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THE OSSETIC GERUND

Suffix *-gæ*; in the abl.-instr. sg. *-gæ-iæ* (Iron), *-gæ-i* (Digor), probably < O.Ir. **-akā*, an old oxytone instrumental of a verbal noun in **-aka-*.

Examples:

I. The gerund is a verbal adverb, marking an action concomitant with the action expressed by a finite verb:

The implied agent of the gerund is co-referential with the subject of the finite verb of the superordinate clause:

(1)   *læppu*   *kæugæ*   *bacyd*   *jæ xæʒarmæ*
       boy (nom.sg.)   crying (ger.) came-in (past 3 sp.)   his to-house (allat.sg.)
       "the boy entered his house crying" (Abaev, Grammatical sketch, p. 48; Iron).

(2)   *kafgæiæ*   *Æxsarbeg fæstæmæ*   *rakast*
       dancing (ger.abl.) Æxsarbeg back (allat. sg.) looked (3 sg.)
       "Æ. looked back while dancing" (Axvlediani (ed.): Gramm. oset. yaz., I, p. 272; Iron).

(3)   *Murtaz ænæ-xongæ*   *nygguyrsti*
       Murtaz not-invited ("without" + ger.) burst-in (past 3 sg.)
       "M. burst in without being invited" (Abaev, Sketch., p. 48; Iron.)

The agent is co-referential with the object of the superordinate finite verb:

(4)   *c῾iu,*   *am dælæmæ*   *čyzg*   *æmæ læppu*
       bird (nom.sg.),   here downward (all.)   girl (nom.sg.)   and boy (nom sg.)
       liʒgæ   *næ fedtaj*
       running (ger.)   not you-saw (2 sg.)
       "bird, did not you see a girl and a boy running here downward?" (Iron adæmy sfældystad, 1961, II, 94; Iron.)

(5)   *Æxsærtæg rast bonivæni   æfsænk´æbot   mærğtæ*
Æxsærtæg right at-dawn (loc.sg.) steel-beak   birds (nom.pl.)
ærbataxgæ   fæiidta
hither-flying (ger.)   he-saw (past 2 sg.)
"at dawn Æ. saw birds with steel-beaks come flying" (Narty kadʒytæ, ed. 1990, p. 84; Digor).

The agent is co-referential with a dative (possessive dative):

(6)   *sæ exsy   cælqytæi   æmæ sæ bæxty*
their of-whip (gen.sg.)   from-cracks (abl.pl.) and their of-horses (gen.pl.)
k´æxty   qæræi   Narty   zærond lægtæn
of feet (gen.pl.) from-beat (abl.sg.) of-Narts (gen.sg.) old   for-men (dat.pl.)
nyxasy   badgæiæ   sæ   zærdæ
on-assembly-place (loc.sg.) sitting (ger.abl.)   their heart (nom.sg.)
nyssæxxætt lasta
flare-up   grew (past 3 sg.)
"at the crack of their whips and the hoofbeat of their horses the hearts of the old men of the Narts, who were sitting in the assembly place, flared up" (Narty kadʒytæ, 1990, p. 82; Iron).
(Possessive dative: *zærond lægtæn* ("old men", dat.plur.) *sæ* ("their", poss.gen.plur.) *zærdæ* ("heart"): "the heart of the old men".)

The gerund may be unattached and not related to any NP ("pendant", "dangling" gerund):

(7)   *uæd dyn   iu   bon   amaigæ   -amaiyn*
then to-you (dat.sg.)   one day (nom.sg.) building (ger.) to build (infin.)
dur   raxaudta   æmæ   æfsymærtæi   sæ
stone (nom. sg.) fell (past 3 sg.) and   of-the-brothers (abl.pl.) their
iuy   sær   asasta
of-one (gen. sg.) head (nom. sg.) smashed (past 3 sg.)
"then one day, during construction, a stone fell down and smashed the head of one of the brothers" (Abaev, Sketch, p. 49; Iron.).

(8)   *aiquysti   duneiyl,   zæğgæ,*
was-heard (past 3 sg.) on-world (superessi. sg.) saying (ger.)
Narty   Uærxægæn   raqomyl is   qæbatyr fyrttæ,
of-Narts (gen.sg.) for-Wærxæg (dat.sg.)   grew-up (3 sg.) brave sons (nom.pl.),
fazzættæ   Æxsar æmæ   Æxsærtæg
twins (nom.pl.)   Æxsar and   Æxsærtæg (nom. sg.)

"the news spread in the world, saying that there grew up with (lit. for) W. the Nart brave sons, the twins Æ. and Æ." (Narty kadžytæ, ed. 1946, p. 4; Iron)

The gerund is correlated with the intransitive verb *aiquysti* "it was heard".

(9)   *Uyryzmæžy*   *zærdæ*   *fæfidar is,*
of-Uryzmæg (gen.sg.)   heart (nom. sg.) was strengthened,

uædæ ta bynton sæft næ dæn   *kæd myn*   *acy ran*
then   but wholly lost not I-am, if for-me (dat.sg.)   this place (nom. sg.)

dær   *æmcekktæ æmæ, mæ uyndmæ*   *či*   *bælly*
too   relatives   and my sight (all. sg.)   who   wants (pres. 3 sg.)

axæmtæ   *razyndis,*   *uæd,*   *zæğgæ,*   *æmæ syn*
such (nom. pl.)   turned-up,   then,   saying (ger.)   and to-them (dat. sg.)

ražyrdta,   *kuyd æğdauæi*   *æræftydis*
told (past 3 sg.) how rightly (abl. sg.)   arrived (past 3 sg.)

Donbettyry bæstæm,   *uyi*
Donbettyr's to-place (all. sg.),   that

"U.'s heart recovered its courage, saying "I am not totally lost, if I have relatives in this place, and if they turn out to want to see me (the sight of me)", and he told them how he arrived at D.'s place" (Narty kadžytæ, ed. 1946, p. 36-37; Iron).

The gerund *zæğgæ* "saying", used as a citation particle, refers to Uryz-mæg, notionally the subject of the superordinate (compound) verb *fæ-fidar is.*

(10)   *uælæbæl*   *k'umæl*   *cæğdgæi,*
in-upperworld (superess.sg.)   small beer (nom. sg.)   filtering (ger. abl.)

k'umæl-gor   *bacæugæiæ,*   *k'umæl næ læværdta*
small-beer-seeker coming (ger.abl.),   small beer not gave (past 3 sg.)

"in the upper world she used to filter (lit. strike) small beer, but when somebody came asking for small beer, she did not give small beer" (Iron adæmy sfældystad 1961, II, pp. 400-401; a Horse Consecration (funeral) sermon in Digor).

The implied subject of the first gerund (*cæğdgæi*) is co-referential with the subject of the superordinate verb (*lævardta* "(she) gave", whereas the second gerund has *k'umælgor* ("the one asking for small beer") as its subject; a kind of an absolute construction.

As appears from the examples (8) and (9), the gerund of the verb *zæğyn* (Digor *zæğun*) "to say", *zæğgæ* (*zæğgæiæ/zæğgæi*) is used as a citation particle for embedding reported speech or thought.

In narrative texts, when a proper name is introduced for the first time, *zæ̆ğgæ* is usually added:

(11) *ražy zamany card Axsaqtemyr, zæ̆ğgæ, iu fydlæg* "once upon a time there lived a monster called A." (Iron adæmy arğæuttæ, 1960, p. 33; Iron).

(12) *cardis æmæ uydis iu læg – Toreʒæ, zæ̆ğgæ, iæ nom* "there once lived and was a man called Torezæ, his name (was)" ibid., p. 196; Iron).

The gerund *zæ̆ğgæ* is frequently used to express purpose or cause:

(13) *læppu,   midæmæ   baxizon,   zæ̆ğgæ,*
     boy   inside (all.sg.) I-shall-enter (subj. 1 sg.), saying (ger.),
     kuyd zæ̆ğta,   aftæ iu zdæxt   fækodta
     how said (past 3 sg.),   thus one turn (nom. sg.)   made (past 3 sg.)
     Satanamæ
     to-Satana (all.)
     "when the boy was about to enter (lit. "the boy saying, I shall enter"), he turned around to S." (Narty kad`ȝytæ, ed. 1946, p. 46; Iron).

(14) *sağæs   kænyn   baidydtoi,   cy   kænæm,   zæ̆ğgæ*
     thought to-do (in.) they-began (past 3 pl.), what we-shall-do (subj. 1 pl.),   saying
     "they started to think what to do" (ibid. p. 80; Iron).

(15) *baidydta   quydy kænyn   Uyryzmæg,   uædæ cy*
     began (past 3 sg.) thought to-do (inf.)   Uryzmæg (nom.),   then which
     amalæi   airvæzon   acy fydbylyzæi,
     by-means (abl. sg.) I-shall-avoid (subj. 1 sg.) this from-trouble (abl. sg.),
     zæ̆ğgæ, æmæ ta iyn   ærquydy kodta   xinʒinad
     saying, and but for-him (dat. sg.) thought made (past 3 sg.) trick (nom. sg.)
     "U. began to think by which means he should get out of this trouble (lit. "by which means shall I get out of this trouble, saying"), and he thought of a trick" (ibid. p. 51).

The gerund may take the place of a finite verb:

(16) *ældar   sidgæ   nuazgæ, mæguyr læg dær aftæ*
     chieftain shouting drinking, poor   man too thus
     "the chieftain pronounced toasts and drank, and likewise the poor man" Abaev, Sketch, p. 76; Iron).

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II. The gerund is a noun, with the syntactic properties of a noun: head or modifier of a NP, the nominal part of a compound verb, a postposition:

The gerund may function as a nominal modifier (participial function):

(17a) *cæugæ don* "running water" (*cæuyn* "to move", *don* "water").

(17b) *ducgæ qug* "milch cow" (*ducyn* "to milk", *qug* "cow").

(17c) *kælgæ   fingæ   'ma iȝag sinon   uo*

flowing (ger.) table (nom. sg.) and full cup (nom. sg.) you-shall-be (subj. 2 sg.)

"may you be one possessing an exuberant table and a full cup "Iron adæmy sfældystad, 1961, II, p. 395; a Horse consecration sermon in Digor; *kælgæ fingæ* and *iȝag sinon* are apparently bahuvrihis).

The gerund may be used as the head of a noun phrase (as a substantive):

(18a) *xæd-tulgæ* "bicycle" (lit. "self-rolling", *tulyn* "to roll").

(18b) *dymgæ* "wind" (*dymyn* "to blow").

The gerund may function as the nominal part of a compound verb:

(19) *kæm xærgæ kænys* "where do you eat?" (i.e. "where do you (usually) take your meals?").

The gerund may function as a postposition:

(20) *gæsgæ* (*kæsgæ* (with the allative), from *kæsyn* "to look at") "according to":

mænmæ   gæsgæ

to-me (all.) looking-at (ger.)

"according to my view (lit.: to me)".

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The examples are in Iron where nothing else is said.

THE OSSETIC GERUND

The question of the role played by bilingualism in the history of Ossetic has been debated from various points of view. There seems to have been a tendency, particularly among native scholars, to stress the importance of language contacts for the moulding of the modern language, and there is, of course, no denying that Ossetic has been exposed to influence from neighbour languages, and that bilingual contacts have been instrumental in the formation of the language as we know it today and contributed at least to some of its peculiar features. After all, Ossetic has to all appearances been spoken in bilingual (or multilingual) communities for thousands of years. It is therefore a pity that our knowledge of all these prehistoric language communities is very limited.

In its basic vocabulary Ossetic has been comparatively resistant to the intrusion of foreign elements. This has been demonstrated clearly by Roland Bielmeier in his study of 1977, *Historische Untersuchung zum Erb- und Lehnwortschatz im ossetischen Grundwortschatz.* In a few studies, published in the 1980'ies, I came to the same conclusion. It appears from these investigations that the Ossetic loanwords adopted from adjacent, Turkic, Caucasian, languages are to a large extent confined to designations of things or phenomena which are peculiar to the living conditions of the Caucasus area, i.e., the form has been borrowed with the referent.

In its grammatical structure Ossetic shows a number of archaic traits. This is particularly true of the verb inflection, where e.g. the modal system is almost Avestan or Old Aryan in its structure.

Ossetic lacks many of the features which have traditionally been regarded as characteristic of the Caucasian languages. Ergativity, which must be assumed for a part of the noun declension at a previous stage of development (the genitive of certain pronouns used as the subject of transitive verbs), has been abandoned. An inherent trend of the language, or Turkic influence?

However, Ossetic possesses some grammatical, morpho-syntactical features, which it seems reasonable, or at least tempting, to regard as areal phe-

nomena and to ascribe to bilingual contacts. But it should be borne in mind that in the case of typological similarities between Ossetic and an adjacent language the direction of the borrowing may be difficult to determine. Where contacts seem likely, Ossetic is not necessarily the recipient language. Ossetic was formerly spoken over a wide area in the Northwest Caucasus, where it has been superseded by Northwest Caucasian and Turkic languages, and may have been a sort of a local prestige language. Turkic linguistic influence in the North Caucasus seems to have been strong, and the possibility should not be excluded that both lexical items and grammatical features have been transferred from Turkic to North Caucasian languages through the medium of Ossetic.

Among the grammatical features of Ossetic where areal contacts seem to be likely, or at least possible, I want to mention the following:

1) Ossetic has developed a case system that is unique among the Iranian languages.

2) The ancient local preverbs have developed an orientational function that is reminiscent of the *mi-/mo*-opposition of Georgian and similar functions of the preverbs in the Northwest Caucasian languages.

3) Verbal composition is extremely common in Ossetic: A compound verb is formed from a noun of some kind and an auxiliary verb (mostly the verb *kænyn* "to do" (transitive verbs) and the verb *uyn* "to be" (intransitive verbs)). This speech fashion is widespread over a large area in Central and Western Asia including the Iranian sister languages of Ossetic and seems to be attested in Avestan.

4) Ossetic possesses a verbal adverb (gerund, converb, absolutive) that is used for marking complement predicates.

I will use the rest of my time to make some comments on this last-mentioned feature.

But before I proceed I want to point out that in all the instances I have mentioned the morphological material used is unambiguously of Iranian origin; there is no case and reason to presume the borrowing of a grammatical morpheme.

In Ossetic a verbal adverb or gerund is used for the marking of complement predicates. The formative element is -*gæ*, that is added to the present stem of the verb.

I have previously explained this suffix as a petrified oxytone instrumental of an action noun in *-aka-, i.e. *-akā, with a syncope of the pretonic vowel, i.e. as a suffix of Iranian origin.

If this holds true, it is natural to presume that the adverbial function of the gerund is, from a diachronic point of view, primary, and that the participial functions are due to secondary developments.

Verbal nouns in *-aka-*, with various functions, are extremely common in the Iranian languages.

The Ossetic gerund has a wide range of functions. A rough classification is given in the hand-out.

Being a verbal noun the gerund may, like any other noun, function as a nominal modifier, that is to say as a participle (examples 17a-c). Or it may be the head of a noun phrase (examples 18 a, b). It can be used as the nominal part of a compound verb (example 19) and as a postposition (example 20).

The primary function of the gerund is, however, to mark an action concomitant with, and logically subordinate to, the action expressed by a superordinate finite verb. In this function the gerund may take the ending of the ablative (-instrumental) case, Ir. -gæ-iæ, Dig. -gæ-i (with dissimilation), a case with a large range of adverbial functions and frequently used as a predicative complement (referring to the subject as well as other NPs of the clause where it stands).

The use of verbal adverbs, instead of adverbial clauses with finite verbs, is a speech fashion that is widespread over a great part of eastern Europe and western and southern Asia (and, of course, found elsewhere too). It is characteristic of both the Turkic and the North Caucasian languages, where morphemic hypotaxis is the regular device for the embedding of complement predicates (terminology of Bossong in *Typologie der Hypotaxe*, Folia linguistica 1979, and G. Hewitt in *The typology of subordination in Georgian and Abkhaz*, 1987). It is therefore reasonable to regard this particular type of subordination as an areal phenomenon, somehow due to interference from one or more of the neighbour languages of the North Caucasus area.

Ossetic possesses only this one gerundial form. As to voice, it is neutral. In example (3) it is natural to translate *ænæ-xongæ* with a passive verb: "without being invited". In examples (1) and (2), *kæugæ* and *kafgæiæ*, an active translation is natural.

The gerund shows neither tense (as do the subordinating non-finite verbal forms of the Turkic and North Caucasian languages) nor agreement with any of the actants of the clause (as do the non-finite verbal forms of the Northwest Caucasian languages).

The action expressed by the gerund is either simultaneous with or prior to the action expressed by the superordinate verb. There will be found examples of both meanings in the hand-out.

The implied subject of the gerund is co-referential with the subject of the finite verb or with an other NP of the superordinate clause. In examples (4) and (5) the underlying agent of the gerunds is co-referential with the object of the finite verb. In example (6) it is co-referential with a possessive dative ("for the old men their hearts" = "the hearts of the old men").

Perhaps more interesting are the instances where the gerund is not attached to any NP (a "pendant" or "dangling" usage). Examples (7)–(10) in the hand-out.

The use of *zæǧgæ (zæǧgæiæ)*, the gerund of the verb *zæǧyn* "to say", as a citation particle for embedding reported speech or thought has its typological counterparts in both the Turkic and North Caucasian languages, where gerundial (or non-finite) forms of verba dicendi are used in a similar way: Ossetic examples (8)–(9) in the hand-out.

Kab. *ži'ari (žə'an* "to speak"), Adyge *ə'wi ('wən* "to speak"), Chechen-Ingush *boxuš* (present gerund of *bāxa* "to speak"), *älla* (past gerund of *āla* "to say"), etc.

The use of gerundial forms of the verbal stem *te/de-* to mark reported speech is common to most Turkic languages, including those of the North Caucasus.

In Ossetic this citation particle may be used to express the purpose or cause of an action. Examples (13) – (15) in the hand-out.

In the Turkic languages the gerund of *te/de-* is common in this function *(tep* etc.) and is recorded already in Old Turkic.

The use of the Abkhaz citation particle *ħ°a*, originally a past gerund of the verb *a- ħ°a-ra* "to say" has been treated by George Hewitt in his study, mentioned above (p. 38 ff.).

The function of non-finite forms of verba dicendi as citation particles and markers of syntactic hypotaxis is probably a phenomenon that languages in various places of the world have developed independantly of one another. But its occurrence in the North Caucasus, in geographically contiguous, but genetically unrelated languages, makes it natural to regard it as an areal phenomenon. It may be daring to suggest that it has been introduced into this area through the influence of Turkic; -unless we should prefer to treat it as common Eurasian phenomenon.

From Old Aryan (and Indo-European) Ossetic has inherited the phrasemic type of hypotaxis (to use Bossong's term), and this is still the predominant device for complementation in the language: subordination is carried out by finite verbs in association with conjunctions, that are mostly (or even exclusively) derived from the interrogative pronominal stem (*k-, c-* < I.E. **kwi-, kwe-* etc.), and as a rule prefixed to the verb.

The co-existence of the *morphemic* and the *phrasemic* complementation is, of course, quite common in Iranian languages outside the Caucasus area. In New Persian, e.g., the past participle in *-t/d-e* (< **ta-ka-*) is used as a gerund to mark an action subordinate, and as a rule anterior, to the action expressed by a finite main verb. This usage, which is found in early New

Persian documents, has been ascribed, at least in part, to the influence of Central Asian Turkic languages, and it is perhaps significant that it is particularly characteristic of Tajiki.

In early New Persian (less commonly in modern Farsi) the present participle in -*ān* (< *-*āna-*, the ancient present participle of the middle voice) is commonly used to mark an action simultaneous with the action expressed by the superordinate finite verb.

In Sogdian, a language closely related to Ossetic, the participle in -*ān* is used in a similar way. The implied agent of the participle is not necessarily co-referential with the subject of the superordinate verb; the participle does not always show number agreement with the plural of the subject.

Yaghnobi, a daughter language of Sogdian which has been strongly influenced by Turkic (Uzbek),in earlier times probably also by Persian, has two gerundial forms, one in -*on* (< *āna-*), the other in -*ki* (an oblique case form an action noun in * -aka-?).

The predicative function of the participles dates back to Indo-Iranian (and Indo- European) times. Everybody who has read some ancient Greek will remember the complex participial syntax of that language.

In Vedic the implied agent of the predicative participle may be co-referential with either the subject of the finite verb or another NP member of the superordinate clause, or it may be a "dangling" ("pendant") participle, not correlated with any expressed NP. In Avestan a participle may be used predicatively in a similar way.

A discussion of the gerundial constructions of the Iranian languages and their use of predicative participles would carry us beyond the limits of this paper and my time. And as a matter of fact, apart from Persian, detailed investigations into these matters seem to be lacking.

Suffice it to say that Ossetic since prehistoric times has known both types of hypotaxis: the *phrasemic* and the *morphemic* hypotaxis (to use the terminology of Bossong and Hewitt once more). The former type is still predominant, but it is possible that the language shows some tendency from this type towards the morphemic subordination. In the competition between the two types the possibility of using the morphemic hypotaxis may have been strengthened and intensified through the influence of adjacent Turkic and (or) North Caucasian languages.

But as there is no written evidence for the Ossetic language until the beginning of the 19th century (the mediaeval Alanic documents are silent on this matter) it is difficult to pronounce a conclusive judgement.