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FOSSILIZED IMPERATIVAL MORPHEMES IN OSSETIC¹

(*Studia Iranica et Alanica. Rome. 1998*)

1. It is a rule in Ossetic² that Old Iranian intervocalic *t* becomes *d*, as e.g. in *ærvad* ‘a relative’ from OIran. *brātā* ‘brother’, while OIran. *ϑ* becomes *t*, as e.g. in *fætæen* ‘broad, wide’ from OIran. *paϑana*.

2. In *ærvad* the originally intervocalic *d* < *t* stands in wordfinal position as a result of the loss, regular in Ossetic, of vowels that in Old Iranian non-monosyllabic words were either word-final or were closed by a word-final consonant that was lost along with the vowel.³ The same is true of originally intervocalic *t* < *ϑ*, for instance in the OIran. nominal suffix *-aϑa*, represented in Ossetic by *-æt*⁴.

3. By the above rules Miller was right when at p. 119 [70] he reconstructed as **-æt* the personal suffix to be expected in Ossetic for the 2 pl. pres. ind. from OIran. *-aϑa* (corresponding to Skt *-atha*). It was no doubt in deference to this reconstruction, that at p. 56 [30] he declared also the *t* of the actually used 2 pl. pres. ind. ending *-ūt*, to represent the *ϑ* of OIran. *-ϑa*. But although this too is right, he prevented recognition of its rightness by not clearing out of the way certain obstacles, which in the next three paragraphs we shall try to remove.

4. It is not only the 2 pl. pres. ind., but also the 2 pl. impv., which has *-ūt* as personal suffix (MILLER, pp. 119-120 [70-71]). Of the Verbum Substantivum, however, *ūt* is all by itself a finite form, the 2 pl. impv. meaning ‘be ye!’. According to Miller (p. 119 [70]) this *ūt*, because of the frequent auxiliary function of the Verbum Substantivum, was demoted to a personal suffix, as which, spreading from the imperative to the indicative, it there replaced the previously unchallenged indicatival suffix **-æt* (see § 3). For evaluation of this suggestion much will depend on the origin one attributes to the finite 2 pl. impv. *ūt*. The corresponding 2 sg. impv. is *ū* ‘be thou!’, convincingly derived by Miller at p. 130 [77] from the OIran. active 2 sg. impv. *bava* of the verb *bav* ‘to become’ (Skt *bhav*). The Skt 2 pl. impv. is *bhavata*. Therefore Miller, still

at p. 130, derived *ūt*, interpreting it as *ū* (= *bava*) + *t*, from **bavata* (which word is phonetically analyzable as *bava* [becoming *ū*] + *ta*). Where he went wrong in this elegant explanation, was in overlooking, and not warning his readers, that from **bavata* one expects in Ossetic not *ūt*, but **ūd* (see §1).⁵

5. Had Miller paid attention to this fact, he could not have helped it becoming the first Iranologist to recognize, on no more than Ossetic evidence, what was recognized only decades later on non-Ossetic evidence unknown as yet in Miller's days, namely that not all ancient Iranians uniformly employed for the 2 pl. impv. the ending *-ta/-ata*⁶ inherited from Indo-Iranian: some of them used *-ḡa/-aḡa* instead. This is by now known from Sogdian,⁷ and sporadic traces of imperatival *-ḡa* have come to be attributed even to Avestan,⁸ where Miller had followed Bartholomae⁹ in regarding exclusively *-ta/-ata* as the 2 pl. impv. ending in active voice.¹⁰

6. We have no choice, therefore, but to regard the 2 pl. impv. *-ūt* as descending from an OIran. **bavaḡa* that served not only for the present indicative (see §3), but also for the imperative. The reason why *ūt* does not mean 'you are' in addition to 'be ye!'¹¹ will then be that in the indicative of the Verbum Substantivum Ossetic did not replace OIran. *ah* 'to be' with OIran. *bav* 'to become'.¹² Does not however the meaning 'you become' which one expects *ūt* would have had in the indicative, stand in the way of Miller's supposition (see §4) that it is *ūt* 'be ye!', demoted to an imperatival suffix, which we are to recognize in the suffix *-ūt* employed for the indicative no less than for imperative?

7. This semantic seed of doubt leads one to wonder if even the imperatival suffix *-ūt* was really nothing else than the finite imperative *ūt*, demoted. In the singular 2nd person impv. one would expect the final *a* of OIran. *bava* (§4), i.e. strictly speaking *bawa*, to have been lost (see §2), whereupon one may suppose that **baw*, after turning first **βuw* and next **wuw*, contracted to *ū*.¹³ The lengthening of *u* from *a* in **wuw*, may be assumed to have been caused by its absorption of the preceding *w*, the subsequent absorption of the second *w* being due to the latter's word-final position. In the 2 pl. impv. **bawaḡa* by contrast, it was not the second *a*, but the third which one expects would have been lost. If then the second *a* turned *u* by assimilation to the preceding *u* (itself an *a* turned *u* as a result of being sandwiched between two labials) and each *wu* became *ū*, the finite 2 pl. *ūt* would be the outcome of contraction of an earlier **ūūt*. Before the two *ū* merged into a single one, Ossetes could hardly have helped it regarding the **ūt* of **ūūt* as a suffix pluralizing the finite 2 sg. *ū* 'be thou'.

8. It is difficult not to think of this explanation as an improvement on Miller's assumption that *-ūt* is simply the finite *ūt* turned into a suffix. Nor is it likely that Miller would have disapproved of the suggestion, since if *-ut* were

only part, and not the whole of *ūt*, its birth-place would emerge even more compellingly than Miller had supposed, as having been the imperative. For in the indicative, where the OIran. 2 sg. *bavahi* would have become **uəs* via **uis* in Ossetic,¹⁴ the 2 pl. **ūūt* from *bavaða* could never have been considered by any Ossete as having a suffix *-ūt*, added to **uəs*. Miller's presentation suffers, as part and parcel of his slip-up over the *t* of *ūt* (see §4, end), from failure to realize that the **-æt* which he justly postulated as original 2 pl. pres. ind. suffix (see §3), must have been in Ossetic also the original 2 pl. impv. suffix (cf. §§ 5-6), so that for example **kænæt* meant 'you do' in the indicative (2 sg. *kænəs* 'thou doest'), but 'do ye!' in the imperative (2 sg. *kæn* 'do thou!'). Once this is taken into account, everything falls in place: of 'to do' the 2 pl. impv. appeared to be formed by the addition of **-<æt* to the 2 sg. impv. *kæn*, of 'to be' by the addition of **-ūt* to the 2 sg. impv. *ū*; **-æt* and **-ūt* therefore seeming interchangeable in imperatival function, *kæn-ūt* came to be coined as a synonym of **kæn-æt* 'do ye!'; as the latter, however, meant in addition 'you do', there could be no stopping *kæn-ūt* from coming to denote the indicatival meaning also. By this detour via a double-edged **-æt*, no difficulty can arise from the semantic discrepancy alluded to in §6.

9. What is more, since the origin of indicatival *-ūt* is fully comprehensible only if the indicatival **-æt* postulated by Miller (see §3) was double-edged (i.e. had imperatival function as well), we may be sure that, except with the Verbum Substantivum, **-æt* was the sole 2 pl. impv. ending current from the earliest Middle Ossetic period, until the moment when *-ūt* first began to be used as an alternative to it. To date that moment we should have to know how long it took OIran. **bavaða* to become **ūūt*. The changes involved, as conjectured by us in §7 with n.13, are not so drastic as to preclude their completion before the beginning of the Christian era. This guess is here offered merely as a warning that today's imperatival paradigm, may reflect mutual adjustments that took place not in medieval times, but within a pre-Christian distribution, conceivably *across* the Caucasus, of Ossetic speech:

	South Ossetic	North Ossetic
3 sg.	<i>-æt</i>	<i>-æd</i>
2 pl.	<i>-ūt</i>	<i>-ūt</i>
3 pl.	<i>-æt</i>	<i>-ænt</i>

In this paradigm¹⁵ only *-æd* is the regular descendant of a corresponding Old Iranian suffix (see §10). What needs to be borne in mind, therefore, is that only to the date, whichever that be, of the indubitable replacement of 2 pl. **-æt* with *-ūt*, can we hope to relate chronologically (i.e. as earlier, later, or simultaneous) the formation of the irregular suffixes *-ænt*, *-æt* singular, and *-æt* plural.

10. Miller's derivation at p. 120 [70 sq.] of NOss. (and Digoron) *-æd* from the Old Iranian active 3 sg. impv. ending *-atu* conforms to the rule of our §2, where however we specified that not only Old Iranian word-final vowels were shed in Ossetic, but also word-final consonants along with the vowels supporting them. Accordingly not only *-atu* was bound to become *-æd* in Ossetic, but also the OIran. middle 3 sg. impv. ending *-atām*, with the result that *-æd* offers no clue as to whether its Old Iranian antecedent had ended in *-u* or in *-ām*. If unlike Miller one hesitates to settle for one or the other, one may by way of compromise take *-æd* for the combined outcome of both endings.

11. Similarly, if Miller, *loc. cit.*, were right in supposing that the NOss. 3 pl. *-ænt*, to which in Digoron corresponds *-æntæ*, is a defensible outcome of the 'thematic' active 3 pl. impv. ending *-antu* (consisting of 'athematic' *-ntu* attached to the thematic vowel *a*, see §5 n.6 and §18), then the same *-ænt* could just as defensibly be taken for an outcome of the OIran. thematic 3 pl. impv. ending in middle voice, **-antām*.

12. In actual fact, however, the only ending that would be the regular outcome of *-antu*, and therefore also of **-antām*, does not occur in Ossetic. Its form would be **-ænd*. Aware of this, Miller tried to make out a case for exceptional retention by Ossetic of Old Iranian postnasal *t*.¹⁶ That he was on the wrong track is suggested by the SOss. 3 pl. *-æt*, without nasal, which was unknown as yet in Miller's days. Its puzzling postvocalic *t* cannot lightly be thought of as unrelated to the equally puzzling *t* of NOss. *-ænt*. But if the two *t* share a common origin, then the derivation of *-ænt* from *-antu* or **-antām* is excluded by the impossibility of deriving from either form also the 3 pl. *-æt*.¹⁷

13. Once *-antu/ām* is excluded as ancestor of *-ænt*, no objection can be raised against supposing that the regular **-ænd* to be expected from *-antu/ām*, did in fact exist in early Ossetic, but was discarded, just as the regular early Ossetic 2 pl. **-æt* from **-aθa* was discarded, after it had contributed to the emergence of alternative suffixation in the same person and number. Being unobjectionable, this **-ænd* will be adopted by us in what follows, as part of a working hypothesis to be abandoned if it proves unhelpful. As under this hypothesis it is **-ænd*, and not *-ænt*, which as Miller thought would directly descend from *-antu*, we must transfer to **-ænd* the rider on voice which in respect of *-ænt* we entered in §11: although *-antu* was bound to become **-ænd*, the same is true also of **-antām*. Again we may say, as we did in §10, that the Ossetic suffix was perhaps the combined outcome of both Old Iranian endings. But lest such a non-committal pronouncement be considered no more than a convenient disclaimer of responsibility, we next offer a paragraph in defence of circumspection.

14. The possibility of descent from the middle ending **-antām*, i.e. of Indo-Iranian voice-distinction having played a part in the morphemic constitution of the Ossetic verbal system, deserves bearing in mind because, although some Ossetic personal endings demonstrably go back to Old Iranian endings in active voice,¹⁸ there are two which demonstrably do not. They are the 2 sg. opt. *-is* (Dig. *-isæ*) and the 3 sg. opt. *-id* (Dig. *-idæ*).¹⁹ Recognizing their middle origin, Miller at p. 122 [72] derived them respectively from thematic *-aiša* and *-aita*.²⁰ He left unresolved, however, the difficulty presented by the vowel *i*, instead of which one would from OIran. *ai* expect *e* in Digoron.²¹ I too passed over this difficulty in *TPS* 1991, 228, but the time has now come to resolve it: just as Oss. *-s* (Dig. *-sæ*) and *-d* (Dig. *-dæ*) point to the OIran. middle personal suffixes *-ša* and *-ta*, and exclude the active suffixes *-š* and *-t* (cf. n.20),²² so the Digoron *i* reveals that *-ša* and *-ta* were in Old Iranian appended to an *ī*, and not to *ai*. The requisite *ī* can only have been the one characteristic of the optative ‘athematic’ conjugation (see n.20), to be found in the Indo-Iranian 2 sg. and 3 sg. precisely in middle voice, and not in the active. Of the Avestan athematic verb *āh* ‘to sit’ for example, *āhīša* is the attested middle 2 sg. opt. (the active 2 sg. opt. would be **āhyāh*), just as of its Skt counterpart *as* the middle 3 sg. opt. is *āsīta* (the active 3 sg. opt. would be **āsyāt*). This linkage in Ossetic of OIran middle voice with OIran. ‘athematism’ will serve us, in due course below (see §24), as a new argument in support of the main contention of our *TPS* article.

15. Our next task must be to align in three columns the two ‘*ūt*-paradigms’ of §9 with the early Ossetic pre-*ūt* paradigm whose 3 pl. impv. will as yet have been **-ænd* (see §13):

	Early Oss.	SOss.	NOss.
3 sg.	<i>*-æd</i>	<i>-æt</i>	<i>-æd</i>
2 pl.	<i>*-æt</i>	<i>-ūt</i>	<i>-ūt</i>
3 pl.	<i>*-ænd</i>	<i>-æt</i>	<i>-ænt</i>

It is obvious that before the secondary 2 pl. *-ūt* ousted the primary 2 pl. **-æt*, the two suffixes must have coexisted for an unknown length of time which, as we said in §9, there is no obstacle (but also no compulsion) to dating as early as the late BC period. During that length of time the rightful **-æt* of the first column was steadily losing ground, but in the second column its eventual eclipse looks like having been compensated by its usurpation of *two* places, at the expense of the latter’s rightful incumbents in the first column. Of the two, usurpation by a 2 pl. of a 3 pl., i.e. by one grammatical person of a different person in the same number, would seem a good deal less surprising than usurpation by a 2 pl. of a 3 sg., i.e. by one person of a different person in a dif-

ferent number. We must therefore investigate in the first instance whether the appearance of 3 pl. *-æt* in the second column can at all be related to the non-appearance in it of the first column's 2 pl. **-æt*. We shall find not only that it can, but that the reason why it can permits the 3 sg. *-æt* to be understood as a quite secondary outcome of the emergence of *-æt* in the same column's 3rd plural person.

16. We have seen in §12 that Miller did not know of the existence in SOss. of the 3 pl. *-æt*. It could not occur to him, therefore, in his search for an explanation of the *t* of NOss. *-ænt*, to look for a pre-Ossetic 3 pl. impv. ending that unlike *-antu* (or **-antām*) had no *n*. Nor would he have found one in Old Iranian. Already in 1895 Bartholomae, in referring to the Skt athematic 3 pl. impv. endings *-atu* (active) and *-atām* (middle), had declared himself unable to trace them in Iranian.²³ There lies here a challenge which the long-overlooked 3 pl. impv. *-æt* of South Ossetic does not allow us to leave unheeded.

17. With verbs conjugated thematically (see §5 n.6) the Sanskrit 3 pl. impv. endings are the same as the Old Iranian, *-antu* in active voice, *-antām* in middle voice. They are made use of also in athematic conjugation, where however, with certain restrictions,²⁴ it is *n*-less endings, *-atu* and *-atām*, which on a large scale are used instead.

18. Viewed historically, the absence of *n* from 3 pl. impv. *-atu* and *-atām* is illusory. In IE the 3 pl. ending was **-nt*, later extended in the In.-Ir. imperative by *-u* in the active, by *-ām* in the middle, the same extensions as in the 3 sg. impv. we saw in §10. The *n* of **-nt* remained consonantal in IE after the thematic vowel *o*, so that from **-o-nt* (extended by *-u/-ām*) one gets in In.-Ir. the thematic 3 pl. impv. endings *-antu* and *-antām* (cf. §5, n. 6 and §11). If however the verbal stem ended in a consonant, for instance *s* as in Skt *ās* 'to sit' quoted in §14, pronunciation was eased by the *n* turning into a vowel. IE vocalic *n*, conventionally written *ṅ*, became *a* in Indo-Iranian, just as did IE *e* and *o*. Hence the ending *-atām* of the Skt 3 pl. middle impv. *āsatām* 'let them sit' goes back to **ṅt* extended in Skt by *-ām*, just as in active voice the Skt athematic 3 pl. impv. ending *-atu* goes back to **-ṅt* extended in Skt by *-u*. The same *-u* and *-ām* extend also *-ant* (from IE **-o-nt*), in the Skt thematic 3 pl. impv. endings *-antu* and *-antām*. The latter are shown to be Indo-Iranian by their occurrence also in Old Iranian. We may therefore be sure, despite the absence of *n*-less 3 pl. impv. endings from the surviving Old Iranian texts (see §16), that also the athematic Skt 3pl. impv. endings *-atu* and *-atām*, terminating in the same *-u/-ām* as their thematic counterparts,²⁵ were inherited from Indo-Iranian. In dealing with the *-u/-ām* termination at the end of §10, and again at the end of §13, we said of the Ossetic suffixes there treated, that one cannot tell whether their Indo-Iranian antecedents had terminated in *-u* or in -

ām. In the case of the athematic 3 pl. impv. ending however, we shall see in §24 that as far as Ossetic is concerned, there is reason to think that the decisive voice was in Indo-Iranian the middle. This is why in what follows we shall refer to the ancient *n*-less ending for short as *-atām*, it being understood that we do not thereby mean to deny *-atu* a subsidiary role in shaping the Ossetic morpheme we are about to reconstruct.

19. Both modern Ossetic, and ancient Sanskrit, are descendants of Indo-Iranian, itself a descendant of Indo-European. Ossetic, however, has reached its present-day form, in which alone we know it, across a very long period, first Old Iranian following upon the Indo-Iranian, and next Middle Iranian, throughout which the absence of records couched in earlier forms of the Ossetic language reduces us to reconstructing, instead of factually gathering, the details of its evolution. Accordingly the existence in Indo-Iranian of *n*-less 3pl. impv. endings beside *n*-containing ones, does not by itself guarantee that the absence of *n* from the SOss. 3 pl. impv. ending *-æt*, as against its presence in NOss. *-ænt*, is a feature of hoary antiquity preserved, across the silence of Old Iranian and Middle Iranian, solely among modern Iranian languages by Ossetic. Such a guarantee would be vouchsafed us only if the *n*-less SOss 3 pl. impv. suffix were not *-æt*, but **-æd*, the expected Ossetic outcome of In.-Ir. **-atām*.

20. One is thus driven to ask, whether the absence of *n* from 3 pl. *-æt* may not simply continue the absence of *n* from an earlier 3 pl. **-æd* (< IE **-nt^o*), of which the *d* would have been secondarily replaced with *t* for a reason we should have to identify. This thought arises all the more readily as none of the three explanations of 3 pl. *-æt* one might think of for the sake of avoiding recourse to **-nt^o*, leads to anything but an impasse. The first would be that 3 pl. *-æt* is simply the 3 sg. *-æt* used for the plural as well. The impasse lies in the inexplicability of the *t* of the singular, if it is not it which, on the contrary, somehow derives (see §27) from the *t* of the plural.²⁶ The second, equally evasive explanation would be, that SOss. 3 pl. *-æt* is the *-ænt* of NOss. with the *η* secondarily lost. This would not only leave the *t* of *-ænt* no less inexplicable (see §12) than the *t* of 3 sg. *-æt* would remain under the first explanation, but would conflict with the rule that OIran. *nt* can lose its *n* in Ossetic only by assimilation, i.e. by becoming *dt*.²⁷ Could it then be, and this would be third explanation avoiding IE **-nt^o*, that the *t* of 3 pl. *-æt* is a **dt* degeminated in word-final position? There would seem to be no parallel on record to such word-final degemination, while contrary examples, of retention of gemination in word-final position, exist. But the impasse lies in the fact that, by deriving 3 pl. *-æt* via **-ædt* from **-ænd* (< thematic **-antuām*, see §13), we deprive ourselves of entitlement to apply to *-ænt* the obviously correct explanation which to Miller, unaware of 3 pl. *-æt*, had remained inaccessible, namely that its *t* was the out-

come of contamination of the *d* of **-ænd* with the *t* of 3 pl. *-æt* (see §26). Of an **-ænd* turned by degeminated assimilation into *-æt* there would have been no *nd* left for contamination with its own outcome.²⁸

21. This last consideration takes us straight back to the opening proposal of § 20. Unlike a 3 pl. *t* issued, if such degemination at all ever happened, from *dt* < *nd*, a 3 pl. *t* whose ancestry had never included a consonantal *n*, would not be disqualified from affecting the *d* of **-ænd*. Our proposal would meet this condition insofar as consonantal *n* could never have formed part of a 3 pl. *-æt* whose *æ* went back to vocalic *ŋ*. But for the proposal to become realistic, the closure in Ossetic of the proposed *æ* < *ŋ* by *t*, instead of by the *d* one expects from the *t* of **-atām*, must be accounted for. It may be helpful for the purpose to present afresh the first column of § 15, this time assuming that early Ossetic had inherited in the 3 pl. impv. not only **-ænd*, but also the **-æd* defined by us at the end of § 19:

	Early Ossetic
3 sg.	* <i>-æd</i>
2 pl.	(* <i>-æt</i>)
3 pl.	{ * <i>-æd</i> * <i>-ænd</i>

22. In the preceding paradigm **-æt* stands in parenthesis as a reminder that, having at first been alone in charge of the 2 pl. person, the suffix, after defending with diminishing success its inherited position against the newcomer *-ūt*, retreated from it altogether. Its having come to be felt redundant in the 2 pl. suggests by itself availability for service elsewhere. Availability being a passive condition, what we need in addition is an active incentive felt by Ossetes, to exploit **-æt*'s availability by inviting it into the 3 pl. person, where instead of being expendable it would put right an inadequacy. It is not difficult to spot in the paradigm of § 21 the inadequacy which **-æt*, by taking the place of **-æd* in the 3rd person plural, would have put right. But this inadequacy, the homonymy of plural **-æd* with singular **-æd*, could have been remedied more simply by retaining in the 3rd plural the perfectly adequate **-ænd* alone. Where lay the incentive to resort to a less simple solution, or perhaps the disincentive to being content with one 3 pl. suffix only? The latter, alternative formulation is the one pointing to the answer we recommend, an answer falling under a rubric we may call 'quantitative (as against qualitative) atavistic conditioning'.

23. To take the 2 pl. for illustration, up to the emergence of the secondary *-ūt* the early Ossetes had been content with the inherited **-æt* as sole suffix. There followed the interlude with two suffixes, which ended with the return for

good to contentment with one suffix only. It does not matter that the survivor was the newcomer (i. e. *-ūt*), and not the no less adequate formerly sole incumbent (i.e. *-æt*), although even this we shall see in §25 hardly happened by accident. What matters is the return from the quantity 'two' to the pristine quantity 'one', testifying to the tenacity of ingrained habit. Even during the interlude that tenacity managed to foster an aversion to maintenance of more than one 2 pl. suffix.

24. In the 3 pl. our paradigm of § 21 displays *two* inherited suffixes, **-æd* and **-ænd*, of which we now need to ask why the first should at all have crossed the threshold from Old Iranian into early Ossetic. We saw in § 14 that the Ossetic verbal system has preserved in the optative clear traces both of middle-voice inflexion and athematic stem-treatment,²⁹ and that in the Ossetic optative the two features go together. If they go together in the optative, then in the imperative the fact that the Indo-Iranian ancestor of 3 pl. **-æd* would by definition have been athematic (see § 18), constitutes at least *prima facie* an argument for its voice having been the middle. In addition, the Sanskrit athematic verbs taking *-atām* greatly outnumber those attested with *-atu* (see § 17 n. 24). Accordingly we did not hesitate at the end of § 19, having prepared the ground at the end of § 18, to recommend **-atām* for antecedent of our 3 pl. **-æd*, in preference to **-atu*. For it is obvious that a 3 pl. suffix **-æd* derived from **-atām* would at first have been used instead of the likewise inherited **-ænd* only with certain verbs, namely in the main those which, from as far back as the Indo-Iranian period, had been athematically inflected on account of their meaning in middle voice only. We may be sure that with the loss of word-final *-u* and *-ām* the early Ossetes had become impervious to voice-distinction. But they would still have known which were the verbs for whose 3 pl. impv. the only 'correct' suffix to use was **-æd*, and with which ones it would be 'wrong' not to use **-ænd*. Admittedly in time they would quite likely have taken to using the two suffixes interchangeably. But by then they would have been well conditioned to having *two* 3 pl. impv. suffixes, and averse, on the atavistic principle we proposed at the end of § 22, to making do with one only, and this despite their all along knowing, that one of the two was in addition the one and only 3rd singular suffix.

25. They would have remained averse, within our reconstruction, to maintaining less than two 3 pl. suffixes, also when *-ūt* arrived on the scene. Their awareness of the inadequacy of 3 pl. **-æd*, on the other hand, would have been bound to grow, after the arrival of *-ūt*, in proportion to the reduced use which the newcomer was causing them to make of **-æt*. The more **-æt* was becoming obsolescent in the 2nd person plural, the more readily its *t* would seem to them a mere articulatory variant of the *d* of 3 pl. **-æd*, to be welcomed

both for distinction from 3 sg. **-æd*, and for allowing *one* suffix to be in sole charge of the 2nd plural. This latter consideration helps to explain why the survivor from the competition between **-æt* and *-ūt* was the newcomer (see §23).

26. As soon as in our paradigm of § 21 we enter **-æt* in the 3rd plural as articulatory variant of **-æd*, both the SOss. 3 sg. *-æt* and the NOss. 3 pl. *-ænt* (see §§ 9 and 15) become understandable as outcomes of analogical adjustment. The 3 pl. *-ænt* is easy to interpret as a contamination of **-ænd* with the *t* of the *n*-less 3 pl. **-æt*. Early Ossetes viewing **-ænd* as an **-æd* endowed with inserted *n*, would not be slow to endow with inserted *n* also the newcomer **-æt*. Instead of the unacceptable view that 3 pl. *-æt* is an *-ænt* with *n* secondarily lost (see § 20, middle), we conclude that *-ænt* is an *-æt*, with *n* secondarily gained.

27. The 3 sg. *-æt* will have arisen as a result of the variant **-æt* having at first joined **-æd* in the 3rd plural only by way of optional alternative articulation. There would follow a period during which the two variants coexisted, alongside of **-ænd/t*. During that period it is only to be expected that speakers pronouncing the 3 pl. **-æd* as **-æt*, would pronounce as **-æt* also the 3 sg. **-æd*. It is true that by so doing they would blur the distinction between singular and plural, the desirability of which we in § 25 offered as a reason why Ossetes would ‘welcome’ the articulatory variant **-æt* in the 3rd plural only. But their welcome would have had a merely semantic slant, manifesting itself in the plural because the plural had been the number denoted by **-æt* in the 2nd person. One need not expect such a semantic welcome to have stifled in the singular an atavistically conditioned *phonetic* expectation, of suffixation sounding identical with the *n*-less plural. From the moment one and the same **-æd* came often to fall from their own lips as **-æt* in the plural, how could they have made sure of never pronouncing it **-æt* in the singular?

28. We end with two paragraphs of reflections arising from the only *-æd* that requires no asterisk, the NOss. 3 sg. impv. suffix (§§ 9-10), to which the corresponding 3 pl. suffix is *-ænt* (§11). In North Ossetic (and in Digoron) the 3 sg. and the 3 pl. suffixes of all tenses and moods are morphologically distinct, as apart from the imperative they are also in South Ossetic. Had the SOss. single 3rd person imperative suffix been **-æd*,³⁰ the only prudent explanation would have been the routine one, that only in the imperative South Ossetes, for reasons unfathomable, took to using the 3 sg. ending for the plural as well. It would have been thought extravagant to suggest that the single **-æd* represented a merger of IE 3 sg. **-et^o* with 3 pl. **-nt^o* (cf. § 18), too slender a pretext for attribution to Ossetic alone among Iranian languages (see § 16) of a feature that was archaic already in ancient Greek.³¹ But the single SOss. suffix is *-æt*, not **-æd*. Of its singleness, therefore, the above routine explanation be-

comes unexceptionable if one reverses it: it is to using their 3 pl. suffix for the singular as well, that the South Ossetes must have taken (cf. § 15), to judge from its being again a plural suffix, i.e. *-ænt*, of which the *t* becomes understandable if of the two SOss. *-æt* the plural one was the earlier. But even if earlier, the *t* of 3 pl. *-æt* cannot in Ossetic have been original. Its *æ*, on the other hand, can, insofar as it is derivable from IE η (§ 18). After $\alpha < \eta$, however, one expects the *t* of IE $*-nt^\circ$ to turn up in early Ossetic as *d* (§1).

29. What we needed to find, therefore, was an *-æt*, preferably as regular as the expected $*-æd < *-nt^\circ$ would have been, that would qualify for use as a variant of 3 pl. $*-æd$. Such a use of it could only have come about by an innovation, which in turn, if another innovation were detectable in the imperative, might have been sparked off by the latter. This is why the present paper, down to § 9 inclusive, deals with the *ūt*-innovation, chiefly in order to test, and confirm, its imperatival provenance (§ 8). It was an innovation which brought about the retreat of an original plural suffix, $*-æt < *-a\vartheta a$, from the imperative's 2nd person. Our conclusion is, that in the course of its retreat the suffix could not have left an imprint on the 3rd plural person, as seems hard to deny that it did, if in that person Ossetic had not inherited, beside $*-ænd$, a suffix $*-æd$. That was the suffix of which the *æ* is echoed by the *æ* of 3 pl. *-æt*, which latter *æ* thereby discloses itself as a fossilized echo of IE $*-\eta$.

NOTES

1. Written version of a communication delivered orally at the plenary opening session of the First International Conference of Ossetic Studies held in Vladikavkaz from 12 to 18 October 1991. As the audience included not only philologists, but also historians, archaeologists, ethnologists, etc., the author for clarity's sake presented no more than the gist of an article of his at the time still in press, which has meanwhile appeared in *TPS* 1991, 221-234 under the title «The Ossetic 3rd plural imperative». The article has here been drastically recast, with omission of some related problems discussed in it, addition of some proposals not previously offered, and adoption of a different method of presentation.

2. In the present paper the term 'Ossetic (Oss.)' is used for the Iron Ossetic language, within which, where necessary, a distinction will be made between 'North Ossetic (NOss.)', and 'South Ossetic (SOss.)'. The Digoron Ossetic language, spoken in the western valleys of North Ossetia, will be referred to simply as 'Digoron (Dig.)'. Other abbreviations here used are IE (Indo-European), impv. (imperative), ind. (indicative), In.-Ir. (Indo-Iranian), OIran. (Old Iranian), opt. (optative), pl. (plural), pres. (present), sg. (singular), Skt (Sanskrit).

3. Thus *-am* or *-ām* in Oss. *nær* 'now', from OIran. *nūrām*.

4. The examples are Oss. *cæwæt* 'offspring' and *mælaet* 'death', on which see Abayev i 307 and ii 86.

5. I no longer think it right to suggest, as I did in *TPS* 1991, 232 n. 6 (end), that it is merely Miller's succinct wording, which makes him appear to have taken *ūt* for a phonologically correct outcome of **bavata*. Had he not really believed this to be so, he could hardly have remained unperturbed by the fact that *ūt* would in the indicative have been no part of the Verbum Substantivum, see our § 6.

6. Where *-ta* (or any other personal ending) was added to a 'thematic' verbal stem, i.e. a stem terminating in the 'thematic' vowel *a* from IE *e* or *o*, Indo-Europeanists often count the thematic vowel as part of the ending. Strictly speaking, however, Miller's **bavata* has *-ata* (from IE **-e-te*) as 2 pl. impv. suffix only insofar as the personal suffix *-ta* was added to the thematic stem *bava* of the root *bav*.

7. See *TPS* 1991, 232 n.6.

8. Thus Kellens-Pirart (i 190 n. 7 and iii 272), although they define *ivīzaya θa* in Yasna 53.7 as a subjunctive (as which it is rendered by Humbach 1991, i 194 and ii 246), translate the form as if it were the imperative for which Spiegel had taken it already in 1864, 57 and 399. Another Avestan hapax, *vāstrya θa*, is perhaps an imperative according to Sims-Williams, 258 (on 294).

9. Bartholomae 1895, 61.

10. Thus also Kellens 1984, 316.

11. 'You are' is *st-ūt* in Ossetic, see Miller, 126-7 [74-5].

12. Cf. the Digoron distinction to which Miller draws attention at p. 129 [77 top], between *æz un* 'I become' and *æz dæn* 'I am'.

13. Alternatively, in the light of Sogdian *waβ* from *βaw* (cf. *GMS* § 407), what contracted to *ū* may have been a **wuw* going back to **baw* via **wuβ* < **waβ* < **βaw*. In either case **wuw* would be due to assimilation of *β* to *w*.

14. As it did in Digoron, where of course *uis* means not 'thou art' but 'thou becomest', cf. above, n. 12 (to § 6). On the origin of the ending *-is* I prefer the view which Miller at p. 118 [70] quotes from Salemann to his own.

15. In which the suffixes of the 1 sg., 2 sg. and 1 pl. have been omitted as irrelevant to the problems we are about to consider.

16. The case, scrutinized in *TPS* 1991, 221 with n. 2, and 228 sqq., has no tenable foundation.

17. The impossibility resides in facts explained in *TPS* 1991, 233 n. 10. A further warning against deriving the SOss. 3 pl. *-æet* from *-antu/ām*, may be taken from the fact that also the 3 sg. suffix is *-æet* in South Ossetic.

18. In the present indicative those of the 1 sg., 3 sg. and 3 pl.; in the imperative the zero ending of the 2 sg.; in the subjunctive the 2 sg., 2 pl., and 3 pl. (on which last see *TPS* 1991, 229 sq.).

19. On the reason why in South Ossetic the 3 sg. opt. suffix is *-it*, the reader is referred to *TPS* 1991, 228. On that page, however, he is asked, in the light of what follows above in § 14 on the origin of Ossetic optative *i*, to replace the Sanskrit thematic middle 2 sg. opt. end-

ing *-ethās* with its athematic counterpart *-īthās*. Of the Sanskrit verb *ās* ‘to sit’, for example, quoted in § 14, the athematic middle 2 sg. opt. is *āsīthās*.

20. The OIran. middle opt. endings *-aiša* and *-aita* are thematic, as are the corresponding active opt. endings *-aiš* and *-ait*, because their initial *a* is the thematic vowel (see §5 n. 6). The *i* which appears between it and the personal suffixes *-ša*, *-ta* (middle), or *-š*, *-t* (active), is the Indo-Iranian modal sign of the optative. The sign is in front of consonants a brief *i* when preceded by the thematic vowel (in combination with which it forms a diphthong), but a long *ī* when what precedes is a consonant, in other words when the optative is athematic.

21. Being *i* in both Iron Ossetic and Digoron Ossetic, the vowel must in Old Iranian have been a long *ī*. Had it been brief, its Iron outcome would have been *ə*. Note that to Miller (p. 121 [71]) its pronunciation often seemed long. This could in Iron have pointed indeed to derivation from OIran. *ai*, as Miller assumed. But in Digoron ancient *ai* results in *e*.

22. What excludes them is the fact that, being word-final, they were doomed to disappear in Ossetic.

23. See *TPS* 1991, 228.

24. The restrictions are conveniently summed up by Whitney, p. 207, § 550, b: loss of *n* [thus called by Whitney] takes place in the ACTIVE only after reduplicated non-*a*-stems [i.e. athematic stems] and after a few roots which are treated as if reduplicated; in the MIDDLE it occurs after all tense-stems save those ending in *a* [i.e. save the thematic stems].

25. The latter terminated so not only in the 3 pl., but also in the 3 sg. (see § 10). Hence there was no formal distinction in Indo-Iranian between the thematic 3 sg. impv. and the athematic 3 pl. impv. suffixes: both were *-atu* in the active, *-atām* in the middle.

26. On the *t* of the SOss. 3 sg. opt. ending *-it* see the *TPS* reference given above in § 14 n. 19.

27. See *TPS* 1991, 221 and 231 n. 2.

28. This is why from OIran. *anta*^o Ossetic has both *ændæ*^o and *ædtæ*^o, but no **ændtæ*^o. On the internal dialect inconsistency that would here be involved see also *TPS* 1991, 233 n. 10.

29. A further trace of athematic (root-class) stem-treatment can be recognized in certain rarely used Digoron 2 pl. impv. forms, see *TPS* 1991, 232 n. 7.

30. As it indeed is in newspapers and books printed in South Ossetia, by a purely literary, and only partial adaptation to North Ossetic usage, see *TPS* 1991, 226 sq.

31. Cf. Homeric *ῆαται*, *λελόγγασι*, *δέχαται*, and early Attic *έτεταχατο*, *τετάχαται*, in Brugmann, pp. 98, 408.

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