

On the grammatical functions of inner and outer preverbs in Svan
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The verbal system manifested in the earliest Old Georgian texts — and the system most likely to have existed in the final phase of Proto-Kartvelian — was organized around the aspectual contrast between the perfective Series II verb forms and their imperfective Series I counterparts (Shanidze 1980 §333; Schmidt 1963, 1989). Tense distinctions were less prominent in this system. The present could be expressed by the Series I present indicative or the Series II permansive, or even by a special present-iterative form. The primary means for representing the future tense were the Series II optative and the Series I present subjunctive (often referred to as “conjunctive” [G *k'avširebiti*] II and I in the specialist literature). That is, the primary modal verb forms could express either subjunctive or future-indicative meanings, depending on context. The Series II forms of telic verbs usually had preverbs, but often lacked them. For many verbs, the presence or absence of a preverb did not affect its temporal or aspectual interpretation. In a 12th-c. rendering of Deuteronomy, for example, the phrase “he will never leave you” is translated by a preverb-less optative in Deut 31:6 (*ara g-i-t'e-o-s* [not O2-PRV-leave-SUBJ-S3sg]), and by a preverbed optative two lines later (*ara da-g-i-t'e-o-s* [not PV-O2-PRV-leave-SUBJ-S3sg]; Deut 31: 8).

1. Preverbs, tense and aspect in Georgian, Mingrelian and Laz. From the 9th-century onward a new means of expressing the future indicative of telic verbs appears in Old Georgian texts: the present indicative with an added preverb (Shanidze §335; Ch'umburidze 1986: 54-55). One of the earliest attestations is in the Jruč'i (936) and P'arxali (973) recensions of Mark 14:27:

- (1a) **da-v-s-c-em** mc'q'ems-sa ama-s da sacxoar-i igi
PV-S1-O3-hit-SM shepherd-DAT this-DAT and sheep.herd-NOM the:NOM
mi-mo-da-i-bni-o-s
PV-PV-PV-PRV-scatter-SUBJ-S3sg
“I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep-fold will be scattered”

Other versions, such as Adishi (896) have the optative:

- (1b) **da-v-s-c-e** mc'q'ems-i
PV-S1-O3-hit-SUBJ shepherd-NOM
“I will strike the shepherd”

Note that the new preverbed-present (PV+PRS) form of future in the Jruč'i and P'arxali manuscripts is accompanied by the older optative in the verb *mimodaibnios* “will be scattered here and there”. Over the following centuries, the PV+PRS progressively supplanted the use of modal verbs to express the future indicative, eventually becoming the dominant form for telic transitive and intransitive verbs (Shanidze 1980 §333-341; Ch'umburidze 1986: 54-84).

The rise of the PV+PRS future indicative appears to have been the first step in the restructuring of the Georgian verbal system, to one in which the expression of tense is more prominent. Rather than being a context-dependant interpretation of the optative and subjunctive, the future tense now had its own form for most telic verbs. Meanwhile, the permansive and present-iterative forms fell out of use in written Georgian and most dialects, leaving the present-indicative as the primary form expressing present tense.

Besides marking future tense, preverbs took on a new aspect-marking role, indicating the completion of an action. As a consequence, a new contrast emerged for many telic verbs, between preverbed aorists, which imply that the denoted action reached its anticipated endpoint, and (less-commonly used) preverbless aorists, which signalled that the action ended before attaining completion. Several Georgian

proverbs exploit the contrast between preverbless and preverbed aorists (Shanidze 1980 §331). In the following example, the preverbless aorist cxva indicates a not-yet finished stage in the baking of the loaf, whereas its preverbed counterpart gamo-cxva indicates the completion of the process.

- (2) G obl-is k'ver-i cxv-a-o, cxv-a-o, gvian ga-mo-cxv-a-o,
 orphan-GEN loaf-NOM bake-S3sg.PST-QT late PV-PV-bake-S3sg.PST-QT
 magram k'arg-ad ga-mo-cxv-a-o
 but good-ADVPV-PV-bake-S3sg.PST-QT
 “The orphan’s loaf baked and baked [INCOMPLETE], it baked late, but it baked well [COMPLETE]”

The two new functions of preverbs are illustrated here (on Mingrelian, see Reiseck 2015: 121-122):

Table 1. Preverbs signalling future tense and completion (Georgian and Mingrelian)

	— preverb	+ preverb
present/future	G c'er “is writing” M č'ar-un-s	G da-c'er-s “will write” M do-č'ar-un-s
aorist	G c'er-a “wrote (for a while, then stopped)” M č'ar-u	G da-c'er-a “wrote (and completed) sthg” M do-č'ar-u

Mingrelian. As far as the expression of tense is concerned, the Mingrelian verbal system is structurally quite similar to that of Georgian. Telic verbs form their future-indicative by the addition of a preverb to the present tense, in particular, one of the perfectivizing preverbs še-, do-, o-, ga-/go- (e.g. do-č'ar-un-s “will write” in Table 1 above; Ch'umburidze 1986: 140-3). Stative verbs employ distinct stems preceded by the preradical vowels (PRV) i-/a- (or e-); e.g. rz-u-n “[candle] is lit” [light-STAT-S3sg.PASS] > a-rz-en-u-u [PRV-light-CAUS-SM-STAT] “will be lit” (Ch'umburidze 1986: 139). The future tense of medioactive verbs can be formed either by addition of the PRV i- (jab-en-s “is distressed” > i-jab-en-s “will be distressed”), or the emphatic PV ko-; e.g. pun-s “boils” > ko-pun-s “it will boil”.

On the other hand, Mingrelian has specifically imperfective future forms, for which Modern Georgian has no direct equivalent, but which might continue the older use of modal forms to convey the future tense. The imperfective future consists of the present subjunctive followed by the 3sg future of the copular verb; e.g. č'ar-un-d-a-s iʔuapu [write-SM-IMP-SUBJ-S3sg will.be] “will be writing”; i-ngar-d-a-s iʔuapu [PRV-weep-SM-IMP-SUBJ-S3sg will.be] “will be weeping” (Ch'umburidze 1986: 137; Rostovtsev-Popiel 2020).

Laz. Among the modern Kartvelian languages, the Laz verbal system bears the closest resemblance to that of Old Georgian (Mach'avariani 1974). The primary form of the future indicative is based on the optative, either alone (3a; Chikobava 1936 II #33; Chikobava 1944), or with a suffix (3b; Ch'umburidze 1986: 151-3; Lacroix 2009: 372-6).

- (3a) L para mo-m-č-i do ke-g-i-č'op-a
 money.NOM PV-O1-give-S1/2.PST and PV-O2-PRV-sell-SUBJ
 “Give me the money and I will sell it to you”

- (3b) L žurneč ndga do žurneč seri-s mteli b-i-xoron-a-t-en-ya
 forty day and forty night-DAT complete S1-PRV-dance-SUBJ-PL-AUX-QT
 (They said) “We will dance continually for forty days and forty nights”

The suffix -en in (3b) is derived from the copular verb ren “is” (Lacroix 2009: 372-3). In the Xopur dialect of Laz, the auxiliary verb unon “wants” is added to the optative to form the future, which has been attributed to contact with Pontic Greek (Chikobava 1944; Ch'umburidze 1986: 151-4).

The completive meaning of preverbs is less evident in Laz than in Mingrelian or Modern Georgian. Preverb-less aorists are not uncommon in Laz, and they do not necessarily imply incompleted action. For example, the aorist of the verb -rd- “grow up” is attested in texts both with a PV (*bere d-i-rd-u* [child.NOM PV-PRV-grow.up-S3sg.PST] “the child grew up”), and without a PV (*i-rd-u* [PRV-grow.up-S3sg.PST] “he grew up”), with no aspectual contrast (Mach’avariani 1974: 131).

The Laz tense labelled “présent général” by Lacroix (2009: 342-5) is formed by the addition of one of the four “affirmative” preverbs (ko-, do-, o-, menda-; Lacroix 2009: 433-444) to the present indicative. The Laz general present can refer to future events, but can also denote habitual, regularly repeated actions. When used with future meaning, the general present “indique un événement dont la réalisation n’est pas certaine” (Lacroix 2009: 344), e.g.:

- (4) L b-i-mt’-a-t-ya vana padisai-k do-m-p’-il-om-an-ya
 S1-PRV-flee-SUBJ-PL-QT lest sultan-ERG PV-O1-kill-SM-PL-QT
 “Let us flee, or the sultan will kill us!”

2. Svan outer preverbs. The eight Svan preverbs are conventionally divided into two sets (Deeters 1930: 15-24; Harris 2003). The preverbs, and the terms used by certain authors to designate them, are shown in the following table:

Table 2. Svan outer and inner preverbs

	Outer Preverbs (OPV)	Inner Preverbs (IPV)
	<i>sga-</i> ‘in’, <i>ka-</i> ‘out’, <i>ži-</i> ‘up’, <i>ču-</i> ‘down’	<i>an-</i> , <i>ad-/a-</i> , <i>es-/as-</i> , <i>la-</i>
Deeters 1930	<i>adverbiale Präverbien</i>	<i>Richtungspräfixe</i>
Ch’umburidze 1986	<i>meoradi zmnisc’inebi</i>	<i>dziritadi zmnisc’inebi</i>
Margiani-Subari 2012	<i>c’indebul-tandebulebi</i>	<i>dziritadi p’reverbebi</i>

The four outer preverbs (OPV) have, as their primary meanings, movement with respect to an external landmark (up/down, in/out). Three of the four have cognates elsewhere in Kartvelian, although the Georgian and Laz-Mingrelian cognates of Svan OPVs function as adverbs, rather than preverbs, in those languages.

Table 3. Proto-Kartvelian and Georgian-Zan preverbs

Proto-form	Georgian	Mingrelian	Laz	Svan OPVs
GZ *ay- ‘up(wards)’	a(γ)-	o-	o-	—
GZ *da- ‘down(wards)’	da-	do-	do-	—
GZ c’ar- ‘down, away, off’	c’ar- “away”	c’o- “below”	c’o-	—
GZ *še- ‘into’	še-	ša-	ša-, šk’a-	—
GZ *ga(n)- ‘out(wards)’	ga(n)-	go-	go-	—
PK *že ‘up(wards), upon’	ze [adverb]	ži(n) [adverb]	ži(n) [adverb]	ži-
PK *kve ‘below, down’	kve [adverb]	ko-	ko-	ču-
PK *šowa ‘(in the) middle’	šua [adverb] ‘between’			(i)sga- ‘in’
GZ *mi- ‘away from the speaker’	mi-	mi-, me-	me-	—
GZ *mo- ‘toward the speaker’	mo-	mo-	mo-	—

Like the preverbs of Old Georgian (Schmidt 1969; Cherchi 1994), the Svan OPVs can be separated from the verb proper by one or more intervening clitics, as in (6), and the OPV can even be moved to a position after the verb (Boeder 2008).

- (5) *ž<i> eser h<e> ār moš ānbūcix {an-i-būc-i-x}*
 OPV QT if someone:NOM at.all IPV-V-stretch-FUT-PL
 (he said) “if anyone (of you) somehow will stretch it” (UB #120)

The two sets of Svan preverbs participate in the tense and aspect system, but their functions are quite distinct. The four OPVs behave rather like the preverbs of Old Georgian, to the extent that they primarily indicate direction, or are lexically specified by the verb stem. OPVs occur frequently, but not obligatorily, with Series II verbs. In the following two sentences, the presence of the OPV *ču-* in one of the two verbs meaning “he died” has no implications for the tense (past indicative) or aspect (punctiliar, completive).

- (6a) S *al kweq'n-i xelc'ip čw-a-dgan*
 this land-GEN ruler:NOM OPV-IPV-die:AOR
 “The ruler of this country died”
- (6b) S *mare eĵ c'ām-ži a-dgan*
 man:NOM that moment-at IPV-die:AOR
 “At that moment, the man died”

On the other hand, OPVs can indicate tense when added to the present indicative; that is, Svan also has a PV+PRS future tense, comparable to those of Georgian and Mingrelian (Ch'umburidze 1986: 185). The future formed this way is characterized by Margiani-Subari (2012: 118-126) as the “categorical future”, which implies a degree of certainty on the part of the speaker:

- (7) S *eĵis aywe ka x-a-sačkwärn-e ečka ka lok pišt'w-e*
 that:DAT if OPV O3-V-gift-SM then OPV QT release-SM
 “If you give me that as a gift, I will release you”

The grammatical functions of Svan OPVs are summarized in the following table, and compared to Georgian, Laz and Mingrelian preverbs:

Table 4. Grammatical functions of Svan OPVs compared to Georgian, Laz and Mingrelian preverbs

	Svan OPV	Old Georgian	Laz	Modern Geo	Mingrelian
morpho- phonology	clitic	clitic	prefix	prefix	prefix
association with Series II	frequent, not obligatory	frequent, not obligatory	PV-less aorists frequent	completed aspect	completed aspect
association with future tense	OPV+PRES = categorical future	i. OPT = future ii. emerging PV+PRES = FUT	i. OPT = future ii. PV+PRES = <i>présent général</i>	PV + PRES = FUT	PV + PRES = FUT

2. Svan inner preverbs. The four Svan IPVs have no known cognates in the other Kartvelian languages. Their semantic characteristics are less easily described than those of the OPVs. With verbs of motion, the IPV *an-* indicates movement toward the speaker. In that role it contrasts with *a(d)-*, which can denote movement away from the speaker, although for most verbs its function is purely aspectual. The IPV *es-* is commonly selected by verbs denoting action directed toward a goal or surface (often, but not always, accompanied by the superessive version, e.g. *žesučxe* {*ži-es-x-a-učx-e*} “it rained on sb/sthg” vs. *la-i-učx-e* “it rained”). The IPV *la-* shows an affinity for verbs in the subjective or objective version, and verbs

of communication (that is, verbs denoting activities oriented toward a human participant; e.g. **la-i-b-e** “tied for oneself, tied one’s X” vs. **ad-b-e** “tied”). On the whole, the spatial or metaphorical directionality of the IPVs is anchored by the participants in the speech act (especially the speaker), or the principal arguments (subject, indirect object) of the utterance.

The four Svan IPVs, unlike the OPVs, are closely aligned with the Series II verb stems. With the exception of verbs with distinct roots for Series I and II (e.g. PRS **x-a-t’q’c-i** “strikes” [Series I]; AOR **x-ä-qd-e** “struck” [Series II]), all verbs have an IPV in their Series II forms, as in the verbs in (6 a,b) above. This correlation implies that Svan IPVs have become grammaticalized as markers of perfective aspect. IPV-less aorists, with the exception of the suppletive verbs just mentioned, no longer occur in Svan, but a handful of such forms attested in oral poetry indicate that they disappeared from use fairly recently (Margiani-Subari 2012: 60-2).

(8) S ešxwi pitil mad j-i-k’war-e
 one morsel not O2-PRV-throw-AOR
 “He did not throw a single morsel to you” (SMOMPK XXXI: 34)

Margiani-Subari (2012) has identified an interesting correlation of the Svan IPVs with the category of status. For several verb paradigms — the future, conditional and perfect — the addition of an IPV signals that speaker is relying on secondhand information, or inference, or is less confident that the outcome will come about. Contrasting with the “categorical future” mentioned above, which is formed by addition of an OPV to the present, is the form Margiani-Subari labels “inferential future”, which signals doubt or supposition on the part of the speaker. It is formed by addition of an IPV (whether or not an OPV is also present), and usually a suffix (Margiani-Subari 2012: 122):

(9a) S bāzi gim-s čw-ä-k’wrem-i i kartebil ču-i-dwäš-i
 tonight earth-DAT OPV-PRV-freeze-SM and potato:NOM OPV-PRV-ruin-SM
 “Tonight the ground will freeze (CATEG. FUTURE) and the potatoes will be ruined”

(9b) S bāzi gim-s čw-ad-(a)-k’werm-**isg** kartebil ču-i-dwäš-i
 tonight earth-DAT OPV-IPV-PRV-freeze-FUT potato:NOM OPV-PRV-ruin-SM
 “Tonight should the ground freeze (INFER. FUTURE), the potatoes will be ruined”

The suffixes added to the IPV-prefixed future forms of most Svan verbs (-isg/-i, -ine) are of uncertain origin (Topuria 1967: 115-125). One possibility is that they might have once had modal meaning. If this were the case, the Svan “inferential future” would parallel the modal futures of Old Georgian and Laz.

In addition, Svan, like Mingrelian, has specifically imperfective future verb forms (Topuria 1967: 112-115; Ch’umburidze 1986: 161-184). These are the primary means of indicating future tense for atelic verbs, but imperfective futures can also be derived from telic verbs. Atelic verbs form their imperfective futures by the addition of the PRVs i- or e- (the latter if an indirect object is present) and the suffix -i, sometimes preceded by what appears to be the causative formant -in- or -un-, e.g.

(10) S mi isgwa-zum jar yal m-e-lt’-i?
 I you.sg-much who.NOM EMPH O1-PRV-love-FUT
 “How will I love someone as much as you?” (cf. PRS m-a-lät’ “I love him”)

In the Lower Bal dialect, the imperfective futures of telic transitive verbs are formed in the same way, e.g. **a-qn-i** [PRV-plow-SM] “plows” > **i-qn-un-i** [PRV-plow-CAUS?-SM] “will be plowing”; **x-o-qn-i** [O3-PRV-plow-SM] “plows for sb” > **x-e-qn-un-i** [O3-PRV-plow-CAUS?-SM] “will be plowing for sb” (Topuria 1967: 113). Formally, these are passive verbs; that is, the imperfective future of a telic transitive

verb is a type of deponent (Tuite 2002). In other dialects, the imperfective futures of transitives have the same PRVs as their base forms: a-qn-un-i, x-o-qn-un-i. Alongside these forms are optatives and subjunctives occasionally employed as the (imperfective) futures of stative verbs, e.g.

(11) S šomwāj rok w es-c'əx-ən-es mica ši, kā-w x-ā-bžin-e
 when QT IPV-need-IMP-SUBJ his hand:NOM OPV-OPT O3-PRV-inform-AOR
 (He said) “When you will need his (i.e. my) hand, let me know”.

4. Conclusion. The morphology of the future indicative tense in the Kartvelian languages is summarized in Table 5 (primary forms are marked in boldface). In Old Georgian, and probably Proto-Kartvelian as well, the verb system was organized around the aspectual contrast between perfective (Series II) and imperfective (Series I). In this system, modal verb forms could also have future-indicative meaning. As for the preverbed present-indicative form (PV+PRS), in view of its early appearance in Old Georgian texts, and its presence in all modern Kartvelian languages, it is likely to have been at least an optional means of expressing future tense in late Proto-Kartvelian.

Table 5. Morphology of the future indicative tense in the Kartvelian languages

Expression of future indicative	Modal (optative, subjunctive)	Preverbed present (telic verbs)	New atelic or imperfective future-tense forms
Old Georgian	FUT=MOD	emerging PV+PRS	
Modern Georgian	—	PV+PRS	FUT in i-/e- for atelic verbs
Mingrelian	imperfective future = present subjunctive + AUX	PV+PRS	FUT in i-/e- (a-) for atelic verbs
Laz	FUT=MOD(+AUX)	PV+PRS = “présent général”, including FUT meaning	
Svan	1. IPV+PRS+(modal?) suffix for telic & medioactive verbs 2. alternative FUT for atelic verbs (= subjunctive)	OPV+PRS = “categorical future”	Imperfective future in i-/e-√-(un)-i (telic and atelic verbs)

The separability of Svan OPVs and Old Georgian PVs from the rest of the verb indicates that one group of Proto-Kartvelian PVs occupied a position to the left of a clitic chain preceding the person prefixes of the verb. The close morphophonological integration of Svan IPVs with the prefixal components of the verb, as well as their lack of obvious cognates elsewhere in Kartvelian, implies that they originated as a distinct type of morpheme placed closer to the verb. The placement of the Proto-Kartvelian preverbs would have been approximately as shown below. Located to the far left are directional preverbs comparable to (and in some cases, ancestral to) the PVs of Georgian, Mingrelian and Laz, as well as the OPVs of Svan. The IPVs of Svan would go back to a class of prefixes, probably of deictic meaning, situated directly to the left of the person prefixes:

(12) **OPV**-...(clitics)...**IPV**-[S/O-PRV-√-(suffixes)]

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