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FRIDRIK THORDARSON (†)

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Abbreviations

1. Common terms

A.D.	Anno Domini	e.g.	for example	p(p).	page(s)
B.C.	before Christ	f(f).	following page(s)	PN	proper name
cf.	confer	fn.	footnote	repr.	reprint
cent.	century	FN	family (clan) name	resp.	respectively
ch.	chapter	id.	idem	rev.	revised
comm.	common	i.e.	id est	s.v.	sub voce
cp.	compare	lit.	literally	unid.	unidentified
e.a.	et alii	ms.	manuscript	viz.	namely
ed.	editor / edited / edition	mss.	manuscripts	vol.	volume

2. Grammatical terms

abl.	ablative	fut.	future	obl.	oblique case
abs.	absolutive	gen.	genitive	part.	participle
acc.	accusative	ger.	gerund	pass.	passive
adess.	adessive	inanim.	inanimate	pl.	plural
adj.	adjective	indef.	indefinite	poss.	possessive
adv.	adverb	iness.	inessive	postpos.	postposition
all.	allative	inf.	infinitive	pres.	present (tense)
anim.	animate	instr.	instrumental	prevb.	preverb
com.	comitative	interj.	interjection	pron.	pronoun
cop.	copula	intr.	intransitive	sg.	singular
dat.	dative	loc.	locative	s(ub)j.	subjunctive
def.	definite	masc.	masculine	subst.	substantive
dem.	demonstrative	nom.	nominative	suff.	suffix
equ.	equative	ntr.	neuter	tr.	transitive
fem.	feminine	obj.	object(ive)	voc.	vocative

3. Languages

Abaz.	Abaza	Kab.-Adyg.	Kabardian-Adyge	Parth.	Parthian
Abkh.	Abkhaz	Kar.	Karachay	Perm.	Permian
Adyg.	Adyge	Kar.-Balk.	Karachay-Balkar	Phl.	Pahlavi
Alan.	Alanic	Kartv.	Kartvelian	PIE	Proto-Indo-European
Anat.Turk.	Anatolian Turkish	Kaz.	Kazakh	PrDig.	Proto-Digor
Arab.	Arabic	Khot.	Khotanese	PrGerm.	Proto-Germanic
Arm.	Armenian	Khwar.	Khwarezmian	PrIrr.	Proto-Indo-Iranian
Assyr.	Assyrian	Kim.	Kimmerian	PrIran.	Proto-Iranian
Av.	Avestan	Kirg.	Kirgiz	PrK.	Proto-Kartvelian
Azer.	Azeri-Turkic	Kom.	Koman	PrOss.	Proto-Ossetic
Bactr.	Bactrian	Kum.	Kumykh	PrNakh.	Proto-Nakh
Balk.	Balkar	Kurd.	Kurdish	Rom.	Romance languages
Bal.	Balōchi	Lat.	Latin	Russ.	Russian
B.-Russ.	Byelo-Russian	Lezg.	Lezgian	Sak.	Saka
Bolgar.	Bolgarian	Lith.	Lithuanian	Sar.	Sarykoli
Cauc.	Caucasian	Mar.	Marathi	SCauc.	South Caucasian
Celt.	Celtic	Mgr.	Mingrelian	Semit.	Semitic
Chag.	Chaghatay	MIran.	Middle Iranian	Scytho-Sarm.	Scytho-Sarmatian
Chech.	Chechen	MIrish	Middle Irish	Shgh.	Shughni
Chech.-Ing.	Chechen-Ingush	Munj.	Munji	Slav.	Slavic
Chuv.	Chuvash	NHG	New High German	Sogd.	Sogdian
Circ.	Circassian	Nicel.	New Icelandic	SOss.	South Ossetic
D.	Digor	NIndo-Ar.	New Indo-Aryan	Span.	Spanish
Dan.	Danish	NIran.	New Iranian	Sumer.	Sumerian
Darg.	Dargva	Nogh.	Noghay	Taj.	Tajiki
ECauc.	East Caucasian	Nord.	Nordic	Tal.	Talyshi
Engl.	English	Norw.	Norwegian	Tat.	Tatar
Finn.	Finnish	NPers.	New Persian	Thrac.	Thracian
Fr.	French	OAr.	Old Aryan	Toch.	Tocharian
Gath.	Gathic (Avestan)	OCS	Old Church Slavonic	Turk.	Turkic
Gaul.	Gaulic	OEngl.	New English	Turkmen.	Turkmenian
Georg.	Georgian	OHebr.	Old Hebrew	Ub.	Ubykh
Germ.	German	OHG	Old High German	Ukr.	Ukrainian
Gk.	Greek	OGeorg.	Old Georgian	Ural.	Uralic
Goth.	Gothic	OIcel.	Old Icelandic	Uyg.	Uygur
Hung.	Hungarian	OInd.	Old Indic	Ved.	Vedic
I.	Iron	OIran.	Old Iranian	Wakh.	Wakhi
Ind.-Ir.	Indo-Iranian	OIrish	Old Irish	Wan.	Wanetsi
Ing.	Ingush	OPers.	Old Persian	WCauc.	West Caucasian
Iran.	Iranian	ORuss.	Old Russian	Yagh.	Yaghnōbi
Ishk.	Ishkashmi	Oss.	Ossetic	Yazgh.	Yazghulami
Kab.	Kabardian	OTurk.	Old Turkish	Yidgh.	Yidgha

Editor's preface

The present work, *opus postumum* of an author who was certainly the best connoisseur of Ossetic among Western linguists, has kept me busy for one and a half years. Now the edition has been completed, and I should like to add some lines of my own to the late Prof. Fridrik Thordarson's "Ossetic Grammatical Studies".

It was a summer day in 1981, when a colleague from Oslo knocked at my door in Vienna University and said that he would like to get to know the young lady writing her PhD thesis on Ossetic. He was the first person outside the Soviet Union who really took interest in my research on Ossetic onomastics. We started a vital talk on our common subject, the Iranian language of the Caucasus. This first meeting with Fridrik Thordarson had quite an encouraging effect on me. Since then I felt less lonesome with my scientific subject. Not only for me, but also for some other young linguists from the Western hemisphere, Fridrik represented a mature friend who was always ready to give his help. Over twenty years we met regularly, mainly within the framework of the "Societas Caucasologica Europaea" which was officially founded in Oslo in 1986, during an unforgettable conference organised by Fridrik Thordarson himself, who spared no effort to develop the legal grounds of our international "Societas". During our many meetings I had the great opportunity to make friends with Fridrik, whom I highly appreciated for his trustworthiness and for his fine humour. The last time I met him was in summer 2000, on the occasion of the last conference of the "Societas" in Munich. He seemed to be unchangeably young and always bursting of creativity. The bad news of his disease and his death after a third stroke on the 2nd of October 2005 shocked us all tremendously, to say the least. For the small discipline of Ossetic studies, Fridrik Thordarson's death meant an unimaginable loss.

Among Fridrik Thordarson's colleagues nobody knew that he was preparing a great book. He happened to discuss some details here and there and showed restricted parts of his "Studies" to some colleagues, but nobody had ever seen it as a whole before. It was his wife, Dr. Kirsten Schack Abrahamsen, who to her great surprise discovered huge files in her late husband's computer, and then also found some printouts of chapters of a book *in statu nascendi*.

Originally the book comprised five different, extensive versions from different years plus the first pages of one more, obviously proofread version, dated the 16 July 2004. One part of them, representing but the first three chapters, was typewritten. It is the only version containing a short "Preface", obviously still in a provisory form, dated as early as April 1994. But it could be concluded from the whole conception that this date does not tell anything about the real origin of the work. Furthermore, there were also two variants of an unfinished bibliography, relating to the first three chapters only. All these versions were incomplete, but they complemented each other in many respects. Parts of them contained also handwritten corrections. The arrangement of the chapters did not represent the typical order of a conventional grammar, though. As there was no table of contents, it could not be stated with certainty whether this arrangement was planned as such for a later publication. Concerning their size and degree of completion, the respective chapters differ considerably from each other. There is no particular paragraph on the verbal system in Fridrik Thordarson's book. The fact that the author chose the designation "Grammatical Studies" instead of "Grammar" can be interpreted in a way that no special chapter on the verb was intended, but Fridrik Thordarson did not hesitate to give specific information on the verb in different parts of his Grammatical Studies, depending on the contexts. Thus, his treatise on the preverbs

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and their functions as aktionsart and aspect markers reveals many hitherto unknown details.

Together with his many articles, the present book represents the fifth essence of Fridrik Thordarson's multifarious work on Ossetic and his life-long occupation dedicated to all kinds of linguistic categories of that language. The author's wide interest in and his active competence of the modern Ossetic language enabled him to deal with refined subjects such as idiomatics and syntactical problems with the greatest of ease. His work on Ossetic shows a well-balanced proportion of research into older stages of the language as well as its modern varieties.

Fridrik Thordarson's "Ossetic Grammatical Studies" can claim to be the first Ossetic grammar that systematically takes into account the results of modern Indo-Europeanists' and Caucasiologists' research. This was the main basis of his innovative theses and explanations on the history and dialectology of the Ossetic language and on the areal role the Ossetic language played in past and recent periods. It is evident that the present book will widely contribute to our knowledge on the relative chronology of some of the migrations of the Ossetes and their neighbouring peoples and tribes in the Caucasus. This side-effect is by no means unintentional, for Thordarson knew well that in the case of the Ossetes, who are a people without a written tradition, only serious linguistic research can enlighten the past centuries to a certain extent.

It is one of Fridrik Thordarson's main merits to have combined the methods of areal linguistics with purely historical-etymological research. In the present book he revealed more about the historical background of the various linguistic contacts of Ossetic and its neighbouring languages and the social interactions standing behind them than anybody else before.

Fridrik Thordarson spoke Ossetic fluently. His fine knowledge of the language did not only open the hearts of the local people for him, but also enabled him to undertake effective fieldwork. His studies in the fields of comparative phonology and toponomastics, which led him to conclude that the focus of innovative developments in Ossetic of any kind has always been the Dzæudžyqæu (Vladikavkaz) Plateau, must be called pioneer work. But even if we let the focus on areal linguistics aside, Fridrik Thordarson's research must be regarded as completely innovative, especially with respect to the Ossetic noun and the noun phrase, and so are his morphosyntactic studies. What we have here is the most extensive investigation that has ever been written on the Ossetic noun, considering both the inherited Indo-Iranian models and historical changes due to areal influence.

The Epilogue is an essay of its own. It reconsiders historical, ethnological and sociological reasons of migration and language shift. Except for wars and natural phenomena, such reasons could be specific marriage customs, traditional interethnic adoption institutions, or blood revenge.

To sum up, Thordarson's *opus magnum postumum* represents not only a new stage in the research of the Ossetic language. On the basis of exact linguistic methods, it also provides us with hitherto unknown aspects of cultural history and migratory movements in the far and more recent past of the Northern Caucasus area.

In 2006 I was offered the opportunity to edit Fridrik Thordarson's unfinished book, by his widow, Dr. Kirsten Schack Abrahamsen, who not only opened her late husband's library and her house to me but also helped me with bibliographical research, many kinds of organisational matters, and, most of all, encouraging words. I would like to express my deep gratitude to her.

For the financial realisation of the project I am greatly indebted to both Prof. Per Kvaerne (University of Oslo / Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture) and Prof. Bert Fragner (Institute of Iranian Studies of the Austrian Academy of

Sciences, Vienna), whose common initiative created the basis for a scientific joint venture resulting in the publication of the present book.

Furthermore I have to thank Prof. Winfried Boeder who allowed me to include a short unprinted article by Fridrik Thordarson which he had intended to edit himself (cf. the end of the present work).

My thanks also go to Dr. Agnes Korn (University of Frankfurt) who was always ready to help me with bibliographical research, mainly concerning Iranica. Furthermore, I am thankful to Prof. Manana Tandashvili and Lela Samushia, M.A. (University of Frankfurt), for their advise on lexical problems concerning the modern Kartvelian languages. I would also like to express my particular gratitude to Dr. Elguja Dadunashvili (Rustaveli Institute, Tbilisi, Georgia) who provided me with a photocopy of the 1946 edition of the Nartic Epos.

Last but not least, I am feeling particularly grateful towards my husband, Prof. Jost Gippert (University of Frankfurt), who not only formatted the author's original files but who also performed an acribic proofreading of all parts of the book as well as the technically complicated work of bringing all kinds of indexes into a digitally correct form. Without his encouraging attitude, readiness to discuss open questions, and digital skills, the present book would not have seen the light.

My own part in finishing this book is humble. I felt deeply moved when I was given the honour to do the final work on a great project that could not be undertaken any more by the author himself. My contribution consisted in aligning the different versions, verifying and completing the greater part of the bibliographical notes and sometimes also the lexical and formal entries, and in compiling the indexes. In a few cases, when necessary, I felt it useful to refer to more recent literature that could not be considered by Fridrik Thordarson himself any more. Additions of this kind are marked by [S.F.].

All in all, I have always tried not to change the author's wording, whenever possible. It goes without saying that all the wealth of ideas expressed in this book as well as the conclusions remain Fridrik Thordarson's property.

Frankfurt, June 2008

S.F.

Author's Preface

These studies have a long history. The first drafts were written during my stay in Tbilisi and South Ossetia in 1968-69, when I for about a year had the opportunity to listen to Ossetic speech from the lips of native speakers. Some of my notes from that time have since been elaborated and published in various books and periodicals, while others had to wait. In the following chapters an attempt will be made to treat in some detail with questions relating to language contacts and the role neighbouring languages have played in the history of Ossetic.

My sojourns in Georgia in 1968-69 and again in 1989 were supported by the Georgian Government in accordance with the cultural agreement of Norway and the Soviet Union. I also received support from the Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, Oslo, the Norwegian Research Council, the Universities of Oslo and Tbilisi and the Norwegian Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs. To all these institutions I am deeply grateful.

I also want to express my thanks to friends and colleagues who assisted and inspired me in my Ossetic and Caucasian studies. First of all I mention my teachers of the University of Oslo, the late Prof. Georg Morgenstierne, who introduced me to the study of the Iranian languages and first suggested Ossetic as the subject of special research to me, and Prof. Hans Vogt, who taught me Georgian and general Caucasian linguistics.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my many friends of the South Ossetic Research Institute of Cxinvali, in particular Doc. Gæbæraty Nikolæ, Gagloity Juri and Džusoity Nafi, who all acted as my mentors during my stay at their institute in 1969.

Thanks are due to Doc. Olga Tedeeva of the Oriental Institute of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, who guided my first steps as a speaker of her mother tongue, and to my two teachers of Georgian, Prof. Elene Babunashvili and Dr. Ineza Kiknadze, both of the University of Tbilisi. I also want to express my gratitude to Prof. Tamaz Gamkrelidze, the Director of the Oriental Institute of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, who offered me an opportunity to participate in his linguistic seminars at the university and thus introduced me to the circles of Georgian linguists.

Last but not least I am indebted to my many anonymous informants in both North and South Ossetia, who in 1969 and on later occasions answered my numerous questions and with patience and generosity gave me an insight into their language. To them and their compatriots these studies are dedicated.

Oslo, April 1994.

F. Th.

Chapter 1

1. Introduction

1.1. Ossetic is the last offshoot of the North East Iranian (Scytho-Sarmatian) dialects which in antiquity were spoken all over the Ponto-Caspian steppes of South Russia and the North Caucasus. The language has gradually been ousted or superseded through migrations within the Caucasus and through invasions from the north, and is now spoken but in a small area in the Central Caucasus, where it is surrounded on all sides by genetically unrelated languages. In the greater part of its former territory Slavonic, Turkic and Northwest Caucasian languages now prevail.¹ At one time Ossetic (or its Alanic precursor) was brought to the Caucasus area, probably in various waves, by immigrants and conquerors from the north. It did not enter a linguistic vacuum, although unfortunately, we have no precise knowledge of the indigenous languages which it must have supplanted. But by and large, we can take it for granted that there existed linguistic contacts between Ossetic (Alanic) and some North (-west, -east) Caucasian languages ever since the arrival of the former in the area. The first Turkic-speaking tribes certainly entered the North Caucasus later than the linguistic forefathers of the Ossetes. In their turn Turkic languages have little by little replaced Ossetic over a great part of the territory where it was formerly spoken.

It is generally acknowledged that the Ossetes descended from the Alans, a Scytho-Sarmatian tribe or tribal confederacy, who at the beginning of our era had gained the hegemony in the Ponto-Caspian steppes. From the words of Josephus Flavius (1st cent. A.D.), who mentions them as living in that area about 35 A. D., we can probably conclude that they had been residing in the Kuban Valley for some time (Jos. Flav., Bell. Jud. VII,7,4).² The difference between their language and that of the cognate Sarmatian tribes farther to the west or north was hardly significant. The Alanic inscription found by the Zelenčuk River in the Northwest Caucasus in 1888 dates to all appearances from the 11th–12th century (Zgusta 1987: 19; cf. also Abaev 1949: 260 ff.). At that time an Alanic-speaking population inhabited the country to the south of the Kuban River, and we have no reason to believe that they were newcomers. The Byzantine emperor Constantine Porphyrogennitus (first half of the 10th century) places

¹ A survey of the languages of the Caucasus area is given by Geiger, Halasi-Kun, Kuipers & Menges 1959. For details I refer to the relevant chapters in Comrie 1981 and in Klimov 1994.

² According to Procopius (History of the Wars, VIII,3,4; 6th cent.), the eastern borders of the Alans were the Caspian gates. The Caspian Gates have variously been identified with Darband and Darial, the two principal passes of the Caucasus. Their name (Κάσπια Πύλαι, *Portae Caspiae*) is commonly used of the Darial Pass by Greek and Roman writers of the Imperial age (cf. Marquart 1901: 100; 1903: 489; Minorsky 1958: 87 (note); Gagloity Ju. 1966: 136 ff.). – According to al-Mas'ūdī (*Murūj al-dhahab*, ch. 17; 10th cent.), the kingdom of the Alans (*al-Lān*) borders on the kingdom of the *Sarīr* (Avaria, North Daghestan) in the east, and on the Kashak in the west (Circassians); the Alan capital, called *Maghaṣ* (*Ma'as*), seems to be situated in the neighbourhood of Vladikavkaz (*Žeužiqæu*), the present capital of North Ossetia, at the foot of the Darial Pass. The same location of the Alans is found in the geographical descriptions by other Arabian writers: *Hudūd al-'Ālam*: The Regions of the World, transl. Minorsky 1937: 160 ff.; late 10th cent.; Ibn-Rusta: *al A'lāq al-naḥḥisa*, apud Minorsky 1958: 166 ff.; early 10th cent.; the *Tārīkh al-Šāb wa-Sharwān*, ed. and transl. Minorsky 1958, passim; comments pp. 107 and 156 ff. – But it goes without saying that one should be on one's guard against identifying a political power with a language community.

the country of the Alans, Alania, in the Caucasian Mountains, beyond the land of the Circassians (Kasakhia), in the proximity of the Khazars.³ Although it is difficult to establish the linguistic realities which correspond to the ethnic terms used by the historical sources of the surrounding peoples (Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Georgians, Armenians), it is not questionable that Alan (or, more generally, Sarmatian) tribes were a predominating power in the rich and fertile lands of the Kuban area in late antiquity and early mediaeval times, until they had to give way to, and were (at least linguistically) superseded, by Circassian tribes, who in the late Middle Ages started their expansion from the shores of the Sea of Azov towards the south and the east. In the 6th century at the latest the Alans entered into close relations with Turkic-speaking invaders from Central Asia, who constituted the core of the Khazar empire. During the ages Turkic languages have played a leading part all over the North Caucasus and served as a medium in the communication between the different peoples of the area: In its Azerbaijanian form Turkic has been used as a lingua franca both in Daghestan and the country to the northwest, thus acting as a link between these regions and the great Islamic nations of the south. It also seems likely that the mediaeval Alans had already established linguistic contacts with speakers of Northeast Caucasian languages (Nakh, Avar), whose territory appears to have previously extended farther to the north and the west than it does today.⁴ To this patchwork of languages we must add Russian and Ukrainian, which, particularly since the middle of the 18th century, have gradually been encroaching upon the old indigenous languages of the North Caucasus.

³ (Const. Porph., De adm. imp. 42/102) The Alans are located (by Constantine Porphyrogenitus) to the east of the land of the Circassians (Κασαχία), in the Caucasus mountains (καὶ τῶν ὀρέων ἀνωθέν ἐστὶν ἡ χώρα τῆς Ἀλανίας). The same writer locates the principality of Ἀζία (probably the land of the *As*) around the Caspian Gates: εἰς τοὺς ἄρχοντας Ἀζίας, ἐν ᾧ εἰσὶν αἱ Κασπεῖαι Πύλαι (*De caerimoniis aulae Byzantinae*, II, 48).

⁴ Cf. Fähnrich 1983 and 1986; cf. also the discussion in the following (in particular, ch. 3.2. of the present book).

Chapter 2

2. Dialects

2.1. Two distinct dialects

Today Ossetic falls into two distinct, mutually locally comprehensible dialects: Digor (West Ossetic) and Iron (East Ossetic); the literary language is based upon the latter. The South Ossetic idiom of Georgia is a local variant (or a bundle of local variants) of Iron. There are some local varieties within each dialect. The transitional dialect of the Uællagkom region is basically Digor but shares some features with Iron. We have practically no evidence of earlier dialectal differences, but considering the previous extension of the language in the Northwest Caucasus at least some local variation must be presumed.

In their grammatical structure the two dialects are closely related to one another. The morphological categories are mainly the same, fulfilling similar functions in all essentials. Morphological and syntactical innovations are to a large extent common to both dialects. In some instances structural reorganisations have been carried through with different materials. In the system of the demonstrative pronouns two degrees of proximity are distinguished, roughly corresponding to English “this”, “that”. But there is reason to believe that this two-term system has replaced an earlier three-term system, approximately corresponding to classical Latin *hic*, *iste*, *ille*. In both dialects *a-* (< **ā*) indicates proximity to the speaker. In Iron *u-* (< **awa-*, or a conflation of **awa-* and **haw-*?) indicates remoteness from the speaker, whereas in Digor this notion is expressed by *ie-* (nominative; < **ayam*), *uo-* (oblique cases; < **awa-*). Both dialects have made the same development, but differ partly as regards the materials used (cf. 5.5.4. below).

2.2. Inflection of “to be”

Among differences that possibly reflect ancient dialectal diversity the inflection of the verb “to be” (I. *uīn*, D. *un*) can be mentioned. In Iron the past tense is based on a participle stem *uid* (< **būta-*): *uid-tæn* “I was”. In Digor this function is fulfilled by the stem **hāta-*, from the Aryan root **as-* / *s-* (Ir. **ah-* / *h-*): *ad-tæn*. But *ad-* is also found in some Iron forms (the past optative *fæ-c-ad-ain* beside *fæ-uid-ain*. In the protodialect **būta-* and **hāta-* must therefore have coexisted.

In the inflection of the present, there are considerable differences between the two dialects:

	Iron	Digor
Sg. 1	<i>dæn</i>	<i>dæn</i>
2	<i>dæ</i>	<i>dæ</i>
3	<i>u, i, is</i>	<i>æi, ie, ies</i>
Pl. 1	<i>stæm</i>	<i>an</i>
2	<i>stut</i>	<i>aitæ</i>
3	<i>stī</i>	<i>æncæ</i>