *kæmi* (< **kahmyă̆)* "where", etc.

In the plur. the order of the inflectional morphemes is normally case before number: I. nom. *či-tæ*, dat. *kæmæn-ti̱;* D. nom. *ka-tæ*, gen. *ke-ti;* I., D. abl. *cæmæi-ti̱/ti;* but there is even some fluctuation in the order of the morphemes (order is optional): I. com. *kæ-imæ-ti̱/kæi-t-imæ, cæ-imæ-ti̱/cæi-t-imæ.*

The interr. stem serves as the basis for numerous nominal and adverbial formations: I., D. *cal* "how much" *(ci̱/ci + ual* "so much"), *kæd* "if, when" (< **kada);* I. *kui̱d*, D. *kud* "how" (< **kuda);* etc.

Indefinite pronouns are formed from the interr.-rel. pron. (adv.) by the means of pre- or suffixes: *is-či/ci̱ (isti̱)* "anybody/anything"; *či/ci̱-dær* somebody/something"; *či/ci̱-dærittær* "whoever/whatever"; *is-kæm* "anywhere", *kæm-dær* "somewhere"; with negation: I. *ni-či*, D. *ne-ke* "nobody" (< **nai-)*, etc.

3.2.7.5. The pers. pronouns form poss. adjectives by adding the suffix *-on*: *mæn-on* "my", *mæ-xi-on* "my own", *max-on* "our"; *u̇i-on* "his, her, its", *u̇idon-on* "their"; *sæ-xi-on* "their own".

3.3. Verbs.

3.3.1. The structure of the verb is basically the same in both dialects. In details, however, they differ considerably; in part these divergences undoubtedly date back to ancient dialectal differentiation. In this regard the disparity in the personal endings is particularly striking.

3.3.1.1. Whereas the noun has developed some (for an Iranian language) rather original features, the verb has been highly conservative. It is still characterized by an unipersonal inflection, showing grammatical accord only with the subject. The fundamental distinction between the pres. and pret. stems and between the pret. intrans. and trans. inflection is a trait inherited from early Middle Iranian. The modal system is archaic; the formatives are transformations of the Old Iranian modal suffixes; the functions of the moods are basically the same as in Old Iranian. An innovation peculiar to Ossetic is the formation of the fut. by means of *čanah-* "wish", but the use of periphrases containing lexical elements denoting "wish" to form expressions of futurity is a common Iranian phenomenon. On the other hand, the bidimensional system of preverbs is apparently an innovation to be ascribed to Caucasian influence.

3.3.1.2. The rich conjugational flora of Old Iranian has been eliminated. In the pres. all verbs are inflected in the same way; the only exception is the verb "to be", which shows some peculiarities. As to the two conjugations of the pret., see below 3.3.6.

3.3.1.3. The expression of the categories of person and number is of the fusional type, in much the same way as in Old Iranian. Grammatically conditioned variation of allomorphs is considerable. In all essentials the historical background of the pers. endings is clear, although many details still need elucidation; a matter of special importance is the comparatively great differences between the dialects. An unetymological *-æ* that in Digor appears after certain personal endings is unexplained.

3.3.2. The verb possesses grammatical expressions for the categories of person and number, mood, tense and transitivity vs. intransitivity; the expression of aspect (preverbs) is on the border between inflection and derivation.

There are three participles: the pres.part. in I., D. *-æg (< *-aka-),* and the

fut.part. in I. *–inag*, D. *-uinag* (< ?) are formed from the pres. stem. The past part. in *-d/t* is usually identical with the pret. stem. In principle, the part. does not express diathesis: *zaræg* = 1) "singing", 2) "song". In addition, there is a verbal noun in *-ag (< *-āka-)* which denotes "permanent quality": *nuazæg* "drinking", *nuazag* "drunkard" *(nuazɨn* "to drink").

A gerund (co-verb) in *-gæ* (< an old verbal noun in the instr.; **-akā?*) is formed from the pres. stem: *læppu kæugæ bacɨd iæ xæʒarmæ* "the boy went home crying" *(kæuɨn* "to cry"). The gerund is frequently used in the abl.: *cæugæiæ* "going" (D. *–gæi*). Like other nouns it can be used as a modifier: *ducgæ qug* "milch cow" *(ducɨn* "to milk").

The inf. I. *-ɨn*, D. *-un* (< **-una-)* is likewise derived from the pres. stem. As any other noun it is inflected for case and number: *nuaz-ɨn-mæ* "in order to drink", *nuaz-ɨn-tæ baidɨttoi* "they started drinking".

A verbal noun in *-æn* is formed from the pres. stem; it denotes "fitness, destination" and is in form identical with the dat. ending (cf. above 3.2.4.3): *axæm ræsuyd sɨlgoimag zɨn ssaræn uɨd* "such a pretty woman was hard to find" *(sarɨn* "to find", *s*-proverb).

The verbal nouns have the formal and syntactic properties of nouns (inflection for case and number, head or modifiers in noun phrases), but share also the syntactic properties of the verb from which they are derived (e.g., transitivity).

3.3.3. The distinction between a pres. and a pret. stem is basic to the verb inflection. The pres. stem is an amalgam of the various Old Iranian pres. formations. The pret. stem is characterized by the suffix *-t/d* < **-ta-* *(-t* after voiceless consonants, otherwise *-d).* In principle, the pret. stem is not predictable on the basis of the pres. stem, nor vice versa.

From the pres. stem are formed the pres. ind., subj., opt., fut. and imp. and, besides, the nominal forms listed in 3.3.2. From the pret. stem are formed the pret. ind. and opt. and the pret. part.; as a rule the pret. part. is identical with the pret. stem, with the exception of a few verbs: e.g., *læuuɨn* "to stand", pret. *læuuɨttæn*, pret. part. *læud*. In some instances the formation of the pret. entails changes in stem: *kænɨn* "to do", pret. part. *kond,* pret. *kotton.*

Suppletive verbs are few: *dættɨn* "to give", pret.part. *læværd* (< **dad(ā*)-, *fra-bɟta-);* as to the verb "to be", cf. below 3.3.8.

(Lists of verb stems are found in ABAEV, Sketch, 1964, 35ff.; AHVLEDIANI 1963, 218ff.)

3.3.4. Transitivity is both a morphological and a syntactic category. In the pret. the category of transitivity is expressed morphologicatly; in the pres., trans. and intrans. verbs are inflected alike. As a rule each verb is either trans.

or intrans.; there is, however, a group of verbs where transitivity is not inherent in the lexical meaning of the verb; such verbs are inflected in the pret. according to their syntactic position: *xizin* "to graze": trans. pret. *xiston*, intrans. *xistæn*.

Frequently pairs of verbs, one trans., the other intrans., are formed from the same root; the trans. verb then has a strong vowel, while the vowel of the intrans. verb is weak. Such verbs reflect the ancient opposition between primary verbs and caus. verbs in *-aya-*: I. *qusin*, D. *iyosun* "hear", I. *quisin*, D. *iyusun* "be heard" (< *vi-gauš/guš*); the pret. stems are identical: *quist/iyust*.

There is a group of intrans. verbs formed from trans. verbs by adding the suffix *-s-* (< 'inch.' suffix IE. *-sk'-*); as a rule the stem vowel is weakened: *tavin* "to make warm", *tæfsin* "become warm".

Intransitivity (rather than pass.) is expressed by the pret. part. + *cæuin* "to go": *arazin* "to make", *aræst cæui* "is made". The agent is either absent or expressed by lexical means: *kusʒitæ amaiinc xæʒar* "the workers build a house" vs. *xæʒar amad cæui kusʒiti k'uxæi* "the house is built by the hands of the workers".

3.3.5. The distinction between the perfective (determinate) and the imperfective (indeterminate) aspects is mostly expressed by means of proverbs.

A preverb has a double function: 1) It determines the action in some way or focuses the attention on some point in the course of the action; it may be used metaphorically or effect (in part unpredictable) semantic specializations of the verb. 2) It gives the verb a perfective aspect; at the same time it may, more or less, lose its concrete semantic content, becoming a mere marker of aspect. In the pret. and the fut. a verb is perfective or imperfective according to the presence or absence of a preverb: *badin* "I sit", *battæn* "I was sitting", *s-battæn* "I sat down". Information on which preverb functions as the perfectivizer of a given verb belongs to the lexicon. There is some fluctuation, choice to some extent being optional (matter of local, idiolectal, stylistic variation).

In its function as a spatial determiner the preverb has a bidimensional deixis; it informs at the same time about the direction of the action (movement) and the position of the observer: 'actor's field' (I) vs. 'observer's (speaker's) field' (II).

The following preverbs are used in the modern language (their function is exemplified by *cæuin,* the verb denoting movement in general, "go, come"): *a-cid* "he went out" (observer is inside), *ra-cid* "he came out" (observer is outside), *ba-cid* "he entered" (observer is outside), *ærba-cid* "he entered" (observer is inside), *ær-cid* "he came down (arrived at a certain point)" (observer is below), *ni-ccid* "he went down" (observer is above).

As regards *s-* "up", no distinction is made between the two fields: *s-cid* "he went/came up". In the same way, in Digor there is only one preverb for the

direction "out (away)": *racud* "he went/came out". This lack of symmetry indicates that the system of bidimensional deixis is still not fully developed.

The preverb I., D. *fæ-* may be used for expressing perfectivity (*fequɨston* "I heard"); as regards spatial relations it is neutral, not informing on the direction of the action.

The Iranian etymology of the preverbs is in the main obvious: *a-* < **ā-*, *ra-* < **frā-*; *ba-* < **upá-*; *ær-* < **avar-(?)*; I. *nɨ-*, D. *ni-* < **ni-*, I. *(ɨ)s-*, D. *is-* < **us-*; *fæ-* < **pa-* (rather than **pati-*).

After the preverb *nɨ/ni-* the initial consonant of the verb is geminated; in Digor gemination also takes place after *fæ-*: I. *nɨmmarɨn*, D. *nimmarun* "to kill"; D. *fælleʒun* "to run away", but I. *fæliʒɨn*.

There are numerous remains of ancient preverbs which have been amalgamated with the verb, i.e. the verb and the preverb have merged into an unanalyzable lexical unity; to such verbs one of the productive preverbs can be prefixed: I. *n(ɨ)uazɨn*, D. *niuazun* "to drink" (< *ni-* + *uaz-* = "to swallow"), pret. perf. *ba-noston* "I drank" (note *niuazun* without gemination!).

In Digor an encl.pers.pron. may be intercalated between verb and preverb: *ra mæ maræ* (imp.) "Kill me".

The bidimensional deixis of the preverbs can be ascribed with certainty to Caucasian influence. The question of their aspectual function is much harder to decide; the possibility of an areal feature encompassing Slavic and some Caucasian languages beside Ossetic should perhaps not be denied offhand.

Various modes of action (secondary aspects) are expressed either lexically or by derivational devices. An infix *-cæi-*, which is inserted between verb and preverb, turns a prefixed verb into an imperfective verb: *ba-cæi-cɨdi* "he was going in". An encl. particle I. *iu*, D. *eu* (cf. Av. *yauuaē-*) expresses repetition or custom; red. verbs of the type *ra-cu ba-cu kænɨn* "go in and out" denote repetition or durativity.

(For details see ABAEV, Sketch, 1964, 45ff, 76ff.; AHVLEDIANI 1963, 235ff.; BENVENISTE 1959, 93 ff.; BIELMEIER 1981; THORDARSON 1982.)

3.3.6. The intrans. pret. is derived from the pret. stem (part.) with the verb "to be": *cærɨn* "to live", pret. part. *card,* pret. *carttæn (card-dæn)* etc.

The trans. pret. apparently contains the past part., but otherwise its derivation is enigmatic. The pers. endings coincide with those of the subj., except in the I plur. where the subj. has *–æm/æn* while the pret. eliding is – *am/an: kotton* "I did", *kottai, kotta, kottam* (D. *-an;* subj. *kæn-æm/-æn),* I. *kottat,* D. *kottaitæ,* I. *kottoi,* D. *kottoncæ* (*kænɨn, kond*). But for both semantic and formal reasons the possibility of deriving the trans. pret. from the subj. must be ruled out.

In analogy to the pres. a pret. opt. is formed from both trans. and intrans. verbs. The pret. opt. of intrans. verbs is formed directly from the pret. part.: *card-a-in* (D. *card-a-inæ;* but pret. ind. *card + dæn*). The pret. opt. of trans. verbs is formed from the inflectional stem of the ind.: I., D. *kott-a-in,* ind. *kotton.* This appears clearly from such verbal pairs as *kalin* "to pour", *kælin* "to flow": pret. intrans. *kalttæn,* opt. *kaldain;* pret. trans. *kaltton,* opt. *kalttain.*

After spirants, gemination is suppressed: *safin* "lose", *sæfin* "be lost", pret. trans. *sæfton,* pret. intrans. *sæftæn* (opt. pret. trans. and intrans. *sæftain).*

The possibility of deriving *-ain* etc. from an old opt. of **ah-* "to be" naturally suggests itself. Cf. pres. opt- I. *fæ-c-ain* beside *fæ-uain,* from *uin* "to be".

3.3.7. The pres. ind. is the general, unmarked tense and mood. When two verbs are paratactically arranged and the first verb appears in the pret., the last verb is frequently put in the pres. (historical pres.): *bacidi iæm xæstæg Soslan æmæ iæm ʒuri* "S. approached him and talks to him". Formally the pres. ind. continues Old Iranian pres. formations, although many details still need explanation.

The subj., opt. and imp. moods correspond closely to their Old Iranian namesakes.

The subj. has a prospective meaning, with or without the notion of will. The opt. denotes desirability and possibility or supposition. In cond. clauses the opt. has a dissociative function, being used of hypothetical conditions; the subj. denotes real conditions. To a certain extent subj. and opt. are interchangeable, especially in their function as expressions of doubt or vacillation. An interesting archaic trait is the Digor use of the pres. opt. to denote recurrent action in the past; in Iron the pret. opt. is used with this meaning. In the pret., where a secondary opt. has been formed, the functional opposition of the two moods is neutralized; pres. *quamæ acæuon* "I must go", but *quamæ acidain* "I had to go".

In form the subj. clearly corresponds to the Old Iranian thematic subj.: Sing. I., D. *kæn-on, -ai, -a < *-āni, -āhi, *-āt;* 3 plur. D. *-oncæ < *-ānti,* 2 plur. I. *-at < *-āθa;* 1 plur. I., D. *–æm/æn* is identical with the ind.; 2 plur. D. *-aitæ,* 3 *-oi* are in need of an explanation.

The formative of the opt. is *-i-* (note D. "long *ī*"), which undoubtedly goes back to the Old Iranian opt. in **-ai/yā/ī-,* although the details of the development are not clear. In Iron an enigmatic *-kk-* has been inserted in the plur. between the *-i-* and the pers. ending: *kæn-i-kk-am* etc. (D. *kæn-i-anæ).*

The imp. expresses exhortation and order. Its derivation from the ancient imp. is obvious: I. *kæn,* D. *kænæ* "do!" etc.

Peculiar to Ossetic is the fut. formation in I. *-ʒin, -ʒæn,* D. *-ʒæn, -ʒin,* originating from a periphrasis consisting of **čanah-* "wish" and the verb "to

be": I. *cær-ʒin-æn*, D. *cær-ʒæn-æn* etc. "I will live" < **čara-čana(h)-ah-* "(am) life-desiring". Note that the copula in these formations shows no trace of the initial *d-* of the 1 and 2 sing.

3.3.8. The conjugation of the verb "to be", I. *uin*, D. *un*, incorporates forms of the ancient roots **ah-*, **bav-*, and possibly **st(ā)-*. The initial *d-* of the 1 and 2 sing. pres. ind.: I., D. *d-æn*, *d-æ*, has not been satisfactorily explained. The divergences of the dialects in the inflection of the pres. ind. are noteworthy: 3 sing. I. *u*, *i(s)*, D. *ies*, *æi*; plur. I. *stæm*, *stut*, *sti*, D. *an*, *aitæ*; *æncæ* (**ah-*). In Iron the pret. part. *uid* (*uittæn* "I was") goes back to **būta-*. In Digor the pret. is based on a stem *ad* (*attæn* "I was") < **hāta* (from **ah-*); *ad-* is found in Iron in the pret. opt.: *fæ-c-ad-ain* (beside *fæ-uid-ain*).

In Iron a secondary formation *væiin*, expressing iterative aspect, has been derived from **bav-*.

3.3.9. Compound verbs consist of a noun and the verbs *uin* (intrans.) and *kænin* (mostly trans.; other verbs are occasionally used). Such formations constitute a lexical unit. The preverb is placed before the noun: *næ dæ ferox kotton* "I have not forgotten you" (*rox kænin*). The same applies to the place of the negation, though the inverted order is also possible: *rox dæ næ fækotton* (emphasis). Verbs of this type are common.

(See MILLER 1903, 40ff.; ABAEV, OJaF, 357 ff.; ABAEV, Sketch, 1964; AHVLEDIANI 1963-1969; ISAEV 1966; WEBER 1983.)

3.4. Lists of indeclinable words are found in ABAEV, Sketch, 1964, 80 ff.; AHVLEDIANI 1963, 297f.; ISAEV 1966,90ff.

3.5. Notes on Syntax.

In contradistinction to the structure of the noun phrase, where word order is highly significant, the place of the verb in relation to its various complements carries no great functional load. The unmarked word order is of the Subject-Object-Verb type. Adverbials usually precede the verb; sentence adverbials of time and place tend to have an advanced position. Encl. pronouns and adverbs appear after the first prosodic unit of the sentence, i.e. Wackernagel's law (WACKERNAGEL 1892, 333 ff.) is still valid in Ossetic.

Subordinate clauses as a rule precede the superordinate clause. Subordinating conjunctions and relative noun phrases are placed immediately before the verb phrase of the subordinate clause: *iæ poetikon kuist bast u, Cægat Kavkazi xæxxon adæmty æxsæn uici zamani ci zingæ xabærttæ ærcidi, uidonæi iuæiiutimæ* "his poetic activity was connected with some of the important events which at that time happened among the mountaineers of North Caucasia", literally "his poetic activity connected was, North Caucasia's

mountaineers among at that time which important news happened, of-them with-some". In general, the superordinate clause contains a correlative adv. or pron.: *či-uïi* "who – he"; *kæd-uæd* "when, if – then" etc.

(In general, see AHVLEDIANI 1969; ABAEV, Sketch, 1964; GAGKAEV 1956.)

4. Vocabulary

From Indo-European Ossetic has retained the easy power of combining native words into compounds and of enlarging its vocabulary by the use of prefixes and suffixes. The Iranian etymologies of the affixes are mostly clear; hardly any derivational elements have been borrowed from the neighbour languages. The number of lexical items which are etymologically isolated within the language is, apart from loanwords, relatively small. Primary verbs are few in number, a poverty which is compensated for by the great productivity of compound verbs.

Long-standing cultural and bilingual relations with the neighbouring peoples have resulted in considerable mutual exchange of words. Loanwords of North Caucasian and Turkic origin constitute a comparatively large part of the Ossetic vocabulary; in modern times Russian has contributed greatly to the lexical stock. For the most part, however, the loanwords seem to be linked with the conditions of life in the Caucasus area, i.e. the word has been borrowed with the referent. By and large, the Ossetic vocabulary shows a striking tenacity. Most verbs denoting the basic activities of man are of Iranian derivation. Nouns designating parts of the body are mostly Iranian; *arm* "hand", *fad* "foot" and *kom* "mouth" have been replaced in their primary meanings by I. *k'ux,* D. *k'ox;* I., D. *k'ax;* I. *ʒix,* D. *ʒux, c'ux* respectively, migratory words of uncertain extraction, but have been preserved in compounds and metaphoric usages (fixed idioms). The majority of kinship terms are easily recognizable Iranian words; I. *ærvad,* D. *ærvadæ* (< **brātar-*) denotes "kinsman", probably an ancient semantic inheritance; for the narrower meaning of "consanguineous brother" a new word has been coined: I. *ævsimær,* D. *ænsuvær* < **æm-suvær* "of the same womb, couterinus". For the study of family relations in the old tribal society the scarcity of specialized kinship terms is important; notions tike "grandfather, grandmother, aunt, uncle, cousin, niece, nephew" have to be expressed by compounds *(fïdï fïd* "father's father" etc.).

Patronymics in *-on* (< **-āna-)* were probably in use in older times, but have been superseded by the family (or tribal) name in the plural; when used with a proper name it is put in the gen. and precedes the latter: *Koʒïrtï Taimuraz* "T. of the K. tribe". The bulk of proper names belong to the Caucasian area.

Mythological nouns of Iranian derivation are, e.g., *Nart(æ)* "the Narts (mythological heroes)" < **narθra-* (**nar-* "man"); *Alægatæ* (a Nart tribe) < **Āryaka-; Æxsærtækkatæ* (a Nart tribe) < **xsǎθra-; Boratæ,* the name of the third Nart tribe, is obscure. The name of *Soslan,* the solar hero, who bears some resemblance to Miθra, is apparently a patronymic in *-ān,* but for the rest the name is enigmatic. It is of significance to the study of the prehistoric Iranian religion that Ossetic seems to retain no trace of the vocabulary peculiar to Zoroastrianism, a fact that indicates that the 'Mazdean Reformation' never reached the ancestors of the Ossetes.

(See ABAEV, OJaF, passim; BENVENISTE 1959, 115ff.; ABAEV, Slovar'; BIELMEIER 1977; THORDARSON 1986.)

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