

## Svan and its speakers.

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[NB: This sketch dates from 1995. Since that time I have published a longer, and somewhat revised version (*Svan*. Lincom Europa, München [*Languages of the World / Materials*, vol. 139]; 1997). Even the latter sketch needs to be updated in the light of data gathered during subsequent fieldwork in Georgia, recent publications on Svan linguistics, and the evolution of my thoughts on the (pre-)history of Kartvelian grammatical categories. — KT, September 2003]

### 1. Sociolinguistic Situation.

1.1. Area of distribution and number of speakers. Svan speakers refer to themselves as šwan-är and to their language as lušnu nin, but at the same time consider themselves part of the Georgian ethnic group. The speech community numbers around 35,000 to 40,000. Most Svans live in their traditional homeland, along the upper reaches of the Enguri River (“Upper Svaneti”) and the Cxenis-c’q’ali River (“Lower Svaneti”). In the 19th century some Upper Svan families established settlements along the Nensk’ra and upper K’odori River, and in recent years many families have been resettled in eastern Georgia [Tuite 1994b].

### 1.2. Dialects. Most linguists distinguish four dialects:

(1) *Upper Bal* [Geo. balszemouri, i.e. upriver from Mt. Bal], spoken in seven communities along the upper Enguri and its adjoining rivers.

(2) *Lower Bal* [Geo. balskvemouri], spoken along the Ingur valley from Xaishi to Becho, and in more recently-established communities in the Nensk’ra valley.

(3) *Lent’ex*, spoken along the Cxenis-c’q’ali valley from Rcxmeluri to the Cholur community (where a variety of Svan sharing many features with Lashx is spoken), and in the villages located in the Xeledur valley.

(4) *Lashx*, in the Cxenis-c’q’ali valley upriver from the Lent’ex area.

1.3. Vocabulary. The percentage of Svan vocabulary cognate with the other Kartvelian languages is quite low. According to Klimov [1969: 40], Svan shares 360 lexemes with Georgian and 340 with Zan, while the latter two languages share 825. Svan has a reputation for being archaic, harsh-sounding, and impossible for non-Svans to acquire. To give an idea of just how impenetrable Svan sounds to other Georgians, here are four lines from a traditional poem, along with the editors’ Georgian translation, from the collection Shanidze/Topuria/Gujejiani [1939: 54, lines 45-48]:

*Svan text*

cxemäd miča ži xok’ida  
liz-ličedi č’ur xobina.  
mešjäl mare mäg wešgd laxcwir,  
sgwebin otčäš, txum, esogän.

*Georgian translation*

tavisi mšvild-isari auyia,  
svla-c’asvla dauc’q’ia.  
meomari k’aci q’vela uk’an dast’ova,  
c’in gausc’ro, tavši moekca.

*Gloss of Svan text*

[bow.and.arrow:NOM his up he.has.taken  
go-leave indeed he.has.begun  
fighter man:NOM all:NOM behind he.left  
before he.managed, head:DAT, he.stood.to.them]

*Free translation*

‘He has taken up his bow and arrow,  
He has set out.  
He left all the warriors behind,  
He took the lead, he stood at their head.’

The vocabulary bears the traces of longstanding contacts with neighbors across the Caucasus, in particular speakers of Northwest Caucasian languages. Among the more plausible lexical parallels are a handful of terms pertaining to agriculture, which appear to be early borrowings into Svan from Circassian: zəntx ‘oats’, cp. Kabardian zantx ‘oats’; gwiz ‘special-quality wheat or millet flour used for baking ritual bread on feast-days’, cp. Kabardian g<sup>o</sup>aʒ ‘wheat’. A handful of lexemes may have been borrowed from Northeast Caucasian, especially Chechen-Ingush: däl (name of the goddess of game animals and the hunt), cp. Ingush däla ‘god’; dam ‘wheat flour’, cp. Chechen dama ‘flour’ [Fähnrich 1988].

1.4. Viability. Up to the 19th century, many Svans were monolingual, although the local nobility, those living near other speech communities, and men engaged in commerce or working as migrant laborers would know Georgian, Mingrelian or Balkarian. Almost all adult speakers of Svan can now read and write Georgian, and many, especially those who received a higher education or who did military service during the Soviet period, have a good knowledge of Russian. In recent times one notices signs of decreasing use of Svan by children in favor of Georgian, especially in the larger villages and in families living outside of Svaneti.

1.5. Literary status; alphabets used. Svan is not a written language. Most examples of written Svan are contained in linguistic and ethnographic textual collections, that is, they are examples of oral literature reduced to writing by specialists. Some early examples employ a modified Cyrillic script similar to the Abkhaz alphabet; more recent texts are written in Georgian characters, usually with diacritics to represent long and umlauted vowels.

2. Phonology.

2.1. Consonants and vowels. The inventory of consonant phonemes is essentially the same as that of Classical Georgian (i.e. all of the consonants of Modern Georgian plus /y/ and /q/). Svan

lacks /v/ as a distinct phoneme, but it has /w/. Zhghent'i [1949: 141-148] reports having detected a distinct voiced uvular phoneme /G/, in a couple of dozen lexemes (many of them expressive); e.g. Geh (name of edible alpine plant), čGwläp' ‘sound of someone walking in slush’. None of the speakers I consulted produced such a consonant.

The vowel inventories of the Svan dialects differ from each other and from Georgian.

Phonemically long vowels occur in the Upper Bal and Lashx dialects, although the number of minimal pairs distinguished by length is not large (ma:re ‘man’ vs. mare ‘but’, and some verb forms: lä-x-q'ah-ä:n [PV-O3-kiss-Pass.AOR.S1/2sg] ‘you:sg kissed sb’ vs. lä-x-q'ah-ä:ñ [PV-O3-kiss-Pass.AOR.S3/pl] ‘sb kissed sb’). The Lent’ex and Lower Bal dialects no longer have long vowels, although evidence from morphophonemics attests to their existence in Proto-Svan. Other vowel phonemes occurring in Svan but not Georgian are the back unrounded mid-high vowel /ə/ (usually transcribed as a schwa, but sounding more like [w] or [y]), the low front /ä/, and the front rounded vowels /ö/ and /ü/. These latter are often realized as the diphthongs /we/ and /wi/, respectively. Upper Bal has the full set of nine vowels: /a, e, i, o, u, ə, ä, ö, ü/, as well as their long correlates, for a total of 18 phonemes; Lower Bal and Lent’ex have the same nine vowels without a length distinction; and Lashx has the first six — all but the umlauts — both short and long, for a total of twelve.

2.2. Phonotactics. Svan imposes far stricter limitations on the combinations of consonants allowed word-initially than does Georgian [Zhghent'i 1949: 189-194]. In essence, these are limited to clusters phonotactically functioning as single consonants (i.e. harmonic clusters, e.g. txe:re ‘wolf’, č'q'int' ‘boy’; clusters of consonant + /w/), or historically derived from them (šdugw ‘mouse’ < Pr-Krtv \*tagw-). Other initial clusters, whatever their source, are broken up by epenthetic (k'aravät' < Russ. krovat' ‘bed’), or prosthetic vowels (aq'ba ‘cheek, jaw’, cp. Geo q'ba). The 1st-exclusive and 2nd person subject prefixes xw- and x- are deleted before initial consonants, with metathesis of the /w/ ({xw-t'ix-e} > t'wixe ‘I return it’; cp. {xw-i-t'ix-e} > xwit'xe ‘I return it for myself’), and an epenthetic schwa is interposed after other person markers ({m-t'ix-e} > mət'xe ‘sb returns me’).

Conversely, Svan tolerates daunting final clusters, of a sort never seen in Georgian: axeqwsg ‘you stole up on sb’, xosgwž ‘I ordered sb’. Zhghent'i [loc. cit.] attributes this to a specifically Svan tendency toward weakening and loss of vowels in word-final syllables.

### 2.3. Prosodic features.

2.3.1. Vowel length. While distinctly long vowels can be confidently reconstructed for Proto-Svan, it is not at all clear whether they in turn reflect a quantitative opposition in Proto-Kartvelian [Gamq'relidze/Mach'avariani 1965]. Many long vowels represent innovations, due to: (a) contraction of two adjacent vowels in underlying structure; (b) compensatory lengthening (e.g. PKrt \*č'am- ‘eat’ > Geo. -č'am, Sv. -e:m- [Klimov 1964: 22]); (c) phonological context, especially a

following sonant. Short vowels in nominal stems occasionally lengthen when the same stem is used to form a verb (čxət' ‘pebble’ > li-čxə:t'-al ‘children’s game played with pebbles’ [Ch’umburidze 1981]), which may have something to do with accentuation. A large number of suffixes contain long vowels, e.g. the diminutives -i:l and -o:l, the verbal pluralizers -ä:l/-i-e:l, etc. At the same time, many stems with length in both Upper Bal and Lashx resist any such explanation: mu:kw ‘smile’, le:t ‘night’. There is no limit on the number of long vowels per word, e.g.: kä:di:ya:lä:n {ka-ad-i-iy-a:l-a:n} [PV-PV-Sub.V-undress-VPL-Pass.AOR.S3/pl] ‘sb got undressed’ [Shanidze/Topuria 1939: 204].

2.3.2. Accent. Svan morphophonemics bespeak the presence, at some stage of the language’s history, of a strong, mobile accent. The patterns of reduction and vowel quantity in the aorist stems of athematic verbs, for example, reflect a shift of the accent from the root to the prefix. The effect is especially pronounced in the Upper Bal dialect (accentuated syllables in bold-face):

(i) ablauting verbs: vowel-lengthening in preverb la- and deletion of stem vowel in S1/2sg.  
S2sg: {'**la**-x-e-t' ex} > la:xet’x ‘you came back for sb/sthg’  
S3sg: {la-x-e-'**t'äx**} > läxt’äx

(ii) non-ablauting athematic verbs with long root vowels: shortening of root vowel in S1/2sg.  
S2sg: {'**la**-x-o-t'u:l} > loxt’ul ‘you called to sb’  
S3sg: {la-x-o-'**t'u:l-e**} > loxt’ü:l

2.4. Morphophonemics. At first glance, Svan seems rather like an agglutinative language that had been left out in the sun too long: the individual morphemes, so easy to segment out in Georgian, here seem to have fused inextricably together, or been bleached away without a trace. A closer look, and a measure of time and patience, will show that much of the surface confusion is due to the combined agency of a handful of morphophonemic and phonotactic principles.

2.4.1. Reduction. In all dialects save Lent’ex, every even-numbered vowel (except the final one) of a word is liable to syncope or reduction [Nik’olaishvili 1984].

(a) /o/ and /u/ reduce to /w/; /i/ and /e/ undergo complete syncopation, but can cause umlaut of the preceding vowel (see below); /a/, /ä/ and /ə/ disappear without a trace ({näboz-äš} > näbwäzäš ‘evening-GEN’; {x-a-c’ed-un-i-da} > xäc’dündä ‘sb longed to see sb/sth’).

(b) Should reduction occur in the context /CVSC/ [S = sonant], a schwa is inserted ({lə-pindix} > ləpəndix ‘having bullets’).

(c) Long vowels do not undergo reduction. In Lower Bal, which lacks phonemic length, those vowels which correspond to long vowels in Upper Bal and Lashx are likewise immune to reduction

(Cp. {a-k’ar-e} > UB/LB ak’re ‘sb opens sthg’ vs. {a-ma:r-e} > UB ama:re, LB amare ‘sb prepares sthg’). This indicates that Lower Bal too once had long vowels.

In Lent’ex, the vowels /i/ and /u/ can undergo reduction, but only in the penultimate syllable: {a-qän-in-e} > Lshx a-qän-n-e, UB/LB a-qn-in-e ‘sb will be ploughing’ [Ch’umburidze 1953]; {x-a-j-esk’-un-e} > Lshx xäjesk’wne, cp. UB xäjä:sgune ‘sb will make sb take sthg away’ [Topuria 1967: 234].

2.4.2. Assimilation. Svan has two types of assimilation referred to as “umlaut” in the literature: (a) fronting of /a/, /o/, /u/ and /ə/ under the influence of an /i/ or /e/ in the following syllable (palatal umlaut); (b) lowering of /i/ and /e/ to /ä/ or /a/ by assimilation to a following /a/ or /w/ (nonpalatal umlaut [Kaldani 1969]). Palatal umlaut has left its traces in all four dialects, with Lashx being less affected than the others. The palatal umlaut rules boil down to the following hierarchies, with different subdialects observing different cut-off points, at different historical stages (>> = ‘more than’):

- (i) Susceptibility to umlaut: /a/ >> /o/ >> /u/; short vowels >> long; root vowels >> affixal.
- (ii) Likelihood to trigger umlaut: /i/ >> /e/ >> /ä/; reduced vowel >> unreduced; short vowel >> long; underlying /i/, /e/ >> /i/, /e/ as output from umlaut or ablaut (e.g. /i/ from /ü/ > /wi/).

The effects of both types of umlaut can be illustrated by comparing loanwords from Georgian to their source: (a) göč’/gweč’ < Geo. goč’i ‘suckling pig’; (b) UB satätwr, LB satetwr < Geo. satitür- ‘thimble’.

2.4.3. Metathesis. Another feature that spreads is labialization, as when a 1st-person subject marker appears directly before the root. In some instances the metathesized labial feature attaches to the root-initial consonant, in other cases the vowel is rounded: e.g. UB {xw-re:ka} > rwe:ka, rö:ka; cp. Lashx lo:kwar ‘I said’; in the Laxamulan variety of Lower Bal, the /w/ migrates all the way to the **second** consonant of the root: {xw-rekar} > rekwar ‘I said’. The direction of spread also varies: {a-xw-t’əx} > UB/LB/Lshx ot’əx, Lntx at’ux ‘I returned it’.

Both metathesis and umlaut play a part in the complex transformations undergone by the preradical segments in the verbal complex. The output varies considerably from one area to another, notably in Lent’ex: e.g. {ad-xw-a-kač-en} > Lshx. ot-kačen, Lntx atwa-kačen ‘I had been cut for sb’ [Topuria 1967: 175].

2.4.4. Dissimilation. Suffixes containing /r/ are prone to dissimilation to /l/ if the root already contains an /r/. Dissimilation is especially common in Lower Svan, whereas in Upper Svan words with /r/’s in successive syllables are tolerated; cp. {pur-är} > UB purär, Lntx puräl ‘cows’ [Zhghent’i 1949: 164].

2.4.5. Ablaut. Ablaut is restricted to one class of Svan verbs, which account for roughly 15% of the verb stems listed in Gudgedjiani & Palmaitis [1985]. They show the following vocalic alternations:

- (i) transitive present stem: UB dig-e, Lshx dəg-e ‘sb extinguishes sthg’
- (ii) dynamic intransitive present stem: deg-en-i ‘sthg [fire, candle] goes out, burns out’
- (iii) passive intransitive present stem: i-di:g-i ‘sthg is extinguished (by sb)’
- (iv) transitive S1/2sg aorist stem: a-xw-dəg ‘I extinguished sthg’
- (v) transitive S3/pl aorist stem: a-dig ‘sb extinguished sthg’
- (vi) intransitive S1/2sg aorist stem: a-xw-deg ‘I burnt out’
- (vii) intransitive S3/pl aorist stem: UB däg, Lshx dag ‘sthg went out, burnt out’

Note that in the aorist (also the imperfect), verbs employ distinct stems for the 1st and 2nd person singular subject (S1/2sg stem) vs. the 3rd singular and all plural forms (S3/pl). This is an important difference from the pattern observed in Georgian ablauting verbs, where the 1st and 2nd person forms in both numbers have a different stem from the 3rd person singular and plural (see the paradigms in 2.3.2 above).

The lengthened-grade passive stem (iii), i-di:g-i ‘sthg is extinguished (**by sb**)’, is semantically distinct from the dynamic intransitive stem, in that it implies an underlying agent. The same stem is employed to form the Series III screeves (see below) of the transitive verb, e.g. č'q'int'-s lemesg x-o-di:g-a [boy-DAT fire:NOM O3-Obj.V-extinguish-PERF] ‘the boy has put out the fire’. As in Georgian, transitive verbs undergo inversion in Series III, with the agent NP in the surface grammatical role of indirect object. The fundamental sense of the i:-grade might be something like “underlying transitive transformed into surface intransitive” (note that i:-grade also occurs in the past and negative participles of ablauting verbs [3.2.10]).

### 3. Inflectional morphology.

3.1. Substantives. Svan substantives are inflected for case and number. The degree of allomorphy is far greater than in Georgian or Zan [Oniani 1989].

3.1.1. Nouns. Palmaitis & Gudjedjiani [1986] distinguish eight declension classes, of which shown below:

Some Svan declension classes

I	III	V
<i>NOM</i> ala ‘this’	ma:re < *ma:ra-i	txwim < *txum-i ‘head’
<i>DAT</i> am-i-s, ala-s, am-ən	ma:r-a ‘man’	txum < *txum-w
<i>INST</i> am-n-oš < *am-na-wš	ma:r-oš < *ma:ra-wš	txum-šw
<i>ADV</i> am-n-är-d	ma:r-a-d	txum-d
<i>ERG</i> am-n-e:m-[d]	ma:r-e:m	txum-em
<i>GEN</i> am-n-e:m-iš, am-ša, am-iš	ma:r-e:m-iš	txum-em, txum-m-eš

	VII	VIII [all plurals]
<i>NOM</i>	kor ‘house’ < *kora	txum-är ‘heads’
<i>DAT</i>	kor-[a]-s	txum-är-s
<i>INST</i>	kor-šw	txum-är-šw
<i>ADV</i>	kor-[a]-d	txum-är-d
<i>ERG</i>	kor-[a]-d	txum-är-d
<i>GEN</i>	kor-äš < *kora-iš	txum-r-eš

Comments concerning some of the cases:

(a) Nominative. In declensions III-V a now-lost vocalic suffix fronted the final stem vowel of the NOM. The vowel /i/, corresponding to the Georgian NOM suffix, would be a perfect candidate; however, some linguists argue that it may have been \*-e, on the basis of what appears to be an -e NOM occurring sporadically in poetry, especially in the plural: top-ar-e [rifle-PL-NOM?] (mod. Sv. top-är) [Chant'ladze 1973].

In those nouns with the same stem in all cases (e.g. declensions VII and VIII), we have to do with either (i) generalization of the NOM stem to the oblique cases; (ii) originally vowel-final stems, as shown by genitives in -äš (< \*a-iš) or -eš; or (iii) proper names, which, as in Old Georgian, once employed the bare stem in nominative and ergative contexts [Ch'umburidze 1964].

(b) Dative. In several declensions the suffix marking the DAT appears in the other oblique cases as well, forming a secondary stem to which the case suffixes are added. The Svan DAT suffixes are of different origins, though not all scholars are agreed on what these were [Oniani 1989: 164-180]. The DAT in -am, as well as the secondary stem formants -am/-em-, derives from a postposed demonstrative with the function of a definite article, as in Old Georgian (ma:re:miš ‘man:GEN’ < \*mara-jš am-iš [man-GEN this-GEN] ‘the man’s’ [Mach'avarani 1960]). In recent decades DAT allomorphy is giving way to the suffix -s.

Svan datives can also be used as locatives. In some dialects, and especially in the archaic language of poetry, toponyms and other nouns typically used to denote location are declined in the dative or adverbial case, as in Old Georgian (zagar-w ži x-o-qid-a-x [mountain.ridge-DAT up O3-ObV-bring-PERF-O3pl] ‘they have brought him up to the mountain ridge’), or even left unmarked (č'umber-Ø xwizge [Ch. live:PRS:S1sg] ‘I live in (the village) Ch'umber’) [Chant'ladze 1971, 1974].

(c) Ergative. The Svan ergative is assigned by the Series II screeves of Class A verbs to their morphological subjects (see below). Since not all of these verbs are transitive, the ergative can be assigned to the single argument of an intransitive verb. As in Georgian, these verbs are aspectually atelic activity verbs, e.g. LB ežnem äd-(i)-p'or-al-e [that:ERG PV-SbV-fly-VPL-AOR] ‘it [bird] flew’.

(d) Genitive. The genitive suffix can be shortened when it directly precedes the modified noun, e.g. Lntx xäm-i[š] leyw-i[š] liesk' [pig-GEN meat-GEN taking] ‘taking pig meat’ (Shanidze et al. 1978: 290, #305).

(e) Pluralizers. None of the Svan pluralizers are obviously cognate with the Georgian and Zan plural formants. The most frequent is -är and its variants -äl, -ä:r, -ä:l, -i:r, etc. [Oniani 1989: 224-5]. Kinterms are pluralized with a circumflex la- -a: lä-dj-a {la-di-a} ‘mothers’ < di ‘mother’. Other special plural forms include (i) agentive participles in me/mə- and nouns derived with -a:r (plural in -u, e.g. zisq'a:r-u ‘flea-infested ones’ < zisq'-a:r [flea-characterized.by] ‘flea-infested’); (ii) nouns of professions in mə- (plural in -a, e.g. məgm-a ‘builders’ < mə-gem [agent-build] ‘builder’; (iii) old family and clan names (plural in -a or -e:r, e.g. set'el-š-e:r, set'el-š-a [S.-GEN-PL] ‘the members of the Set’el clan’); (iv) the collective plural in -ra of plant and tree names (icx-ra [pear-collective] ‘pears’) [Kaldani 1974].

3.1.2. Adjectives. Adjectives in attributive position show limited agreement with the noun they modify, distinguishing at most a NOM and an oblique form (luwzera ma:re:mi našdabw [diligent:OBL man-GEN work] ‘the work of a diligent man’; cp. luwzere ma:re [diligent:NOM man:NOM] ‘a/the diligent man’); when used as NP heads they decline as nouns [Palmaitis/Gudjedjiani 1986: 43].

The comparative degree of certain adjectives is formed synthetically, by addition of the circumflex x-o- -a, e.g. c'ərni ‘red’ > xo-c'ran-a ‘redder’. Superlatives employ the circumfix ma-[e:n]-e, e.g. ma-c'ran-e ‘reddest’ [Topuria 1985: 113, 117].

3.1.3. Pronouns. The 1st and 2nd person pronouns do not decline; the basic stem is used in NOM, ERG and DAT contexts: 1sg mi, 1pl näj, 2sg si, 2pl sgäj. The 1st person possessive pronouns consist of the object agreement (O1) prefixes added to the basic stem; the i- in the 2nd-person possessives is a prosthetic vowel added to avoid a disallowed initial cluster. Also to be noted are the final vowels, which distinguish plural from singular possessives, most likely a Svan innovation. The dative/oblique forms end in -(w)a.

1sg	<u>m-i-šgu</u> , <u>mišgwi</u> ‘my’	<i>Ipl exclusive</i>	<u>n-i-šgw-e:j</u> ‘our [but not your]’
		<i>Ipl inclusive</i>	<u>gu-šgw-e:j</u> ‘my/our and your’
2sg	<u>i-sgu</u> , <u>i-sgwi</u> ‘your.sg’	<i>2pl</i>	<u>i-sgw-e:j</u> ‘your.pl’

Many 3rd person pronominals have distinct nominative and oblique stems, including the demonstratives ala ‘this’ (oblique stem am-); mäj ‘what’ (oblique stem im-); mäg ‘all, everybody’ (oblique stem či-). These pronouns belong to declension I in the singular. The plural demonstratives, such as alj-är ‘these’, belong to declension VIII.

3.1.4. Numerals. The numerals have well-established Kartvelian pedigrees, albeit somewhat obscured by prosthetic vowels and glides, and the sound correspondence Geo/Zan /t/ : Sv. /šd/: ešxu ‘1’, jeru / jo:ri ‘2’, semi ‘3’, wo:štxw ‘4’, woxwišd ‘5’, usgwā ‘6’, išgwid ‘7’, ara ‘8’, čxara ‘9’, ješd ‘10’; ješd-ešxu ‘11’; jerw-ešd ‘20’, etc. Numerals to ašir ‘100’ and beyond can be generated, though Svan speakers might draw on Georgian or Russian to express higher figures.

3.2. Verbs. Svan verbal morphology, despite considerable innovation, paradigmatic realignment and erosion of final elements, is recognizably Kartvelian, as is the arrangement of verbal forms into screeves and series. Svan verbs can be divided into two basic groups: Class A verbs, which assign ERG case in Series II, and Class P verbs, which cannot. Most, but by no means all, Class A verbs are transitive.

3.2.1. Order of morphemes. The morphemic composition of the verb is as follows [cp. Deeters 1930: 6-7; Schmidt 1992; Tuite 1992]:

[preverb]<sub>0</sub> + [S/O<sub>1</sub>=[ver<sub>2</sub>=[[root<sub>3</sub>]<sub>a</sub>=intr/caus<sub>4</sub>=plural<sub>5</sub>=sm<sub>6</sub>]<sub>b</sub>=impf<sub>7</sub>=tns/md<sub>8</sub>]<sub>c</sub>=S<sub>9</sub>=num<sub>10</sub>]<sub>d</sub>

*Structural levels:*

- a. Verb root (internal changes due to ablaut not shown).
- b. Components occurring in nonfinite as well as finite verb forms: root, causative formant (slot 4), pluralizer (slot 5), series marker (slot 6). All of these components occur in verbal nouns, save the intransitive formant (-e)n ).
- c. Components indicating verb class and screeve: the above plus the version vowel (slot 2), imperfect-stem formant (slot 7) and tense/mood vowel (slot 8).
- d. The fully-inflected finite verb: all of the above with the addition of the Set S/O person agreement prefix (slot 1), the Set S person agreement suffix (slot 9) and the number agreement suffix (slot 10).

3.2.2. Preverbs (slot 0). Svan has two sets of preverbs: (a) the inner preverbs an-, ad-/a-, es-/as-, and la-; (b) the outer preverbs sga- ‘in’, ka- ‘out’, ži- ‘up’, ču- ‘down’. The inner preverbs directly precede the verbal complex, and are intimately bound to it, as shown by their morphophonemic interaction with the person prefixes and version vowels. The outer preverbs are far more loosely tied to the verb, and can even be separated from it by intervening lexemes.

The inner preverbs bear no resemblance to the preverbs of comparable function in Georgian or Zan. Of the four, an- has the most clearly-defined meaning, marking motion toward the speaker, often in opposition to ad-/a- or es-: UB ž-an-yr-i [up-hither-go-SM] ‘sb comes up (towards me)’ vs. ž-es-yr-i [up-thither-go-SM] ‘sb goes up (away from me)’ [Topuria 1967: 53, 66]. The fourth

preverb, la-, often adds the sense of an action done slightly: lä-j-berg-isg [slightly-Sbj.V-hoe-SM] ‘sb will hoe a bit, but not to completion’ [Ch’umburidze 1986: 188-90].

The outer preverbs are generally used in combination with the inner preverbs, and can be separated from the verbal complex by particles [Schmidt 1969], e.g. ži no:sa ogwbažas (< {an-gw-a-baž-a-s}) [**up** by.no.means PV-O1incl-Sup.V-find.out-OPT-S3sg.MOD] ‘She must by no means find out about us’ [Shanidze/Topuria 1939: 64].

3.2.3. Agreement (slots 1, 9 & 10). Svan has two sets of person-marking affixes, most of which have Georgian and Zan cognates. The prefixes appearing in slot 1 are particularly close to those of 5th-7th century Georgian: the S2 and O3 markers in x-, S1 xw-, and the distinction between inclusive and exclusive 1st person. The latter distinction is more formally elaborated in Svan than in Georgian, in that it has been extended to Set S (prefix l-), and a specifically plural Set O exclusive prefix (n-) is opposed to O1sg m-. The O2 prefix ž- (< Proto-Krt \*g-) has undergone yet further palatalization to j- in Lashx and the Etser and Laxamulan subdialects of Lower Bal [Topuria 1967: 32]. The Set S plural suffix appearing in slot 10, -d/-šd, is undoubtedly linked to Georgian-Zan -t [Klimov 1964:67-8; Fähnrich/Sarjveladze 1990: 141]. The allomorph -šd appears in only one verb in one dialect, this being the Upper Bal copula: xw-i-šd ‘we<sub>excl</sub> are’, l-i-šd ‘we<sub>incl</sub> are’; cp. xw-i ‘I am’ [Topuria 1967: 9].

#### Person agreement affixes in Upper Svan dialects

		Set S			Set O		
		<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>		<i>singular</i>	<i>plural</i>	
<i>1st</i>	<u>xw</u> -	<i>exclusive</i>	<u>xw</u> -	<u>-(š)d</u>	<u>m</u> -	<i>exclusive</i>	<u>n</u> -
		<i>inclusive</i>	<u>l</u> -	<u>-(š)d</u>		<i>inclusive</i>	<u>gw</u> -
<i>2nd</i>	<u>x</u> -		<u>x</u> -	<u>-(š)d</u>	<u>ž</u> -		<u>ž</u> - <u>-x</u>
<i>3rd</i>	<u>(l)</u> -	<u>-s, *-a?</u> <u>(l)</u> -	<u>-x</u>	<u>x</u> -		<u>x</u> -	<u>-x</u>

Only one, or possibly two, of the various Georgian and Zan S3 suffixes seem to have Svan cognates: a suffix -s added to the S3sg forms of all modal screeves, and the S3 aorist marker \*-a reconstructed by Kaldani [1978]. Conversely, what appears to be an S3 prefix occurs in several verbs, especially in some Lower Bal subdialects (Lshx la-l-ə:š ‘s/he, it drank it’; cp. la-x-ə:š ‘you.sg drank it’ [Topuria 1967: 2-3; Kaldani 1979]). There is also a pluralizer of unknown origin, -x, which serves to indicate the plurality of any argument controlling Set S or Set O agreement, for which no other means of coding number is available (i.e. S3, O2, O3).

In all other screeves the 3rd person has no marker of its own; in fact, in the case of verb forms without version vowel or preverb, the three persons in the singular have identical forms, e.g. Lshx. t’ex-no:l-n-o:l [return-IMP-PASS-CND] ‘I / you.sg / she, he, it would be coming back’.

3.2.4. Indirect syntax and inversion. The clausal argument crossreferenced by the Set S marker corresponds, in the majority contexts, to the grammatical subject. The Set O markers generally agree with the indirect or direct object, especially if animate. This correlation between grammatical relations and person markers is called “direct syntax”:

ežjär	näj	täš-s	gw-a-hwd-i-x
they:NOM	us	cheese-DAT	O1incl-Sup.V-give-PRS-S3pl
‘they are giving us the cheese [PRESENT]’			

In many contexts the relation between grammatical relations and person markers is the inverse of that shown in the above sentence: the grammatical subject controls agreement with a Set O prefix. I will refer to such an agreement pattern as “indirect syntax”. As in Georgian, indirect syntax is selected by (i) a large number of verbs, mostly intransitives, denoting psychological or physical states, involuntary actions, desires, etc.; (ii) the Series III verb forms of Class A verbs, which undergo inversion:

ežjär-s	nišgwej-d	täš	loxwhodax {la-x-o-hod-a-x}
they-DAT	us:GEN-ADV	cheese:NOM	PV-O3-Obj.V-give-PERF-O3pl
‘they have given us the cheese [PRESENT PERFECT]’			

3.2.5. Version (slot 2). Svan has the four versions, and cognates of the version vowels, that are used in Georgian [Topuria 1967: 43-51]. Class A verbs can in principle appear in all four versions:

*Neutral version:* [-a-/Ø-] bepšw qän-s ä-b-em [child:NOM bull-DAT Nt.V-tie-SM] ‘the child ties up the bull’

*Subjective version:* [-i-] bepšw qän-s i-b-em [child:NOM bull-DAT Sb.V-tie-SM] ‘the child ties up his/her own bull, ties it for him-/herself’

*Objective version:* [-i/o-, -e- (Class P only); -a-] bepšw mu-s qän-s x-o-b-em [child:NOM father-DAT bull-DAT O3-Ob.V-tie-SM] ‘the child ties up his/her father’s bull, ties it up for him’

*Superessive version:* [-a-, -e- (Class P only)] bepšw megäm-s qän-s x-a-b-em [child:NOM tree-DAT bull-DAT O3-Sup.V-tie-SM] ‘the child ties the bull to a tree’

As in Georgian, the version vowel *-i-* also marks a subgroup of Class P verbs (prefixed passives), most often the passive-voice counterparts to Class A verbs, e.g. Class A ä-mč-e [Nt.V-age-SM] ‘sb/sthg makes sb grow old’ vs. Class P i-mč-i [Sub.V-age-Pass.SM] ‘sb is getting old’

[Topuria 1967: 179]. The relative form of prefixed passives, subcategorizing an indirect object crossreferenced in the verb, is always in the objective version in -e-, e.g. x-e-mč-i [O3-Ob.V-age-Pass.SM] ‘sb is getting old for/on sb; sb’s sb [e.g. relative] is getting old’. Other types of Class P verbs can appear in distinct objective-version and superessive-version forms: x-a-sgur [O3-Sup.V-sit] ‘sb sits on sthg/sb’ vs. x-o-sgur [O3-Ob.V-sit] ‘sb sits by sb’; x-e-t’x-en-i [O3-Sup.V-return-PASS-Pass.SM] ‘sthg/sb returns to sb’ vs. x-o-t’x-en-i [O3-Ob.V-return-PASS-Pass.SM] ‘sb’s sthg/sb returns (to sb)’ [Palmaitis/Gudjedjiani 1986: 77].

3.2.6. Screeves: aspect, tense, mood (slots 6, 7, 8). The verb paradigms, or screeves, are grouped into three series, according to the case-assignment patterns of Class A verbs (ERG case assigned in Series II, inversion in Series III). The principal semantic categories marked by the Svan screeves are aspect and mood; while most screeves have an unmarked tense indication, some screeves permit other temporal references in specific contexts.

**Series I (present series).** These verb forms are marked by a stem formant in slot 6 (“series marker”) that is not present in the Series II screeves. The most common series markers are -e-, especially in Class A verbs, and -i-, which appears in Class P passives and also in many transitive verbs. Stative Class P verbs often have the series marker -a- (x-a-žx-a ‘sb is called sthg [e.g. name]’) or none at all (sgur ‘sb is sitting’) [Topuria 1967: 41-42; 208]. Several series markers of more complex shape, most of which have no known Georgian or Zan cognates, are restricted to a handful of Class A verbs: -em (a-b-em ‘sb ties sthg’); -er (i-kwt-er ‘sb steals sthg’); -e:sg, -e:šg and variants, sometimes followed by another series marker (ä-j-e:sg-i [Nt.V-take-SM-SM] ‘sb takes sthg’). The Series I screeves include:

(a) *Present*. This is the unmarked present stem, i.e. with no markers in slots 7-9. It is aspectually imperfective, and while generally employed to describe events or states in present time, in appropriate contexts the present screeve can have (imperfective) future reference [Ch’umburidze 1986: 159].

(b) *Imperfect*. Mach’avariani [1980] inventoried no less than six allomorphs of the imperfect formant: -a (for presents with the series marker -e); -d (cognate to the Georgian/Zan imperfect suffix); -w (widespread in Lower Bal, but unknown elsewhere); -n/-ən (stative verbs); -o:l (prefixed passives); deletion of the series marker (pres. t’ex-en-i ‘sb is coming back’ > impf. t’ex-en ‘sb was coming back’; especially for ablauting verbs in Upper Bal and Lent’ex).

The S1sg and S2sg forms employ a different stem from the S3sg and all plurals. This formal opposition is sufficiently implanted in the grammar that all sorts of formal means, varying from region to region, have been recruited to express it. Two and even three imperfect morphemes can appear in the same verb, as in the Becho (Lower Bal) form xw-i-mär-i-d-asg-w [S1-Sub.V-prepare-PassPRS-IMP-IMP-IMP] ‘I was being prepared’; cp. S3sg i-mär-i-da ‘sb/sthg was being prepared’ [Mach’avariani 1980: 212].

The Svan imperfect can replace the aorist to ‘soften’ an imperative: x-ä-sq’-e-w [S2-Nt.V-do-SM-IMP] ‘would you do it?’ vs. ž-a-x-ä-sq’ [PV-PV-S2-Nt.V-do:AOR] ‘do it!’ [Topuria 1967: 168].

(c) *Conjunctive*. This screeve is formed by addition of the suffix -(d)e-/-(d)e:d- (slot 8) to the S3sg/pl imperfect stem, followed by -s in the S3sg form, e.g. Etser [Lower Bal] ä-d-asg-w-de-s [Nt.V-put-SM-IMP-CNJ-3sgMOD] ‘that sb be putting sthg’; cp. impf. ä-d-asg-w [Topuria 1967: 107]. The conjunctive is aspectually imperfective; and typically appears (i) in subordinate clauses of purpose; (ii) in some types of main clauses expressing hypothetical circumstances; (iii) after the particle kek’wes ‘must’.

(d) *Imperfective future*. Svan has two distinct future-tense screeves: imperfective and perfective. The former is based on the present stem, preceded by the suffixes -(n)-un- (Upper Bal), -wn-, -ən-, -o:l-n- (Lashx), -(i)n- [Ch’umburidze 1986: 162]. Lower Bal Class A imperfective futures can take on the formal characteristics of Class P prefixed passives; e.g. i-qn-un-i [Sub.V-plough-FUT-SM] ‘sb will be ploughing’ (cp. present a-qn-i [Nt.V-plough-SM]) [op. cit.: 167; Topuria 1967: 185].

(e) *Perfective future*. The perfective future typically includes one or two preverbs (slot 0), which signal perfective aspect as well as their distinct lexical meanings [Mach’avariani 1974]. In many cases the preverbs represent the only formal difference between present and perfective future, e.g. Lntx. a-t’ex-en-i [PV-return-PASS-SM] ‘sb will come back’ vs. present t’ex-en-i. Other verbs change their series markers as well, and add a suffix, e.g. an-(a)-žb-in-e [PV-Nt.V-cook-FUT-SM] ‘sb will cook sthg’ vs. present a-žb-i [Ch’umburidze 1986: 200-208]. The aspectual difference between the two futures is illustrated in the second example in section 5.3.4).

(f) *Imperfective conditional*. This is formed from the imperfective future, by replacing the series marker by the suffix -o:l-/-ol-; e.g. Lntx. t’ex-en-wn-ol [return-PASS-FUT-CND] ‘sb would be coming back’; cp. impf. fut. t’ex-en-wn-i.

(g) *Perfective conditional*. For most verbs this is formed by adding a preverb to the imperfect (Lntx. a-t’wexendäs {a-xw-t’ex-en-d-ä}s} [PV-S1-return-PASS-IMP-S1/2sg] ‘I would come back’; cp. impf. t’wexendäs); quite often, though, the conditional employs a different suffix (UB ad-(a)-xat’w-i-is [PV-Nt.V-paint-SM-CND] ‘sb would paint sthg’; cp. impf. axt’äwda {a-xat’aw-i-da}) [Topuria 1967: 125-130]. The uses of the Svan conditionals correspond to those of the Georgian conditional (irrealis mode, past habitual, future-in-the-past), though with the addition of an aspectual opposition.

(h) *Imperfective evidential*. This screeve is formed either synthetically or peripherastically, depending on the valence. Imperfective evidentials with indirect objects (i.e. NPs controlling Set O agreement) are based on the present stem (minus the SM), with addition of the suffixes -in-a, -un-a (Class A), -wn-a, -o:l-n-a (Class P). Verbs without indirect objects form their imperfective evidentials by placing the copula after a participle formed with lə-m(a)- and the suffixes -(w)in-e

(Class P verbs employ other suffixes). The imperfective evidential is in fact the imperfective counterpart to the present perfect, and the two forms appear together in narratives, signalling that the content of the proposition is known through indirect evidence (hearsay, deduction, etc.). In practice the imperfective evidential and present perfect are frequently used at the beginning of a story, to frame it as an unwitnessed account, after which the two evidential screeves give way to aorists, imperfects and even presents:

än-bin-e	sosruq'-d	limbwi.					
PV-Sub.V-begin-AOR.S3/pl	S.-ERG	to.tell-NOM					
ašxw	ägi-s	eser	<b>x-ä-ldy-inā</b>	məldey.			
one:OBL	place-DAT	QT	O3-Obj.V-herd.sheep-IMPEV	shepherd:NOM			
eči:	žika:n	eser	werp	<b>lum-p'ö:r-ye:l</b>	i	š-un	buγwā:
that:SHG	above	QT	eagle:NOM	IMPEV-fly-VPL	and	hand-DAT	ox:SHG
barž			<b>x-a-yw-e:n-a.</b>	a-x-(a)-šq'ed-a	eža	ču	
shoulder.blade:NOM	O3-Ob.V-have-IMPEV	PV-O3-Ob.V-fall-PERF	that:NOM	down			
werp-s,	məldey-i	tanw-isga	a-x-(a)-xwie:n-a,				
eagle-D	shepherd-SHG	eye:DAT-in	PV-O3-Ob.V-meet-PERF				
sga	otšq'äd {ad-x-o-šq'äd}	sga:men-te,	žibe	quru-s	a-čäd	ha	
in	PV-O3-Ob.V-fall:AOR.S3/pl	inside-to	upper	hole-DAT	PV-go:AOR.S3/pl	or	
čubeše	dä:r-d	ma	moš	än-(i)-meqr-e.			
lower	nobody-E	not	different	PV-Sub.V-notice-AOR.S3/pl			

‘Sosruq began to tell the story: A shepherd was tending his flock [IMPERF. EVIDENTIAL] in a certain place. Above him an eagle was flying [IMPERF. EVIDENTIAL], and it had in its grasp [IMPERF. EVIDENTIAL] an ox’s shoulder blade. The eagle dropped it [PRES. PERFECT], and it went [PRES. PERFECT] into the shepherd’s eye. It fell [AORIST] inside his (eye), but whether it went [AORIST] in the hole under the upper (eyelid) or under the lower, he did not even notice [AORIST].’

[Upper Bal; Shanidze/Kaldani/Ch’umburidze 1978: 163, #184]

**Series II (aorist series).** The two Series II screeves employ a distinct stem, marked by the absence of the series marker, by ablaut, or occasionally by suppletion. Series II is aspectually punctiliar — representing an event or state as a single point within the narrative structure, rather than as a frame for another event — and also perfective. Many stative verbs, and some medioactives (in the Laxamulan subdialect of Lower Bal) simply add perfectivizing preverbs to their imperfect and conjunctive stems to create (pseudo-)aorists and optatives, e.g. Laxamulan imperfect xeprebal (< x-e-preb-äl-a)‘sb was caressing sb’; pseudo-aorist läxprebal (< la-x-e-preb-äl-a)‘sb caressed sb’ [Tuite 1994c]. The formal opposition between preverbed (perfective) and preverbless (imperfective)

Series II forms allowed by the Georgian aspectual system does not occur in Svan: only the perfective forms are attested [Mach'avariani 1974; but see below].

(a) *Aorist*. The aorists of Class A verbs can be divided into athematic and thematic conjugations, with ablauting verbs as a subtype of the athematic conjugation. All non-ablauting Class P verbs are thematic. The S1/2sg and S3/pl stems are distinct, as shown in the following table ([V] = stem vowel; suffixes in boldface):

	non-ablauting			ablauting	
	Class A athematic	Class A thematic	Class P	Class A	Class P
S1/2sg	[V], unless:	[V+umlaut]	[V] <b>-än/-en</b>	[ə]	[e]
	(1) reduced				
	(2) shortened				
	(3) /e/ > /ä/				
S3/pl	[V+umlaut]	[V] <b>-e</b>	[V] <b>-ä:n/-an/-än</b>	[i]	[a/ä]

The principal morphophonemic rules affecting the aorist are:

- (i) Umlaut of the vowels /a/, /o/, /u/, /ə/ (and their long counterparts) in certain contexts;
- (ii) In Class A athematic verbs with short stem vowels, inner preverbs and version vowels, the stem vowel undergoes reduction in the S1/2sg, while the version vowel is reduced in the S3/pl (cp. S1sg ätwic'wr {ad-xw-i-c'or} [PV-S1-Sub.V-revenge:AOR.S1/2sg] 'I took revenge' vs. S3sg ädc'ör {ad-i-c'ör} [PV-Sub.V-revenge:AOR.S3/pl] 's/he took revenge' [Topuria 1967: 142]).
- (iii) In Class A athematic verbs with long stem vowels, the latter is shortened in the S1/2sg; conversely, the preverb la- is lengthened in some S1/2sg forms (see (iv) below, and 2.3.2 above).
- (iv) In Upper Bal athematic verbs, the stem vowel /e/ becomes lowered to /ä/ in the S1/2sg (cp. S1sg lo:xwäm {la-xw-e:m} 'I ate sthg' vs. S3sg lale:m {la-l-e:m}).

(b) *Optative*. The Class A optative is formed from the S1/2sg aorist stem, with the addition of a mood vowel in slot 8. Class A verbs with thematic aorists generally have optatives in -ä-, athematic verbs form their optatives in -i-, and ablauting verbs tend to have optatives in -e- (though the other two mood vowels occur as variants, sometimes within the same dialect). Class P ablauting optatives also employ the S1/2sg aorist stem, either with no mood vowel (UB, Lntx), or with -e- (Lower Bal and Lashx). Other Class P verbs take the suffix -e:n/-en- (evidently related to the Class P aorist suffix. The S3sg forms take the modal person marker -s.

**Series III (perfect series)**. The three Series III screeves employ the same stem, unlike in Georgian, differing only in the suffixes, or postposed copular verb forms, they add. The inversion transformation, affecting the mapping between grammatical relations and morphology, is brought about not only by the Series III screeves of Class A verbs, but also by a handful of monovalent

stative verbs, for reasons that rest obscure [Gagua 1976; Palmaitis/Gudjedjiani 1986: 91; Hewitt 1987]: cp pres. **ma:re** sgur ‘**man:NOM** is.sitting’, prespf. **ma:ra** x-o-sgur-a [**man:DAT** O3-Obj.V-sit-PERF] ‘the man has been sitting’. The Series III stems of Class A and relative Class P verbs are formed from the respective aorist stems, with some exceptions: non-ablauting Class P verbs have the suffix -e:n in place of the aorist stem formant, and ablauting Class A verbs employ the lengthened-grade stem mentioned in 2.4.5 above. Class A verbs use Set O markers and the objective-version vowels -i/-o- to mark the grammatical subject; relative Class P verbs all take the version vowel -a, regardless of what vowel is used in Series I and II (pres.pf. x-ä-c’d-a {x-a-c’ed-a} ‘sb has caught sight of sb/sthg’, vs. aor. x-e-c’äd). Monovalent Class P verbs have periphrastic perfects, comprising a past participle (lə- -e, me- -e) plus the copula.

(a) *Present perfect*. The non-periphrastic present perfect employs the suffix -a, probably related to the series marker found in many stative verbs. It is very often used in narratives, to indicate past unwitnessed action, along with the imperfective evidential. The present perfect is often used without a preverb. Interestingly, the preverbless perfect can be used in juxtaposition with a preverbed aorist or perfect to create a contrast resembling that between imperfective and perfective aorist in Georgian, e.g.

am-ži      **x-o-km-a**,      xokma, i      ašir-te-ži      **es-kim**.  
this-way    O3-Ob.V-add-PERF    add...    and    hundred-to-on   PV-add:AOR  
‘In this way he increased and increased [PREVERBLESS PRESENT PERFECT] (the number), and increased it [PREVERBED AORIST] to a hundred’

[Lower Bal; Davitiani/Topuria/Kaldani 1957: 324, #178]

The present perfect can be used with the optative particle -oy(w)/-u(w), especially in blessings, wishes, curses and the like:

t’än-iš      nähduri      eser-**oy**      la-hod-en-a {la-x-a-hod-en-a}!  
body-G    health:N    QT-OPT   PV-O3-Obj.V-give-PASS-PERF  
‘May health of body be given to you!’ [Lower Bal; Davitiani/Topuria/Kaldani 1957: 73, #41]

(b) *Pluperfect*. The pluperfect is, formally speaking, the perfect stem plus (i) the Class P aorist suffix (Class A, relative Class P), or (ii) the past tense forms of the copula (monovalent Class P). It is infrequently used, especially in comparison to the Georgian screeve of the same name.

(c) *Perfect conjunctive*. This screeve is used as a modal in certain past-tense contexts:

min	i-bn-a-x	liyrä:l-s,	ere
they:NOM	Sub.V-begin-IMP-PL	to.sing-DAT	that
mezga	lixi:rwil	<b>oxbinens</b> {an-x-o-bin-en-s}.	
family:D	to.revel:NOM	PV-O3-Ob.V-begin-PRFCNJ-S3sg.MOD	
‘They would begin singing, so that the family could begin to have a good time’ [UB; Shanidze/Kaldani/Ch’umburidze 1978 #44, p. 44].			

3.2.7. Derived intransitives, causatives (slot 4). The causative formants are of the form -Vn-, e.g. x-ä-č’m-un-e [O3-Obj.V-mow-CAUS-SM] ‘sb makes sb mow sthg’ [Topuria 1967: 234]. The same formants derive transitive verbs from noun stems, e.g. a-mž-un-e [Nt.V-sun-CAUS-SM] ‘sb lays sthg out in the sun’ <məž ‘sun’.

Passives are formed by both suffixation and ablaut. The Class P passives corresponding to non-ablauting Class A verbs are marked by the series marker -i and the version vowels -i- and -e- (i-č’m-i ‘sthg [e.g. hayfield] is being mowed’). Class A ablauting verbs have two different means of passivizing, distinguished by stem vocalism (see 2.4.5 above) and by affixation, e.g. Class A t’ix-e ‘sb returns sb/sthg’ : Class P t’ex-(e)n-i ‘sb is returning, coming back’ vs. i-t’i:x-i ‘sb/sth is being returned [by sb]’ [Topuria 1967: 181].

3.2.8. Verbal plurality (slot 5). The suffix -a:l- and its variants (-ie:l- , -ə:r-), found in some dialects of Svan, can signal plurality of the semantic absolute (transitive direct object or intransitive subject), or of the action in general [Sharadzenidze 1954; Schmidt 1957; Tuite 1992].

t’abg-är-ži	diär-s	i	leyw-s	ä-d-isg-ǟl-i-x.
table-PL-on	bread-D	and	meat-D	Nt.V-lie-SM-VPL-SM-PL
‘They put bread and meat on the tables.’ [Lower Bal; Davitiani/Topuria/Kaldani 1957: 79]				

In addition, many Class A denominal verbs denoting activities (events perceived in terms of their temporal duration rather than change of state) are derived with the suffix -a:l-, e.g. UB li-bəlkow-ǟl-i ‘to play cards’ (<bəlkow, a name of a card game) [Chumburidze 1981].

3.2.9. Verb root (slot 3). While noun and adjective stems of all shapes can in principle be incorporated into verbs, the ablauting stems, clearly one of the most archaic groups of lexemes, are of canonical Kartvelian CVC shape, where ‘C’ can be a simple consonant, a harmonic cluster, or either followed by /w/; e.g. -bVr- ‘(be) subtract(ed)’, -pxVž- ‘spread’, -t’q’wVp- ‘explode’; -pVšwd- ‘let pass’.

3.2.10. Non-finite forms. Svan has a rich variety of verbal nouns and adjectives, including some not found in Georgian:

- (i) The masdar (li-) is used in the roughly the same contexts as in Georgian, and can take nominal as well as verbal stems (li-na:t-w ‘kinship’ < nä:ti ‘kin’). Ablauting verbs have separate transitive and intransitive masdars: li-t’x-e ‘returning sthg/sb’ vs. li-t’ex ‘coming back, being returned’.
- (ii) The agentive participle (mə-, mo-, me-), e.g. Class A mə-t’x-e ‘returner [of sthg/sb]’; Class P me-t’ex ‘who/which comes back’; from nouns: mə-čä:ž-i ‘horseman’ (< čä:ž ‘horse’).
- (iii) Svan has two distinct future participles, denoting patients and themes (le-), and instruments and destinations (la- -a); cp. le-tr-e ‘beverage [sthg to drink]’ vs. la-tr-a ‘drinking vessel, place for drinking’. Examples from noun stems: le-päq’w ‘[material] to be used to make a cap’ (< paq’w ‘cap’), la-te-j ‘window in manger wall (for cow to see out)’ < te ‘eye’.
- (iv) Past participle (lə- [-e], me- -e, na-): Class A lə-qi:d ‘brought’, Class P me-qd-e ‘come’.
- (v) Negative participle (u- -a/-w): Class A u-qi:d-a ‘not brought’, Class P u-qäd-w ‘not having come’; from nouns: u-cw’il-a ‘unmarried girl’ (< c’wil ‘bride’).

#### 4. Word formation.

4.1. Derivation of nouns. In addition to the participles mentioned above, Svan has several noun-forming affixes in common use:

- (i) Diminutive formants (-əl[d], -il[d], -o:l[d], ä:d). These suffixes are more frequently employed in Svan than in Georgian: bepšw-ild-är [child-DIM-PL] ‘little children’; däl-il [Däl-DIM] (name of hunter goddess).
- (ii) The suffix -aj/-äj, used to forms nouns denoting ‘lover of ...’ or ‘one given to ...’, e.g. kartobl-äj ‘lover of potatoes’, qep-äj ‘biter’ < qepa ‘to bite’ [Topuria 1985: 115].
- (iii) The circumfix na- -i, for deadjectival nouns: na-bg-i ‘firmness’ < bəgi ‘firm’ [ibid: 114].
- (iv) The suffix -a in a small class of nouns derived from Class P ablauting verb stems, e.g. kwäc-a ‘cutting’, xwät’-a ‘extinction (esp. from lack of a male heir)’ [Topuria 1967: 213].

4.2. Derivation of verbs. Denominal and deadjectival verbs are quite common in Svan. In many such instances the noun root does not undergo special modification (i-k’əlmäx-i {i-k’almax-i} [Sub.V-fish-SM] ‘sb fishes’ < k’almax ‘fish’ [Topuria 1967: 72]).

4.3. Derivation of adjectives. The principal affixes for deriving adjectives are (i) lə- ‘having, possessing’, e.g. lə-qän ‘bull-owning’; (ii) -ä:r and variants, e.g. täš-ä:r [cheese-ADJ] ‘cheese-containing’; (iii) -ur/-ul ‘without’; e.g. tetr-ul ‘moneyless’ [Topuria 1985: 117].

5. Syntax. In most respects Svan syntax, including morphosyntax, resembles that of Georgian.

5.1. Structure of the NP. Word order within the noun phrase is somewhat more rigid than in Georgian, in that postposed modifiers, including personal pronominals, are very rare. Adjectives and nominalized clausal modifiers precede the NP head, e.g.

li-ge:rg-i:      to:-jsa      ka:m      me-pšwde      ča:r-s  
St.George's   month-in   outside   PPL-let.go   horse-DAT

‘... [to] a horse that was left outside during St. George’s month’ [Lashx; Oniani 1917: 15]

The rare examples of postposed adjectives — invariably possessive pronouns — I have encountered are in poetry and song texts, e.g. dede mišgwi [mother:NOM my] ‘mother of mine’ [UB; Shanidze/Topuria/Gujejani 1939: 268].

Relative clauses represent the only common exception to the modifier-precedes-head principle, in that they almost always come after the NP head, e.g.:

ež    ma:re,      xedwä:j      ät-(x-e)-ywäč’,  
that   man:NOM   which:NOM   PV-O3-Obj.V-pursue:AOR.S3  
gäč-däd-(i)-sip'-ä:n  
knife-ADV      PV-Sub.V-turn-Pass.AOR.S3  
‘The man which was pursuing him turned into a knife’ [UB; Abesadze 1960: 110]

When the relative pronoun itself heads the noun phrase, a coreferent pronoun (based on the distal root ež- ‘that’) usually follows, sometimes at the very end of the sentence:

lä-x-(e)-č'wed-da-x,      mä:nk'wid      er      ka-an-qäd,      eža-s  
PV-O3-Obj.V-ask-IMP-PL      first      that   PV-PV-come:AOR.S3   that-DAT  
‘They asked the first one that came’ [UB; Abesadze 1960: 135]

5.2. Structure of the PP. Svan has postpositions, which generally govern the dative case, although they assign genitive case to proper names, pronouns and other nominals denoting humans in certain contexts [Abesadze 1984; Manning 1994]; e.g. lemesg-te:-sga [fire:DAT-to-in] ‘into the fire’ vs. min-eš-te:-sga [them-GEN-to-in] ‘to them (lit. into their [place/home])’

5.3. Structure of the clause. The ordering of major clausal constituents is fairly free in Svan, as elsewhere in Kartvelian. The grammatical subject tends to come before the direct and indirect objects and the verb, but all relative orderings of these four constituents are possible.

5.3.1. Negation. Svan has a considerable inventory of negative pronouns and particles, many of them evidently derived from two- or three-morpheme compounds. Grouped by their initial segments, the negative particles include (translations very approximate):

- (a) no ‘do not [prohibitive]’, no:sa ‘must by no means not ...’, noma ‘do not’, etc.
- (b) de ‘not’, deš ‘cannot’, dem ‘not want to ...’, de:sa ‘not’, deš-yäs ‘no one can ...’, etc.
- (c) dom ‘not’, dom-gwäš ‘nothing’
- (d) ma:ma / mo:d / mad ‘not, cannot’

5.3.2. Questions and answers. Interrogative pronouns precede the verb, and cannot be separated from it by any lexemes other than particles. The response to a question is often introduced by an echo of the interrogative pronoun, followed by ‘and’:

**mäj**            eser        x-a-k'u?  
what:NOM    QT        O3-Obj.V-want

‘What do you want?’

**mäj**            eser    **i**        lädi:            moxärž            eser        ža            l-i  
what:NOM    QT      and    today:GEN    meal.provider:N    QT        self:NOM    S3-be  
‘[What and] you are to provide today’s meal.’ [Shanidze/Kaldani/Ch’umburidze 1978: 162]

Yes-no questions are marked by a clitic -(j)a:, onto which the accent shifts:

ka            loxt'u:lä'ja:? {la-xw-o-t'u:l-a-ja:}  
PV            PV-S1-ObV-call-OPT-QUES  
‘Should I call him?’ [UB; Tamar Girgwiani (elicited)]

5.3.3. Indirect speech. When the speaker is repeating his or her own speech, or that of the interlocutor, a clitic -əž/-iž is attached to a word near the beginning of the clause [Hewitt 1982; Topuria 1985: 143]. In reported speech from third persons the special pronouns ža [singular] and min [plural] replace the 1st and 2nd person pronouns of the original text, and the quotative particles eser or rokw are added. In the following example, the two interlocutors are referred to by forms of ža, while the 3rd-person arguments continue to employ the usual pronouns (ežas, ečas):

eča-s	läk'wcä:n	x-e-yw-e:n-i,	eža-s	ču
that-DAT	towel:NOM	O3-Obj.V-have-FUT-SM	that-DAT	down
oxk'wa:ne {ad-x-o-k'w-a:n-e}	ža,		eža	ži:-w
PV-O3-Obj.V-drop-CAUS-SM	oneself:NOM [= I]	that:NOM	up-OPT	
än-(i)-k'id	mižne:m.			
PV-Sub.V-take:AOR		oneself:ERG [= you]		

“The towel that he [ečas] will have [IMPERFECTIVE FUTURE], I [ža] will make him drop it [PERFECTIVE FUTURE], and you [mižnem (ERG case of ža)] take it.” [Upper Bal; Shanidze/Kaldani/ Ch’umburidze 1978: 161]

5.4. Subordinate clauses. Clauses can be imbedded through both nominalization (use of participles) and subordination. The principle relative pronouns are derived from the corresponding interrogative pronouns by the addition of a suffix **-wä:j**, which functionally, albeit not etymologically, resembles the Georgian suffix **-c**, e.g. **jer** ‘who?’ (Geo. *vin?*) > **jer-wä:j** ‘who’ (Geo. *vin-c*); **ime** ‘where?’ (Geo. *sad?*) > **im-wä:j** ‘where’ (Geo. *sada-c*) [Abesadze 1960].

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## Abbreviations in glosses.

(i) *Dialects.*

UB (Upper Bal) LB (Lower Bal)  
Lshx (Lashx) Lntx (Lent' ex)

(ii) *Verb morphology.*

Slot 0: PV (preverb)

Slot 1: S1 ..., O1 ... (subject and object markers)

Slot 2: SbV (subjective version), ObV (subjective version), NtV (neutral version), SupV (supercessive version)

Slot 3: [root]

Slot 4: PASS (passive), CAUS (causative)

Slot 5: VPL (verbal pluralizer)

Slot 6: SM (series marker); Pass.SM (passive series marker [-i])

Slot 7: IMP (imperfect-stem formant)

Slot 8: FUT (future), OPT (optative), PERF (present perfect), CND (conditional), CNJ (conjunctive), IMEV (imperfect evidential), PLPF (pluperfect), PRFCNJ (perfect conjunctive), Pass.AOR (passive aorist formant: Pass.AOR.S1/2sg, Pass.AOR.S3/pl)

Slot 9: S1/2sg (1st and 2nd singular stem [past indicative]), S3/pl (3rd singular and all plurals [past indicative]), S3sg.MOD (modal 3rd singular suffix [-s])

Slot 10: PL (S3, O2 and O3 pluralizer [-x]), S1/2.PL (S1 and S2 pluralizer [-d])

(iii) *Nominal morphology.*

NOM (nominative case) ERG (ergative case)

DAT (dative case) GEN (genitive case)

ADV (adverbial case) OBL (oblique stem)

INST (instrumental case) PL (plural)

PPL (participial affix) DIM (diminutive)

(iv) *Particles.*

OPT (optative particle [-w, -oyw]) QT (quotative particle)

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