

Author's Preface

These studies have a long history. The first drafts were written during my stay in Tbilisi and South Ossetia in 1968-69, when I for about a year had the opportunity to listen to Ossetic speech from the lips of native speakers. Some of my notes from that time have since been elaborated and published in various books and periodicals, while others had to wait. In the following chapters an attempt will be made to treat in some detail with questions relating to language contacts and the role neighbouring languages have played in the history of Ossetic.

My sojourns in Georgia in 1968-69 and again in 1989 were supported by the Georgian Government in accordance with the cultural agreement of Norway and the Soviet Union. I also received support from the Institute for Comparative Research in Human Culture, Oslo, the Norwegian Research Council, the Universities of Oslo and Tbilisi and the Norwegian Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs. To all these institutions I am deeply grateful.

I also want to express my thanks to friends and colleagues who assisted and inspired me in my Ossetic and Caucasian studies. First of all I mention my teachers of the University of Oslo, the late Prof. Georg Morgenstierne, who introduced me to the study of the Iranian languages and first suggested Ossetic as the subject of special research to me, and Prof. Hans Vogt, who taught me Georgian and general Caucasian linguistics.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my many friends of the South Ossetic Research Institute of Cxinvali, in particular Doc. Gæbæraty Nikolæ, Gagloity Juri and Džusoity Nafi, who all acted as my mentors during my stay at their institute in 1969.

Thanks are due to Doc. Olga Tedeeva of the Oriental Institute of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, who guided my first steps as a speaker of her mother tongue, and to my two teachers of Georgian, Prof. Elene Babunashvili and Dr. Ineza Kiknadze, both of the University of Tbilisi. I also want to express my gratitude to Prof. Tamaz Gamkrelidze, the Director of the Oriental Institute of the Georgian Academy of Sciences, who offered me an opportunity to participate in his linguistic seminars at the university and thus introduced me to the circles of Georgian linguists.

Last but not least I am indebted to my many anonymous informants in both North and South Ossetia, who in 1969 and on later occasions answered my numerous questions and with patience and generosity gave me an insight into their language. To them and their compatriots these studies are dedicated.

Oslo, April 1994.

F. Th.

