

OSSETIAN EVIDENCE FROM EARLY MODERN EUROPEAN SOURCES: TRACING LINGUISTIC CHANGES

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Осетинский, восточно-иранский язык жителей Центрального Кавказа, имеет богатую и сложную историю, которая была сформирована различными языковыми и культурными влияниями региона. Однако из-за отсутствия письменной традиции источники по осетинскому языку ограничены, и большая часть ранней истории языка и его развития остается окутанной тайной. К счастью, существует ряд публикаций, относящихся к раннему Новому европейскому периоду и содержащих несколько списков слов, которые дают ценную информацию о языковом развитии осетинского языка. Самая ранняя из этих публикаций датирована 1705 г. Данные списки слов позволяют заглянуть в лексикон языка и дают представление о лингвистической эволюции осетинского языка, поскольку они позволяют проследить развитие, передавая транскрипцию составивших их исследователей. Как таковые, эти источники имеют большое значение для лингвистов, интересующихся историей и развитием осетинского и иранского языков, а также контактными явлениями, и могут помочь пролить свет на то, как происходят на протяжении нескольких столетий языковые изменения бесписьменных языков. В этой статье мы исследуем лингвистическое развитие осетинского языка, наблюдаемое в европейских источниках раннего Нового времени, и исследуем пути, по которым это развитие можно проследить до более поздних стадий развития языка. С этой целью мы сначала предоставим обзор соответствующих монографий, которые были опубликованы в прошлые века и которые включают либо исследования, например, по синтаксису или морфологии осетинского языка, либо включают языковой материал, такой как списки слов и транскрипции того времени, когда в языке еще не было устоявшейся письменной традиции. Поскольку цель этой статьи состоит в том, чтобы обсудить развитие и особенности, которые можно сделать из этого материала, мы более подробно рассмотрим два списка слов, а именно: «черкесский» глоссарий, который был опубликован в «Северная и Восточная Тартария» Николааса Витсена, а также иронский и дигорский глоссарии осетинского языка Симона Палласа. Глоссарий Витсена содержит не только черкесские лексемы, но и значительное количество осетинских слов. Это делает записи в глоссарии Витсена старейшими из засвидетельствованных письменных образцов современного осетинского языка. Глоссарий Палласа, с другой стороны, актуален для сравнительного изучения вариантов и диалектов осетинского языка; записи показывают, что диалектные особенности иронского, например, уже были установлены. Судить об этом позволяет фонология словарных статей.

Ключевые слова: развитие языка, историческая лингвистика, диалектология, осетинский язык раннего нового времени.

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Introduction.

Ossetic is a language spoken in the Caucasus region, specifically in North Ossetia-Alania and South Ossetia. Ossetic is a member of the Iranian branch of the Indo-Iranian languages and is divided into two varieties, *Iron* and *Digor* Ossetic, according to their self-designations as *Iron* and *Digoron*. While these two dialects share many similarities, they also exhibit significant differences in their phonology, morphology, and syntax. Every variety has certain regional variations which are often categorized as subdialects. There is an ongoing dispute about the classification of Iron and Digor as two dialects of one language (cf. Akhvlediani [1, 13-23]; Abaev [2]; Thordarson [3, 5]) or as two closely related languages (cf. Erschler [4; 5; 6]).

Digor is accepted as the more archaic variety and is spoken in the northwestern districts of Iraf and Digora of North Ossetia-Alania. Iron, on the other hand, is the basis of Standard Ossetic and is spoken in the remaining parts of North and South Ossetia. While the differences of the Iron subdialects from the northern Caucasus are not considered to be enormous, the differences between Iron spoken in North Ossetia-Alania (in the following: I) and the Iron subdialects from South Ossetia, Kudar (K) and Čisaj (Č), are considerable. However, these variations are mainly of phonetic nature. For instance, I. *styrzærdædzinad* (Cyrillic *стырзæрдæдзинад*) 'carelessness' is realized as /ʃtər.ʒer.də.zi.na:d/ in I, as /stər.ʒær.dæ.ɖʒi.nad/ in K, and as /stər.ʒær.dæ.ɖʒi.nad/ in Č, whereas I. *Хуыцау* (Cyrillic *Хуыцау*) 'God', is realized as /xʷə.ˈsaw/ in I, as /xʷə.ˈʃaw/ in K and as /xʷə.ˈʦaw/ in Č. In short: the vowels <æ> and <a> as well as the consonants (Cyrillic) <ц>, <с>, <з>, and <дз> are realized differently.

Iron and Digor are nowadays considered to be mutually comprehensible (cf. Thordarson [3, 5]) but as Erschler states, "[t]o communicate between each other, Digor and Iron speakers use Russian, rather than any of the two Ossetic languages" [6, 641].

2. Early Modern European Sources.

The following passages draw from my unpublished dissertation with the title "Definiteness in Ossetic" (submitted in September 2022). During my doctorate studies, I compiled a table providing an overview of publications that cover Ossetic in its entirety or in sections that relate to various linguistic aspects. The publications included in the table are in several languages, such as Dutch, Latin, English, German, French, Russian, Ossetic, Turkish, and Polish. The table will be supplemented in the future. The complete table is thoroughly discussed in

sections 1.2 History of Ossetology, and Appendix A – Relevant publications on Ossetic of my thesis.

In the following, we will see an overview of noteworthy monographs that have been published in the past three centuries and contain relevant material for Ossetic. The publications are compiled of Early Modern European sources and noteworthy works which were published in the North Caucasus, and the Russian Empire (later Russian Federation). The following three sections are divided into three centuries, starting with the 18th century. At the end of sections 2.1 and 2.2 the publications and relevant text passages or word lists are summarized chronologically in tables. Due to the high number of publications in the 20th century (over 70), such a summary was omitted in section 2.3.

2.1 Ossetian Sources from the 18th century.

The earliest known mention of Ossetic dates back to 1705, when Nicolaes Witsen included it in his book *Noord en Oost-Tartarye* [7]. Witsen's dictionary appears to have originated between 1666 and 1677, making it one of the earliest sources available on Ossetian vocabulary, aside from the three medieval Alanian documents: the Zelenčuk inscription, a small number of phrases given by Tzetzes in his *Theogony*, and the *Alanic Marginal Notes*. In the second edition of his manuscript, Witsen listed 211 Dutch words and their equivalents in Ossetic and Circassian. He introduces the glossary as words that are (translated from Early Modern Dutch) "used in the country of the king Archin or Archillus, which is located in the mountains between the Black and the Caspian Sea, its capital being Melityn or Ismaliten (as the inhabitants are crude Christians and known as Circassian mountain people)" [7, 256]. Naarden [8, 7] points out that Witsen, who was a lawyer and politician by training, did not collect the language material that he provides in his manuscript himself. Furthermore, *Noord en Oost-Tartarye* is a compilation of a large amount of data, which Witsen had found in 700-800 different printed, handwritten, and oral sources in Persian, Russian, and other languages.

Witsen's work was followed over half a century later by Johann Anton Güldenstädt, who collected information on the languages, peoples, and geography of Ossetia during a visit in 1771. Güldenstädt's notes and word lists were used by various authors and were eventually published by Peter Simon Pallas as *Reisen durch Rußland und im Caucasischen Gebürge* in 1787 and 1791 [9; 9], and later by Heinrich Julius von Klaproth as *Reisen nach Georgien und Imerethi* in 1815 [10].

Pallas used Güldenstädt's notes and word list to create his comparative studies in *Linguarum totius orbis Vocabularia* (1786), where he compiled a list of words in 187 languages and dialects. Ossetic was assigned the number 79 and Dugor the number 80, and both were listed after Iranian languages such as Persian, Kurdish, and Afghan [11]. George Ellis also used Güldenstädt's notes in his monograph *Memoir of a map of the countries comprehended between*

the Black Sea and the Caspian (1788), where he described Ossetian as having some similarities with Persian and noted that the Dugorian dialect was even a variant of Persian [12]. Ellis provided a word list of 130 lexemes and their equivalents in both the "Dialect of Oseti" and the "Dialect of Dugor". Jacob Reineggs published his *Allgemeine historisch-topographische Beschreibung des Kaukasus* in 1796, where he stated that the Ossetic language was distinct from the other languages spoken in the Caucasus and was only mixed with a few Persian and Georgian words. Reineggs also provided a word list of 41 lexemes that corresponded with Iron [13].

In the year of 1796, a travel journal titled *Tagebuch einer Reise die im Jahr 1781 von der Gränzfestung Mosdok nach dem innern Caucasus unternommen worden* was published in St. Petersburg and Leipzig, which was edited by Peter Simon Pallas [14]. In Engelmann's bibliography of publications on geography and travels that appeared in Germany between 1750 and 1856, the diary is listed but no author information is provided [15]. However, Allen [16] and Rohrbacher [17] suggest that the author's name may have been Steder, Šteder or Staeden. The diary includes a chapter dedicated to observations of Ossetian customs and geography, providing the names of a number of Ossetian settlements and villages. The author also writes about the religions and beliefs of the Ossetians, and his own role in reconciling conflicts between inhabitants, but does not mention any language or word list, except for the word 'water' [14, 48].

The first book in Ossetic was published in 1798, which was a bilingual Catechism in the Iron language [18]. This Catechism had word forms that are different from the modern standard Iron language, which leads Kozyreva [19] to suggest that they are either colloquial speech from the 18th century or idiomatic dialects used by the authors. A partial copy of the 1798 Catechism with French interlinear translations was also found, which was likely created by or for von Klaproth [20]. This assumption is based on the fact that von Klaproth [21] quoted the Catechism in his publication's appendix.

The table below gives an overview of the published books in the 18th century:

Table 1. Ossetian sources from the 18th century

Year	Author (editor)	Title
1705	Witsen, Nicolaes	<i>Noord en Oost Tartarye, ofte bondig ontwerp van eenige dier landen en volken, welke voormaels bekend zijn geweest: beneffens verscheide tot noch toe onbekende, en meest nooit voorheen beschreve Tartersche en naaburige gewesten, landstreeken, steden, rivieren, en plaetzen, in de Noorder</i>

1786	Pallas, Peter Simon	<i>Linguarum totius orbis Vocabularia comparativa/Sravnitel'nye slovari vsëx" jazykov" i narëčij</i>
1787, 1791	Güldenstädt, Johann Anton (ed. Peter Simon Pallas)	<i>Reisen durch Rußland und im Caucasischen Gebürge</i> 1772
1788	Ellis, George	<i>Memoir of a map of the countries comprehended between the Black Sea and the Caspian; with an account of the Caucasian Nations, and Vocabularies of their languages</i>
1796	Reineggs, Jacob (ed. Friedrich E. Schröder)	<i>Allgemeine historisch-topographische Beschreibung des Kaukasus</i>

2.2 Ossetian Sources from the 19th century.

The oldest manuscript in Ossetian language dates back to a similar period as the first Ossetic book, namely to the year of 1802 [22]. It is a translation created by Ivan Georgievič Yalghuzidze of an appeal from the Tsarist government to the inhabitants of South Ossetia. To carry out the translation from Russian to Ossetic, Yalghuzidze employed the Georgian alphabet.

Heinrich Julius von Klaproth, in his book *Reise in den Kaukasus und nach Georgien* [21], provided a comparative word list that showed the Ossetians to be of Medean descent. He compared Ossetic with Medean and Persian and referenced historical and medieval sources to discuss alternative designations used to refer to the Ossetians. Klaproth also attempted to describe the nominal and verbal morphology of the language and provided interlinearized religious texts and a word list for Iron with several cognates and Digor forms. The book was translated into French and published in 1823 under the title *Voyage au Mont Caucase et en Géorgie avec une carte de la Géorgie* [23].

Heinrich Julius von Klaproth's book, *Asia Polyglotta* [24], includes word lists and descriptions of various languages and language families. The section titled "Osseten oder Alanen" [24, 82-97] contains a word list with cognates and discusses the relationship between Ossetic and Medean-Persian. Von Klaproth notes that Ossetians are related to Medes, Sarmatians, As, Alans, and Jazs [24, 87] and suggests that there are similarities between Ossetic and Finno-Ugric languages. He mentions that the language shares many words with Livonian and, in particular, with Woyakian, Zyrian, and Permian [24, 88].

Andreas Johann Sjögren published *Iron Ævzagaxur – Das ist Ossetische Sprachlehre* [25], the first monograph dedicated solely to the Ossetian language, following von Klaproth's attempted grammar of Ossetic. In this grammar, Sjögren covers the nominal and verbal morphology, as well as syntactic descriptions of the language. He also introduces an alphabet for the language based on the

Cyrillic script, with modified letters to cover additional phonemes that do not exist in Russian, such as <ɟ> for /y/, <ɣ>/k/ in opposition to <к>/k'/, <п̄>/p/ in opposition to <п>/p'/, among others.

Georg Rosen wrote a grammar book about Ossetic shortly after Sjögren's work [26]. In his book, he criticized von Klaproth's work and suggested that he may have been limited by his reliance on Russian. Rosen also claimed that he was able to use Georgian to supplement his research. Unlike Sjögren, Rosen preferred to use the Georgian alphabet for Ossetic because he believed it was more suitable for the language, and he provided word forms in both Georgian and Latin scripts.

Vsevolod Fjodorovič Miller's trilogy *Osetinskie ètjudy* [27] is an important publication in Ossetology as it contains Ossetian folk tales translated into Russian with a strong focus on the Ossetian language. Among other works, Miller also wrote the relevant monographs *Digorskija skazanija* [28], which is a collection of texts in Digor and Russian, and the trilingual three-volume dictionary *Osetisch-Russisch-Deutsches Wörterbuch* [29].

The first Russian-Ossetian dictionary was published by Josif Episkop Vladikavkazskij in 1884, which mainly includes Iron (Tagaur) word forms because, as he states, "this dialect is spoken by most Ossetians and because Tagaur is perfectly understood by Digors and South Ossetians alike while Digor is barely understood by Tagaurs" [30, II].

Other important works on Ossetic include Reinhold von Stackelberg's dissertation, *Beiträge zur Syntax des Ossetischen* [31], Heinrich Hübschmann's etymological studies on Ossetic with the title *Etymologie und Lautlehre der Ossetischen Sprache* [32], and Carl von Hahn's comparison of Digor and Iron words in *Bilder aus dem Kaukasus: Neue Studien zur Kenntniss Kaukasiens* [33, 23-57].

The table below gives an overview of the published books in the 19th century:

Table 2. Ossetian sources from the 19th century

Year	Author (editor)	Title
1812, 1814	von Klaproth, Heinrich Julius	<i>Reise in den Kaukasus und nach Georgien, unternommen in den Jahren 1807 und 1808</i> <i>Anhang zur Reise in den Kaukasus und nach Georgien</i>
1814	von Klaproth, Heinrich Julius	<i>Beschreibung der Russischen Provinzen zwischen dem Kaspischen und Schwarzen Meere: mit einer Charte</i>
1815	Güldenstädt, Johann Anton (ed. Julius von Klaproth)	<i>Reisen nach Georgien und Imerethi</i>
1823	von Klaproth, Julius (ed.?)	→ French translation of 'Reise in den Kaukasus und nach Georgien': <i>Voyage au Caucase et en Géorgie</i>
1823	von Klaproth, Julius	<i>Asia Polyglotta</i>

1834	von Blaramberg, Johann	<i>Istoričeskoe, Topografičeskoe, Statističeskoe, Ėtnografičeskoe i Voennoe opisanie Kavkaza</i> [=‘Historical, Topographical, Statistical, Economical, and Military Description of the Caucasus’]
1844	Sjögren, Andreas Johan	<i>Iron aevzagachúr, das ist ossetische Sprachlehre nebst kurzem ossetisch-deutschen und deutsch-ossetischen Wörterbuche</i> <i>Ossetische Sprachlehre nebst einer Abhandlung über das Mingrelische, Suanische u. Abchasische</i> (Vorgelegt der Königl. Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin am 24. October 1844 und 6. Februar 1845)
1881, 1882, 1887	Miller, Vsevolod Fjodorovič	<i>Osetinskie étjudy</i> , vol. 1-3 [=‘Ossetian studies 1-3’]
1884	Josif Episkop Vladikavkazskij	<i>Russko-Osetinskij Slovar’ s Kratkoju grammatikoju</i> [= ‘Russian-Ossetian Dictionary: with a short grammar’]
1886	von Stackelberg, Reinhold	<i>Beiträge zur Syntax des Ossetischen</i>
1887	Hübschmann, Heinrich	<i>Etymologie und Lautlehre der Ossetischen Sprache</i> (reprint in: Sammlung Indogermanischer Wörterbücher I. Amsterdam: Oriental press)

2.3 Ossetian Sources from the 20th century.

Boris Alborov was a pioneer in Ossetian studies in the Caucasus, and his book *Iron ævzadžy cybyr grammatikæ xistær axuyrgæninægtæn æmæ xi axuyrgænægtæn* was one of the earliest studies published in Ossetic, which appeared in 1925 [34]. After that, scientific papers in written Ossetic continued to be published, mainly in Iron. Some examples include Alborov’s *Næ fyccag muxurgond iron činygæj nog xabærttæ* [35], Qocyty Bidzina’s *Iron ævzadžy formalon praktikon Gramatikæ: Astæuggag skholajy fyddzag ærtæ khordæn* [36], and Dzagurti Gubadi’s *Digoron ævzagi orfografij (rast finsun) zingædær æhdæuttæ* [37], which was one of the first publications in Digor. Terminological dictionaries have also been published in Ossetian, such as Seoti Zaxar’s *Iron-Dyguron grammatikæjy æmæ ævzag axuyry terminty dzyrduat* [38] and Boris Bigulaev’s *Lingviston Terminty: Wyrjysag-Iron cybyr dzyrdwat* [39].

Bernhard Munkácsi’s *Blüten der ossetischen Volksdichtung* [40] is also an important publication, as it includes various Ossetian tales written in Latin script, accompanied by diacritics to indicate hyphenation, word groups, and stress. The tales are written in both Iron and Digor and are accompanied by a German translation.

Vasilij Ivanovič Abaev is a well-known figure in Ossetology, and his works are frequently referenced. In *Osetinskij jazyk i fol’klor* [41], he covers a wide range of topics related to Ossetology, including research on the Scythian and

Alanian languages, dialectology, phonetics, grammar, and etymology. Abaev's *Istoriko-ëtimologičeskij slovar' osetinskogo jazyka* [42] is a multivolume etymological dictionary that provides examples of Iron and Digor word forms found in Ossetian literature and discusses their etymology, drawing on cognates from other Indo-European languages. His *Grammatičeskij očerk osetinskogo jazyka*, first published in [2], provides a grammatical overview of the Ossetian language, and it was later translated into English and published as *A grammatical sketch of Ossetic* [43].

In the years following Abaev's work, many other scholars published grammatical studies of the Ossetic language. Some notable examples include Georgij Saridanovič Akhvlediani's *Grammatika osetinskogo jazyka* [1], Nikolaj Konstantinovič Bagaev's *Sovremennyj osetinskij jazyk* [44], and Émile Benveniste's *Études sur la langue Ossete* [45], which was later translated into Russian as *Očerki po Osetinskomu Jazyku* [46]. While Iron had been the primary focus of Ossetic studies, Magomed Izmailovič Isaev's grammar of the Digor dialect, titled *Digorskij dialekt osetinskogo jazyka*, was published in 1966 [47].

Isaev's grammar did not bring an end to Ossetian studies, and in the following decades, there have been many publications that covered various aspects of the language. In fact, Ossetian studies flourished, particularly in the second half of the 20th century, with the previously mentioned works opening up opportunities for comparative and etymological studies.

3. Linguistic Developments: Language Material from Early Modern Sources vs Modern Ossetic.

Despite the small amount of Ossetian language material in historical sources, there are a number of developments that probably took place in the past three centuries, making the few historical sourced highly valuable since they show a pre-stage of the modern standard language.

A remarkable amount of such developments can be seen in Witsen's glossary, which was object of an elaborate investigation by Rieks Smeets [48]. It compiles of 213 lexemes of which 132 lexemes are given in Kabardian, around one third (73) are Ossetic, and the remaining lexemes are either from Karachay-Balkar, Georgian or of uncertain origin [48, 177].

Most of the entries provide a single equivalent from the above-mentioned languages. However, for 22 entries Witsen provides two translations, whereas for two entries, he provides three. The question arises whether Witsen was aware that his word list consisted of more than one language. If this was the case, why did he not differentiate between all of these languages? This question is reaffirmed by the pattern visible for in entries with 2 or 3 lexemes; in these cases, the Ossetic form is given first, followed by the Kabardian word form. This fact suggests that at least Witsen himself or his informants were aware of the linguistic differences between the languages and tried to draw a line between them. Yet, it remains unclear whether Witsen was aware of these differences and whether

it was Witsen who decided to group all languages together or if it was Johann Dresscher, Witsen's informant, who did not inform Witsen that these lexemes belonged to different languages from different language families. And this leads to another question of whether Dresscher himself was aware of the linguistic differences and if he collected these lexemes himself or not.

Table 3 below presents eight entries by Witsen and is arranged as follows: the left column represents the number according to Witsen's original glossary, followed by his Dutch translation. The third column gives the English translation, and the fourth column shows the entries as they are found in the original list. Here, as in the original list, the Ossetian word form according to Witsen is given with the Modern Ossetic form in Iron and Digor in the last column. Circassian word forms by Witsen were omitted in this table.

Table 3. Excerpt from Witsen's glossary

	Dutch Form (Witsen)	Translation	Witsen's Item	Modern Ossetic &
3	Een Meid	'a girl'	kiska	I. <i>čyzyg</i> D. <i>kizgæ</i>
11	Donder	'thunder'	arfmare	I. <i>ærvy næryn</i> D. <i>ærvy nærun</i>
12	Een Lepel	'a spoon'	widig	I. <i>widyg</i> D. <i>wedug, jedug</i>
26	Zout	'salt'	tzach	I. <i>cæxx</i> D. <i>cænxæ</i>
28	Brood	'bread'	tzull	I. <i>dzul</i> D. <i>dzol</i>
30	Een Steen	'a stone'	dur	I. <i>dur</i> D. <i>dor</i>

The table shows that certain dialectal developments between Iron and Digor had already taken place, for instance, the development of Plr **ai* > POss **e* > I. *i* | D. *e* [49, 32-33] which is visible in item number 12 (Plr **waituka* > I. *widyg* | D. *wedug, jedug* [42 IV, 102]. This development is confirmed by Abaev's [42 II, 124] and Bielmeier's [49, 197] claim that item number 9, I. *mit* | D. *met* 'snow', stems from Slavic ** (o) met*, where the **-e-* corresponds to the intermediate stage of POss before the dialectal developments. Consequently, this observation upholds the notion that the development of (Plr **ai* >) POss **e* > I. *i* | D. *e* had already taken place when Witsen's glossary was created.

Another dialectal development that had already taken place at that time is the development of Plr. **au* > POss **o* > I. *u* | D. *o* [49, 33] which can be observed in items number 28 I. *dzul* | D. *dzol* 'bread' and 30 I. *dur* | D. *dor* 'stone'. Abaev (*dzul* [42 I, 376]; *dur* cf. [42 I, 399 f.]) and Bielmeier (*dur* cf. [49, 144]) don't give a clear etymology for neither of these lexemes. However, in consideration of other lexemes that show the same development, we can note a regularity of at least the development from the intermediate POss **o* > I. *u* | D. *o*: *qus* | D. *ğos* 'ear' (< **gauša-*, [49, 263]); *sudyzn* | D. *sodzun* 'to burn' (< **šauča-*, [49, 216]), *bud* | D. *bodæ* 'smell' (< **bada-*, [49, 131]), *ærdu* | D. *ærdo* 'hair' (< **drau-*, [49, 118]).

Witsen's table shows a further dialectal development that already took place at that time: the development of Plr **nx* > I. *xx* | D. *nx*, which can be

observed in item number 26 I. *cæxx* | D. *cænxæ* 'salt'. A similar development is found, for instance, in the lexemes I. *zæxx* | D. *zænxæ* 'earth', and I. *xox* | D. *xwænx* 'mountain'.

Lastly, as can be seen in Table 3 above, the Ossetian variety found in Witsen's word list seems to be closer to Modern Iron. This, on the other hand, makes item number 3 of particular interest, as the velar plosive /k/ in word-initial position is very unusual for Iron in this lexeme and rather reminds of Modern Digor *kizgæ* rather than Modern Iron *čyzg* 'girl, daughter'. Therefore, we must assume that the affrication of plosives that are followed by the fronted vowels /e/ and /i/, as for instance in I. *č'iri* | D. *k'eræ* 'Ossetian pie', I. *či* | D. *ke* 'who', I. *čyndz* | D. *kindzæ* 'bride', took place at a later stage of the language. Abaev [41, 510], too, discusses the palatalization of these consonants with the following words (translated from Russian): "there seems to be some doubt as to whether this transition [of *k, g, k'* to *č, dž, č'*] [...] should be attributed to a more distant era, unreachable for us due to the lack of monuments.". He further states: "The translation of the Catechism of 1798 [...] seems to eloquently say that in the late 18th century the Northern Irons did not yet [realize this palatalization]." Abaev refers to A. Sjögren, who describes this process almost half a century after the catechism was created, and predicts that a regular palatalization will be realized completely in the future.

Another word list that shows dialectal peculiarities was published over 80 years later by Pallas [11], who compiled a comparative word list with 187 languages and dialects. Each language in Pallas' list is assigned a number; language 79 is "Osetinski" and language 80 is "Dugorski". Iron and Digor are listed right after the Iranian languages Persian, Kurdish and Afghan, which have the numbers 76, 77, 78 respectively. Not only does Pallas differentiate between Iron and Digor, but he also provides more than one word form for the Iron entries where one matches with the realization of the lexeme in Standard Iron from North Ossetia and the other one with the realization of the lexeme in Kudar Ossetic, predominantly spoken in South Ossetia.

Table 4 below gives ten entries from Pallas and is arranged as follows: the left column represents the number in accordance with Pallas' original glossary. Since Pallas listed Iron and Digor separately, they are given in different columns in the table. The second and third columns give Pallas' Iron entry along with the corresponding transcription of the Modern Iron lexeme, while the fourth and fifth columns show Pallas' Digor entry and its Modern Digor equivalent, respectively. The last column provides a translation of the entries. Since Pallas provided the Iron and Digor entries in Cyrillic script, the transcription of the original entries are supplemented by the original items in brackets. The Modern Iron and Modern Digor word forms in Table 4 on the other hand are only transcribed and not supplemented by a Cyrillic orthography.

Table 4. Excerpt from Pallas' glossary

	Iron (Pallas)	Modern Iron	Digor (Pallas)	Modern Digor	Translation
1	сав, хиџав (цав, хучавъ)	<i>xwycaw</i>	хусав (хуцау)	<i>xucaw</i>	'God'
3	fid, abu (фид, абу)	<i>fyd</i>	fide (фиде)	<i>fidæ</i>	'father'
4	mad' (мадъ)	<i>mad</i>	made (маде)	<i>madæ</i>	'mother'
5	firt', lappu (фирть, лаппу)	<i>fyr̥t</i>	furt' (фурть)	<i>furt</i>	'son'
6	kizge (кизге)	<i>čyzg</i>	kizge (кизге)	<i>kizgæ</i>	'daughter'
7	arvade, ervod' (арваде, ерводъ)	<i>ærvad</i>	arvod' (арводъ)	<i>ærvadæ</i>	'brother'
10	us' (усъ)	<i>us</i>	oassa (оасса)	<i>wosæ</i>	'woman'
12	lappu (лаппу)	<i>læppu</i>	lokkon' (локконъ)	<i>læq̥wæ̃n</i>	'boy'
13	sevellon' (севеллонъ)	<i>syvællon</i>	bidžaw (биджау)	<i>biccew</i>	'child'
14	leg', lax' (легъ, лахъ)	<i>læg</i>	leg' (легъ)	<i>læg</i>	'man'
18	fīndž', fenz' (финджъ, фензъ)	<i>fyndz</i>	fīnds' (финдсъ)	<i>fij</i>	'nose'
20	čest', čašt' (честь, чаштъ)	<i>cæst</i>	ceste (цесте)	<i>cæstæ</i>	'eye'
25	dzikku, zibku (дзикку, зибку)	<i>dzykku</i>	džikko (джикко)	<i>dzikko</i>	'hair'

The dialectal differences between Standard Iron and Kudar Iron are evident in Pallas' Iron item number 1, where the first lexeme is given as an alveolar affricate/ʈʂ/, while in the second lexeme, it is a palato-alveolar affricate/ʈʃ/. In item number 7, the initial vowel of the lexeme I. *ærvad* | D. *ærvadæ* 'brother' is given as /a/ in the first and as /e/ in the second lexeme. In item number 18, the first entry corresponds with the Kudar realization /d͡ʒ/, while the second entry corresponds with the Standard Iron realization /z/. In item number 20, the first entry corresponds with Kudar, and the second item does not fully comply with the Standard Iron realization due to the word-initial palato-alveolar affricate/ʈʃ/.

Further peculiarities that can be observed in Pallas' word list are dialectal developments. For instance entry number 6 *kizge* 'girl', which we have already seen in Witsen's glossary, shows that the palatalization of /k/ before /i/ and /e/ apparently did also not take place when Pallas' word list was created, since the expected word form in Standard Iron would have been *čyzg*. However, this might as well be a mistake by Pallas, who might have just used the Digor word form for Iron in this case, since the loss of -æ in word-final position already took place as the entries number 3, 4, 10, and 20 show; the Digor items all show word final -æ in these entries, whereas the Iron word

forms do not. Hence, the palatalization of /k/ could have been established after the creation of Witsen's word list and either before or during the creation of Pallas' word list.

Nevertheless, entry number 7, where the loss of word-final -æ would be expected due to Modern Iron *ærvad* 'brother' not encountered in the first item given by Pallas for Iron. Thus, we can assume that Pallas' word list shows a stage of Modern Iron, where this development was probably still in progress.

Conclusion and Discussion.

In conclusion, this article has provided an overview of the history of Ossetology and the early attempts at documenting the language. We have examined the oldest known state of Ossetic, which is represented by Witsen's word list from the early 18th century, as well as the later word lists from the same century, which offer a glimpse into the early stages of Modern Ossetic. While these sources are few in number, they are invaluable for understanding the development of the language, as they provide evidence of changes that occurred over time.

Moreover, we have explored the linguistic developments that led to the differences between the two main Ossetic dialects, Iron and Digor, and how these changes can be traced back to a relatively early stage in the language's history. We have also noted that even within the Iron dialect, there are sub-dialectal differences within the Iron continuum, which reflect/confirm the contemporary distributions of phonetic features.

Further, we have seen that despite the small amount of Ossetic language material in historical sources, there are a number of valuable developments that likely took place in the past three centuries and show a pre-stage of the modern standard language. The compilation of Witsen's glossary is a particularly significant resource, as it offers insights into the dialectal differences between Iron and Digor, and the developments that have already taken place at that time.

Interestingly, Witsen's word list shows that the Ossetian variety found in his glossars seems to be closer to Modern Iron. This observation makes some items of particular interest, as the velar plosive /k/ in word-initial position is very unusual for Iron in this lexeme and rather reminds of Modern Digor *kizgæ* rather than Modern Iron *čyzyg* 'girl, daughter'.

Despite the challenges of limited sources and the lack of a writing tradition, I hope that this article has contributed to a deeper understanding of the development of Ossetic.

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OSSETIAN EVIDENCE FROM EARLY MODERN EUROPEAN SOURCES: TRACING LINGUISTIC CHANGES.

Keywords: *language development, historical linguistics, dialectology, Early Modern Ossetic.*

Ossetic, an Eastern Iranian language native to the central Caucasus region, has a rich and complex history that has been shaped by various linguistic and cultural influences of the region. However, due to the lack of a writing tradition, sources for Ossetic are limited, and much of the language's early history and linguistic development remains shrouded in mystery. Fortunately, there are a number of publications that date back to the early modern European period and that contain a few word lists, which provide valuable insights into the linguistic developments of Ossetic. The earliest of these publications dates back to 1705. These word lists not only offer a glimpse into the lexicon of the language but they also provide a window into the linguistic evolution of Ossetic since they allow for the tracing of developments, portraying the transcriptions by the researchers, who compiled them. As such, these sources are of great importance to linguists interested in the history and development of Ossetic and Iranian languages but also contact phenomena and can help shed light on the ways in which language change of oral languages occurs over a period of a couple of centuries. In this article, we will explore the linguistic developments of Ossetic as observed in early modern European sources and examine the ways in which these developments can be traced to later stages of the language. For this purpose we will firstly provide an overview of the relevant monographs that were published in the past centuries and that include either research on, for instance, the syntax or morphology of Ossetic or that include language material, such as word lists and transcriptions that date back to a time, when the language did not have an established writing tradition yet. As the aim of this paper is to discuss developments and peculiarities that can be concluded from this material, we will have a closer look into two word lists in particular: namely the "Circassian" glossary that was published in Nicolaes Witsen's "Noord en Oost Tartarye", and Simon Pallas' Iron and Digor Ossetian glossaries. As we will see, Witsen's glossary compiles not merely Circassian lexemes but also shows a considerable amount of Ossetian entries. This makes the entries in Witsen's glossary the oldest attested written examples of Modern Ossetic. Pallas' glossary on the other hand is relevant for the comparative study of Ossetian varieties and dialects; the entries show that dialectal varieties of Iron, for instance, were already established. This can be seen in the phonology of the entries.

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