

Deponent verbs in Georgian  
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0. Introduction.

In the summer of 2000, while on a research trip to Georgia, I came across the following cartoon in a Tbilisi newspaper. Here is the text with a translation:



- სუფში რაჲმ იჲყრებ-  
და?  
- ვინჲვ, ვეჲთა თუ ანა.  
- ???  
- ჩემი ვეჲთა ყოველთჲს  
ეჲნე ამნებებს უთხ...

Waiter: *supši rat'om ipurtxebit?* (Why do you keep spitting in the soup?)  
Customer: *vsinjav, cxelia tu ara.* (I'm testing if it's hot or not.)  
Waiter: ???  
Customer: *čemi coli q'oveltvis egre amoc'mebs utos.* (My wife always checks the iron like this.)

Leaving aside the political incorrectness — on several levels — of the content of the cartoon, let us make use of it as a source of linguistic data. The verb in the first line, *i-purtx-eb-i-t* “you [pl/polite] spit”, is formally in the passive voice; its 3rd-person subject form would be *i-purtx-eb-a*. Its morphology contrasts with that of the transitive *a-purtx-eb-s* in exactly the same way as, say, the passive (*k'ari*) *i-γ-eb-a* “(the door) is opened” is opposed to the active (*k'ars*) *a-γ-eb-s* “s/he opens (the door)”. If the meaning of *a-purtx-eb-s* is “s/he spits”, one would expect the first line of the above dialogue to mean something along the lines of “Why are you being spit into the soup?”, which is manifestly not the case. The *Explanatory Dictionary of the Georgian Language* (KEGL) glosses *ipurtxeba* “spits continually, sprays spit all the time (from the mouth)” (*erttavad apurtxebs, c'ara-mara purtxs isvris (p'iridan)*); according to Tschenkéli's dictionary, it means “(dauernd) spucken”. The near-synonymy of a formally passive verb with its corresponding

transitive is not limited to this root in Georgian. The KEGL inventories 78 verbs with similar semantic profiles. Nor has the phenomenon gone unnoticed by grammarians.

In his discussion of the uses of Georgian passive verb forms, Tschenkéli (1958: 255-256) notes that passives “die rein aktive Bedeutung besitz[en]” can be employed as a type of iterative “um eine gewohnheitsmässige, wiederholte Handlung oder auch eine dauernde Handlung im allgemeinen auszudrücken”. Examples include *i-q'vedr-eb-a* “dauernd Vorwürfe machen”, *i-coxn-eb-a* “ein Tier kät wieder, pflegt wiederzukauen”. Some verbs with these features can even take direct objects: *i-zlev-a* “sb gives sthg”, *v-q'v-eb-i* “ich erzähle etwas”.

Shanidze devotes a section of his monograph on Georgian morphology to what he calls “deponents” (*dep'onensebi*) (1953 §366), defined as verbs which are “passive in form and active in meaning”. He contrasts such pairs as the deponent *i-zlev-a* “sb. gives sthg” and its corresponding active *a-zlev-s* “sb. gives sthg to sb.”, and concludes that the primary function of deponents is the demotion of the object argument from the morphosyntactic structure of the sentence. Shanidze makes the important observation that such verbs are neither new nor limited to colloquial Georgian. Several deponents are attested since the most ancient monuments of the Georgian language, from over 1500 years ago.

The late Bessarion Jorbenadze touched upon deponents, which are formed with the version vowels *i-* and *e-*, in his book on the category of version (1983: 107-9, 136-141; see also Jorbenadze 1975, 1981). In his view, a verb form such as *i-c'er-eb-a* is NEUTRAL with regard to active/passive meaning. The fundamental meaning of *i*-version (“subjective version”) is reflexivity (*uk'ukcevitoba*), which can be reflected by both transitive and intransitive constructions. It is the animacy of the subject which determines whether the verb is to be interpreted as a true passive (*c'erili ic'ereba (viyacis mier)* “a/the letter is being written (by sb)”) or as a deponent (*(viyaca) c'erils ic'ereba* “(sb) is writing letters, a letter”). The large number of deponents among *e*-prefixal passives is likewise attributed by him to the use of this prefix by both transitive and intransitive verbs, although few of the former are attested in Georgian. More recently, Aronson (1989, 1994) has commented on the difficulties posed by deponents for form-based theories of grammatical relations. The dative-case argument of a sentence such as *c'erils ic'ereba* should not be a direct object, since the verb form is intransitive by definition, yet there is nothing in the verb form (such as an objective-version vowel or an object-agreement prefix) which would

enable one to categorize the argument *c'erils* as an indirect object, either.

In this paper I will attempt to expand upon the work of my distinguished predecessors concerning the morphosyntax and semantics of the so-called deponent verbs (henceforth DVs) of Georgian. Another distinguished predecessor — albeit one who is still very much active in the field — is Winfried Boeder, whose important early article on the category of version (1968) informed my thinking about Kartvelian deponents. I hope thereby to honor, in a small way, the great contribution Winfried has made, and continues to make, to the exploration of the fascinating nooks and crannies of Kartvelian grammar.

To begin, let us consider the appropriateness of the term chosen by Shanidze to denote *ipurtxeba* and similar verbs. “Deponent”, of course, has been adopted from the vocabulary of traditional Latin grammar, in which context it is applied to “une catégorie de verbes actifs pour le sens, mais qui paraissent se dépouiller (*deponere*) de la forme active attendue, pour revêtir la forme passive” (Monteil 1970: 261). Latin deponents correspond by and large to the *media tantum* of Greek and Sanscrit, and this lack of opposition to an active verb formed from the same stem is often cited in definitions. P. Flobert, for example, who devoted an important monograph to the Latin deponent, defined it as “formellement un passif sans actif correspondant, qui complète son paradigme par recours à l’actif” (Flobert 1967: xi). (Flobert’s definition takes into account the fact that certain non-finite forms of Latin deponents are constructed like those of active verbs). The above-cited definitions cannot, however, be transferred in their present form to the Georgian verbs Shanidze labels as ‘deponents’. Unlike Latin deponents, most Georgian DVs are contrasted with actives — and often other verbal classes — built from the same root. The traditional characterization of deponents as “passive in form but active in meaning”, which Shanidze adopted for Georgian DVs, is rather vague as it stands. I believe it can be modified to accommodate the Georgian facts by specifying that “active” and “passive” refer to the “deep-case” or “thematic” roles subcategorized by the verb as well as to its morphology. Since it will be important to distinguish between these two levels of analysis in the discussion to follow, I will arbitrarily employ the term DIATHESIS to refer to the deep-case relation of the subject to the thematic frame of the verb, whereas VOICE refers to the morphology. A definition which takes into account the relation between voice and diathesis has the advantage of avoiding impressionistic judgments of whether a given verb, taken in isolation, has “active” meaning or not. (Latin *morior* “I die” is commonly classified as

a deponent, but some might dispute the semantic grounds for qualifying it as such). A true DV, as I define the term for the purposes of this paper, is A PASSIVE-VOICE VERB WHICH MAINTAINS THE SAME DIATHESIS AS THE CORRESPONDING ACTIVE. As a consequence, a Georgian verb can only be labelled as a DV if (i) it has so-called passive morphology; (ii) it is opposed to an active verb from the same stem; and (iii) the grammatical subjects of the passive and active verbs have the same thematic relation (i.e., agenthood) to their respective verbs. The verb *a-zlev-s*, like a not-inconsiderable number of Georgian actives, is in contrast with both DV and non-DV passives. The shift in thematic-role frame accompanying the latter, but not the former, is evident in the following examples:

[ACTIVE] *mdivan-i kal-s pul-s a-zlev-s* [secretary-NOM woman-DAT money-DAT O3-gives-S3sg] “the secretary gives money to the woman”

[DEPONENT PASSIVE] *mdivan-i pul-s i-zlev-a* [secretary-NOM money-DAT gives-S3sg] “the secretary is giving out money”

[NON-DEPONENT PASSIVE] *kal-s pul-i e-zlev-a* [woman-DAT money-NOM O3-is.given-S3sg] “money is given to the woman”

The criteria I adopt in this paper for the Kartvelian DVs would, of course, exclude precisely that type of verb labelled a deponent in Latin. Nonetheless, almost all of the verbs Shanidze lists as deponents would be admitted under my definition. I will begin with an inventory of the verb forms classified by Shanidze and others as DVs, and attempt to find some perspicuous criteria for subgrouping them.

### 1. Deponent verbs in Modern Georgian.

Georgian verbs can be divided into four classes (sometimes called “conjugations”), according to the crosscutting criteria of (1) lexical aspect [atelic vs. telic, or the morphology of the future-tense form, which is strongly correlated with this distinction]; (2) the phenomenon of case-shift. The last-named term refers to the morphosyntactic properties of transitive and many intransitive verbs, which assign ergative case to their subjects in the so-called Series II paradigms (aorist and optative), and dative case in the Series III paradigms (perfect, pluperfect).

**MODERN GEORGIAN VERB CLASSES (CONJUGATIONS):**

	<i>case-shifting</i> [assigns ERG in Series II]	<i>non-case-shifting</i> [cannot assign ERG]
FUTURE = PRESENT	(CLASS 1) <i>v-a-šiv-eb</i>	(CLASS 2) <i>m-šiv-d-eb-a</i>
+ PREVERB:	«I make sb/sthg go hungry»	«I become hungry»
	FUTURE: <i>mo=v-a-šiv-eb</i>	FUTURE <i>mo=m-šiv-d-eb-a</i>
FUTURE STEM ≠	(CLASS 3) <i>v-šimšil-ob</i>	(CLASS 4) <i>m-ši-a</i>
PRESENT STEM:	«I go hungry»	«I am hungry»
	FUTURE: <i>v-i-šimšil-eb</i>	FUTURE: <i>m-e-ši-eb-a</i>

Each of these classes corresponds to a voice category, as defined above (i.e. as a purely formal classification of Georgian verbs): Class 1 represents active voice, Class 2 passive, Class 3 active-atelic (or medioactive), and Class 4 stative (or mediopassive). Class 2, which comprises passive verbs, is divided into three formal subclasses, each of which includes absolute and relative forms. The latter have indirect-object-agreement prefixes, whereas the former do not.

(a) *suffixal passives (doniani vnebiti)*: These verbs form their stems by the addition of the suffix *-d-* (sometimes *-(e)n-* in Old Georgian) to the root. The root may be of nominal, adjectival or verbal origin, and the meaning of the suffixal-passive stem is generally inchoative: “to become X” (*ga=c’itl-d-eb-a* “turns red” < *c’itel-* “red”), “to start X-ing” (*a=myer-d-eb-a* “begins singing” < *myer-* “sing”), etc. The only example given by Shanidze of a suffixal passive with deponent meaning is *da=h-p’ir-d-eb-a* “sb promises sthg to sb”. The corresponding active, *da=i-p’ir-eb-s*, however, has the sense “sb receives a promise from sb” (Tschenkéli: “j-m e. Versprechen abnehmen, j-n dazu bewegen et. zu tun”). While the passive form is indeed rendered by active translation equivalents in western European languages (“j-m et. versprechen”, etc.), it shows the sort of shift of case relations, relative to the active formed from the same root, that is characteristic of the passive voice. In other words, its diathesis is consistent with its voice.

(b) *root passives (unišno vnebiti)*: This is an archaic group of intransitive verbs, the stems of which are not derived from transitive verbs or other parts of speech. Some root passives are characterized by ablaut, which was probably a feature of the entire group in Proto-Kartvelian (Gamq’relidze and Mač’avariani 1965; Tuite 1998b). The only root passive with deponent meaning, again according to Shanidze, is *mo=h-q’v-eb-a* “sb recounts sthg”, relative *mo=u-q’v-eb-a* “sb recounts sthg to sb”. Here again, consideration of the thematic frame of the

corresponding active-voice form (*mo=a-q'ol-eb-s* “j-m et. erzählen l[assen]”) shows that the passive-voice morphology is accompanied by passive diathesis.

(c) *prefixal passives (iniani-eniani vnebiti)*: It appears that the only genuine DVs in Georgian, according to the definition given above, are of the prefixal class. I am stating this here as an empirical observation, but I hope to demonstrate below that restriction of deponents to the prefixal passive subclass is consistent with other properties of these verbs.

To give an overview of the semantic range covered by Georgian DVs, I have divided the 78 i-prefixal DVs listed in the KEGL into three groups by the valence properties of the active verbs from which they are derived. Each group is further segmented by semantic features; I attach no great importance to these features, and no doubt other, equally valid, groupings could be arrived at. (In certain groups, it should be pointed out, are verbs that look very much like DVs in several respects, but for which no active counterpart is known to exist. Such verbs can therefore not be definitively classed as DVs by the criteria I have proposed). Here, then, are my proposed semantic classes of Georgian deponents, with examples of each type:

#### **TYPE I. base trivalent transitive, no relative DV**

The first group comprises verbs of giving and communicating, that is, fundamentally triactantial verbs signifying the transfer of something (object, money, speech) from a sender to a receiver. The DV form, as was illustrated above for the pair *azlevs > izleva*, has the same diathesis as its corresponding active, but with backgrounding of the indirect-object argument. The receiver is not expressed in the case frame of the DV; at the level of discursive interpretation, the receiver is either relatively irrelevant, or in some case assumed to be in the locus of the speaker (*it'q'obineba*, for instance, is glossed “informs someone situated here” [*at'q'obinebs visme, aket mq'ops*]). What appears to be direct-object argument, on the other hand, is frequently expressed. This noun phrase is assigned the dative case, as is normal for the direct object of a transitive verb in the present/future series, e.g. *k'orisp'ondent'i iuc'q'eba raonis axal ambebs* “the correspondent is reporting, reports (regularly) current news from the region”. Although the argument denoting the thing, money or speech conveyed bears the earmarks of a direct object, the formal determination of its status, as noted by Aronson in the papers mentioned above, is problematic, since none of the apparently transitive DVs has Series II or III forms (which would permit one to observe the case shift

diagnostic of a direct object in Georgian). The giving out of money, information or whatever is represented as a recurrent, on-going activity. None of these DVs appears in the perfective-aspect paradigms, i.e. they are what Tschenkéli calls “present-series only” verbs (*nur Präsensreihe*, abbreviated PSO in the lists below). Note that a handful of DVs are built on the causative stem of their active counterpart, although not in any systematic fashion (*i-zlev-a* and *i-zlev-in-eb-a* are synonymous). [TV = transitive verb; RM = relative middle verb].

**(A) GIVING**

*izleva* (PSO) “gives to someone” < TV *azlevs*

*izlevineba* (PSO) = *izleva*

**(B) COMMUNICATION**

*itvlevineba* (PSO) “tells someone (e.g. news)”

*it'q'vis*, *et'q'vis* (PSO) “will express in words [to sb]” In Modern Georgian, these DVs function as the bivalent and trivalent futures of the highly suppletive verbs *ambobs* “says” and *e-ubn-eb-a* “tells”. The latter is also a DV, with the same stem as the now-rare medioactive *ubn-ob-s* “says, speaks”.

**TYPE II. base bivalent transitive, no relative DV**

Type II DVs are almost always intransitive, and based on transitive verbs of eating, gazing and body contact. What these DVs have in common is signification underlining the external contours of the action, as perceived by others or as reflective of the doer's state of mind. Whereas the Class 1 verb *coxn-i-s* “chews” is normally said of ruminant animals, with a direct object describing the grass, cud, etc. being masticated, its DV *i-coxn-eb-a* is intransitive, and tends to be employed when the speaker wishes to emphasize the leisurely, repetitive nature of the chewing (when speaking of an animal), or to express a negative impression of a person making similar mouth movements (e.g. a child chewing gum). A sizeable proportion of the DVs of this and the following class have a distinctly expressive nature, a feature they share with certain types of medioactive (Class 3) verbs (Holisky 1981), but one that is commonly deployed to point out or sanction someone's unseemly, puzzling, irritating or socially inappropriate behavior. For this reason, Type II and III DVs are not infrequently uttered in the 2nd person, either with the negative-imperative particle *nu* “don't” or in the exasperated-question format *ras/rad i-X-eb-i?!* “Why do you [insist on, keep on] X-ing?!”. The cartoon dialogue presented at the beginning of this paper is a case in point. Here are some further examples selected from the KEGL:

*ras irt'q'mevinebi?! "Why do you keep on hitting?!"*  
*šexe, rogor dgas da ič'q'it'eba! "Look how he stands there and gawks!"*  
*k'argia, nu icinglebi! "Enough! Stop blubbering!"*

**(C) EATING**

*iloyneba* (aorist *iloyna*, no present perfect) "eats without pleasure, chews, ruminates" < TV *loynis*  
*isusneba* (PSO) "nibbles, eats a tiny bit (usually in secret)" < TV *susnis*  
*iyeč'eba* (PSO) "chews continually" ["(längere Zeit) kauen", < TV *yeč'avš*

**(D) GAZE**

*ibyvireba* (PSO) "stares angrily, menacingly" < TV *ubyvers*]  
*ixedeba* (PSO) "has his/her eye, gaze fixed (in a certain direction, toward sthg, at sthg); gazes, stares" < TV *xedavš*

**(E) BODY-CENTERED ACTION**

*ibert'q'eba* (PSO) "shakes off sthg (dust, water-drops, etc.) from oneself"  
*ip'udreba* (PSO) "puts powder on one's face" < TV *p'udravš*  
*ipxoreba* (*a-/ga-ipxora, gapxorila*) "[turkey] ruffles its feathers; sb puffs oneself up" < TV *ipxoravš*

**(F) AGGRESSION, CONTACT WITH OTHER'S BODY**

*ik'bineba* (PSO) "bites sb or sthg; has the habit of biting" < RM *hk'bens*  
*ik'ocneba* (PSO) "kisses sb or sthg" < TV *k'ocnis*  
*irt'q'mevineba* (PSO) "hits sb, beats"

**TYPE III. base intransitive or semi-transitive (especially medioactive), includes relative DVs.**

Type III DVs, like the Type II verbs just listed, are formed from verbs denoting behaviors (facial expressions, movements, speech acts) likely to attract attention for their appearance or appropriateness. Unlike Type II verbs, these are based on verbs that are always or usually intransitive; many of them are relative DVs, taking an indirect object denoting the person to whom the behavior in question is directed. The meaning difference between medioactives and the DVs derived from them is not always easy to specify, as I have found when asking native speakers about this matter. In general, the medioactive (e.g. *q'eps* "barks") has a less specific, unmarked meaning, whereas the DV is used to emphasize the duration or habitualness of the activity (*iq'epeba* "barks all the time, has the habit of barking [inappropriately, unnecessarily]"). The comitatives (group J below) are for all intents and purposes homonymous with their Class 3 counterparts, save for the addition of an indirect object — paradoxical as it might seem, here passive morphology



is linked to an INCREASE of valence.

**(G) FACIAL**

iyimeba (PSO) “a smile comes over one, laughs slightly” < RM *hyimis*  
iyimč’eba, eyimč’eba (aorist *daiymič’a*, present-perfect *daymič’ila*) “grimaces,  
twists the face into an expression of displeasure” < TV *ymeč’s* (*p’irisaxes*)

**(H) MOVEMENT, BEHAVIOR**

ip’ranč’eba, ep’ranč’eba (aorist *gaip’ranč’a*, present-perfect *gap’ranč’ebula*)  
“flirts, acts cute, plays the coquette (to excess)” < TV *p’ranč’avs*  
ičxik’neba (PSO) “writes, scribbles in an ugly fashion” < TV *čxik’nis*

**(I) SPEECH-ACT**

ilanzyeba (aorist *ilanzya*, —) “pronounces insulting words; has the habit of  
insulting, cursing” < TV *lanzyavs*  
ixvec’eba, exvec’eba (PSO) “asks for sthg imploringly” < TV *axvec’ebis*

**(J) COMITATIVE RELATIVE DEPONENT VERBS.** This is a large, and in principle open, set of relative (e-prefixal) DVs formed from Class 3 (medioactive) verbs. (According to Jorbenadze’s estimate, such DVs might represent the majority of occurrences of e-prefixal Class 2 verbs in Georgian (1975: 147)). The primary function of these DVs is to add an indirect-object argument denoting someone with/toward/against whom the action denoted by the medioactive is performed (Jorbenadze 1983: 95-6). With the exception of a handful of verbs listed above, comitatives do not have i-prefixal DV counterparts. Here are some representative examples:

<i>Class 3 medioactive verb</i>	<i>Class 2 comitative</i>
v-aršiq’-ob «I flirt, court»	v-e-aršiq’-eb-i «I flirt with sb, court sb»
v-lap’arak’-ob «I speak»	v-e-lap’arak’-eb-i «I speak with sb»
v-čxub-ob «I quarrel»	v-e-čxub-eb-i «I quarrel with sb»

Comitatives have full paradigms, including Series II and III forms, although the latter are commonly “borrowed” from the paradigms of Class 1 verbs (e.g. *v-e-tamaš-eb-i*; AORIST *v-e-tamaš-e*; PRES. PERFECT *m-i-tamaš-n-i-a* (*mastan*)) (Tuite 1996).

As I hope to have demonstrated, Georgians DVs form a coherent set in both formal and semantic terms. Formally, they are morphologically passive (Class 2) verbs with active diathesis. Semantically, they contrast with the Class 1 or Class 3 verbs formed from the same roots in one or more of the following ways:

(i) DVs express repeated, habitual actions, sometimes with the implication that they are characteristic of the subject.

(ii) Many DVs, those of Types II and III, signal a shift of focus from the end-point to the contours of action denoted by the verb (esp. its appearance, impression made on observers).

(iii) Type I and II DVs are generally characterized by valence reduction relative to the corresponding Class 1, although the valency change is not accompanied by diathesis shift, as would be expected with a passive verb. In the case of Type I DVs, it is the INDIRECT object which is backgrounded, whereas the direct object may be expressed as a dative-case NP. Type II DVs are almost always intransitive, with backgrounding of the direct object. In this respect, Modern Georgian morphosyntax shares some features with the “primary-object language” type proposed by Dryer (1986) and Blansitt (1984). Such languages are characterized by morphosyntactic operations which treat notional indirect objects, and the notional direct objects of verbs that lack indirect objects, as a distinct grammatical relation (“primary object”). The primary object relation is accorded a greater morphosyntactic prominence than the “secondary object” relation, by which is meant the notional direct objects of verbs which also have indirect objects. (On the relevance of the primary-vs.-secondary object distinction to Modern Georgian, see Tuite (1998a: 21-22)). In other words, Type I and II Georgian DVs have the profile of a type of antipassive, albeit one that backgrounds the “primary object” rather than the direct object. Those DVs formed from verbs which are already intransitive (Type III DVs), as we have seen, do not reduce the valence, and some — the comitatives — actually increase it.

(iv) DVs as a whole rarely appear in the perfective paradigms. The exceptions cluster in certain semantic subgroups of Type III: comitatives, some speech-act and behavior DVs. There is a strong correlation between relative (e-prefixal) DVs and the availability of perfective verb forms. The comitatives in particular, which function principally as the relative correlates of certain Class 3 verbs, all appear in Series II and III paradigms.

**2. DVs in Old Georgian and in other Kartvelian languages.** DVs are neither a recent innovation of Georgian, nor are they limited to that language. Several DVs are attested in Old Georgian literature, including the very oldest texts (those written in the so-called “xanmet’i” dialect (Sarjveladze 1987; Tuite 1990)). Among them are the very frequently-used pair *x-i-t’q’w-i-s* “sb says sthg” and its relative form *x-e-t’q’w-i-s* “sb

says sthg to sb”. Here are some further instances:

*vitarca x-i-sadil-n-es, xrkwa simon ...* “as they were dining, Simon said ...”  
(Jn 21:15 Xanmet’i Gospels (Kajaia 1984))

*xolo uk’uetu urtertas i-k’bin-eb-od-i-t da še=i-č’am-eb-od-i-t ...* “But if ye bite and devour one another...” (Galatians 5:15)

No investigation has heretofore been made, to my knowledge, of DVs in Zan (Laz-Mingrelian) or Svan, but a cursory examination reveals that the matter merits a closer look. Q’ipshidze (1914/1994: 057) notes in passing that in Mingrelian “sometimes one and the same form may have active and passing meanings”, citing the example *i-b-č’ar-u-ap-u-k*, which, like its Georgian equivalent *v-i-c’er-eb-i*, can mean either “I am written” or “I am writing”. On being presented with Georgian DVs, the handful of native Mingrelian speakers whom I asked readily supplied equivalents for at least some of them. One speaker, who spent much of his childhood in a linguistically conservative, monolingual environment, rejected some of the forms supplied by his wife as artificial morphological calques on the Georgian. Nonetheless, several Mingrelian DVs passed muster:

*i-purt’in-u-ap-u-(n)* “spits” [Geo. *ipurtxeba*]  
*i-gor-ap-u-(n)* “curses, swears” [Geo. *igineba*]  
*i-t’q’ob-in-u-ap-u-(n)* “says, reports” [Geo. *it’q’obineba*]

If DVs seem to be less common in Mingrelian than Georgian, in Svan, by contrast, they appear to have found particularly fertile ground. As in Georgian, many Svan medioactives have e-prefixal DV comitatives, e.g. *x-e-č’wd-ie #l* “asks sb” [Geo. *ek’itxeba*], *x-e-msaxwir* “serves sb” [Geo. *emsaxureba*] (examples from Topuria (1967: 180-181)). DVs also abound in roughly the same semantic fields as in Georgian, e.g. speech acts, physical contact, gaze, etc. Here are a few of the dozens of DVs to be found in Lip’art’eliani’s dictionary of the Cholur subdialect of Svan (1994); I have chosen roots for which both absolute and relative Class 2 entries are given:

*i-nīnāl; x-e-nīnāl* “spreads gossip (about sb)” (< *nin* “tongue”, with the vowel lengthening characteristic of denominal verb roots (Ch’umburidze 1981) + medioactive formant *-āl*)

*i-t’īt’anāl* “has one’s hands all over everything”; *x-e-t’īt’anāl* “tries to grab

(sb, sthg) with one's hands" (< ?*t'wet'* "hand")

*i-č'q'iolāl*; *x-e-č'q'iolāl* "stares (at sb) balefully, with half-closed eyes" < ?  
*č'q'ivār* "cross-eyed or nearly-blind person"

This is clearly a large, and probably open, set of verbs. But the most striking evidence of the success of DVs in Svan is their penetration into the paradigms of active verbs. What is a lexical process elsewhere in Kartvelian has become inflectional in Svan. In the Lower Bal dialect of Svan — a dialect characterized by numerous conservative morphological features — DV verb forms are employed as the imperfective futures of Class 1 verbs. (Svan, unlike Modern Georgian, has distinct perfective and imperfective future-tense paradigms). The Lower Bal imperfective futures are formed by addition of the suffix *-un/wn-* and the series marker *-i*, the same as that used with most types of passive verbs. The version vowels shift to *i-* for absolute and *e-* for relative verbs, as with ordinary prefixal passives (Ch'umburidze 1986: 167; Topuria 1967: 185):

PRESENT *a-č'm-e* "mows (hay)" > IMPERFECTIVE FUTURE *i-č'm-un-i* "will be mowing (hay)"

PRESENT *x-o-č'm-e* "mows (hay) for sb" > IMPERFECTIVE FUTURE *x-e-č'm-un-i* "will be mowing for sb"

In the other Svan dialects, the imperfective futures of Class 1 verbs retain the same version vowels as in the present tense, but the suffixes are essentially the same as in Lower Bal. The Upper Bal equivalents of the absolute and relative imperfective futures shown above would be *a-č'm-un-i* and *x-o-č'm-un-i*, respectively. Other clues in the morphology, however, point to the DV origin of these forms. One, already mentioned, is the series marker *-i*, linked with passive voice (although some Class 1 verbs take it as well). Another is the Svan conditional mood, which, as in Georgian, is formed by adding the imperfect-tense endings to the future stem. In the case of the imperfective conditional, the suffix used is *-ōl/-ol*, which is identical to the passive-imperfect formant. Compare the active imperfective conditional (Upper Bal *a-qn-un-ōl*, Lashx *a-qn- 'n-ōl*, Lent'ex *a-qn-un-ol*, Lower Bal [Becho subdialect] *i-qn-un-ōl* "would be ploughing sthg") to the passive-imperfect (Upper Bal, Lashx *i-qn-ōl-(da)*, Lent'ex *i-qn-ōl-(da)* "sthg was being ploughed"). It is likewise significant that the suffix *-un-* and its variants (*-wn-*, *- 'n-*, *-en-*, *-(i)n-*) are formally homophonous with the causative formant and its allomorphs. The hypothesis which comes most readily to mind links the

causative formant in the DV imperfective future of Svan to that sporadically attested in Georgian DVs (*i-zlev-in-eb-a* “gives”; *i-k’vr-ev-in-eb-a*, *i-rt’q’m-ev-in-eb-a* “hits”). These otherwise unmotivated causative suffixes seem to have been added to the DV’s morphological structure (independently? in Proto-Kartvelian?) to “compensate” for a perceived dissonance between the passive voice and the active diathesis.

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