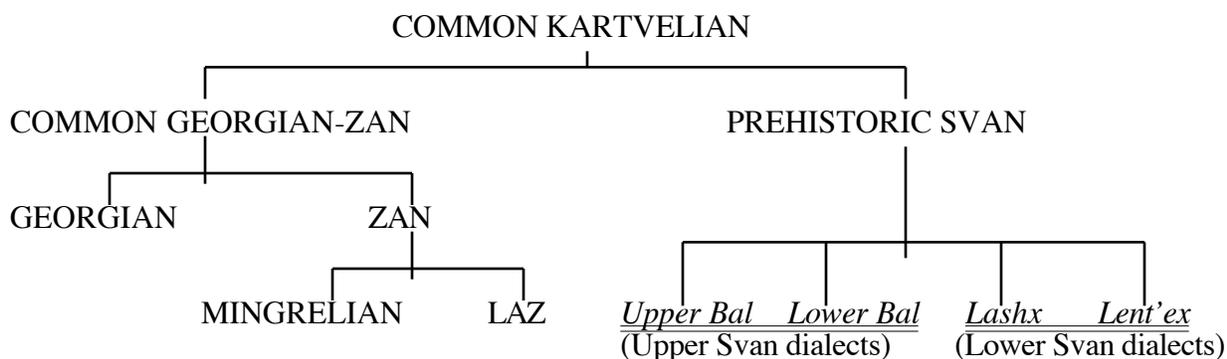


## Aorist and pseudo-aorist for Svan atelic verbs — K. Tuite

**0. Introduction.** The Kartvelian or South Caucasian family comprises three languages: Georgian, which has been attested in documents going back to the 5th century, Zan (or Laz-Mingrelian) and Svan. In the case of Zan and Svan, there is almost no documentation going back beyond the mid-19th century. There is a consensus among experts that Svan is the outlying member of the family, whose family tree would be as in this diagram:



In this paper I will look at one segment of the formal system in Svan — in particular, in the more conservative Upper Svan dialects — for coding aspect. In this introductory section I will go over the system of what Kartvelologists term “screeves” (sets of verb forms differing only in person and number), and then the classification of verbs by lexical aspect with which the morphological facts will be compared.

**0.1. Screeves and series.** In the morphology of verbs in each of the Kartvelian languages, one of the fundamental distinctions is between verb forms derived from the SERIES I OR “PRESENT-SERIES” stem, and forms derived from the SERIES II OR “AORIST-SERIES” stem. We will not go into all of the formal differences between these two stems for the various groups of verbs in each language, save to note that for most verbs the Series I stem contains a suffix (the “series marker” or “present/future stem formant”) which does not appear in Series II forms. (There is also a third series of verb forms, the “perfect series,” in the Kartvelian languages. These forms appear to be of relatively recent origin, and in any event are built on recognizably Series I or II stems. Series III will not be discussed in this paper).

In Old Georgian (5th-11th centuries) those screeves employing Series I stems were aspectually durative or LINEAR (Geo. *xazovani* ), while those verb forms built on Series II stems were characterized by PUNCTILIAR (Geo. *c’ert’ilebrivi* ) aspect. That is, the system offered a choice in the representation of an event: it could be viewed as extending over a period of time, or the narrative spotlight could be directed, in a sense, at a salient point, a change of state. The nature of the semantic distinction conveyed by the formal opposition of Series I and II screeves in the modern Kartvelian languages has changed somewhat from that of Old Georgian (though relics of the older aspectual system are preserved in all branches of the family [Machavariani 1974]).

The screeves of Svan and, for the purpose of comparison, Modern Georgian, derived from Series I and Series II stems are shown in {1} [Gudjedjiani & Palmaitis 1986] (Zan is not discussed here):

{1} Modern Georgian and Svan screeves

**Series I (“present series”)**

Syntactic: 1st and 3rd conjugation verbs assign NOM case to their subjects

Morphological: Special suffix (“series marker”) present in Series I stems

	<i>Modern Georgian</i>		<i>Svan</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
–Past	present	future	present	prfv future	impfv future	narr present
+ Past	imperfect	conditional	imperfect	prfv condl	impfv condl	narr imprfct
<i>Modal</i>	present conjunctive	future conjunctive	present conjunctive	narrative conjunctive		

SVAN EXAMPLES [Upper Bal; Gudjedjani/Palmaitis 1986]: Series I stem *g=em* “build”

present *a-g=em* “s/he builds it”

imperfective future *a-g=m-un-i* □ <sup>1</sup>*a-g-em-un-i*

imperfect *a-g=äm-da* □ ?*a-g-em-w-da*

perfective future *ad-g=em-n-e* □ *ad-a-g-em-in-e*

**Series II (“aorist series”)**

Syntactic: 1st and 3rd conjugation verbs assign ERG case to their subjects

Morphological: Series marker absent in Series II stems; sometimes distinguished by ablaut

	<i>Modern Georgian</i>		<i>Svan</i>
	(1)	(2)	
+ Past	imperfective aorist	perfective aorist	aorist
<i>Modal</i>	imperfective optative	perfective optative	optative

SVAN EXAMPLES [Upper Bal; Gudjedjani & Palmaitis 1986]: Series II stem *g* “build”

aorist *ad-g-e* □ *ad-a-g-e* “s/he built it”

optative *ad-g-a-s* □ *ad-a-g-a-s*

**0.2. Conjugation classes.** Svan verbs can be divided into four conjugation classes based on certain morphological and syntactic criteria. The system employed here is based upon that devised by Topuria [1967:39-41], with some modifications adapted from Harris [1985]. The 1st and 2nd conjugation classes are largely composed of paired transitive and intransitive verbs, distinguished (usually) by affixation or ablaut. The Series II forms of 1st conjugation verbs assign ergative case to the NP controlling subjective agreement, while 2nd conjugation verbs assign nominative case.

{2} *1st conjugation*

ä-č’m-e “s/he mows hay”

a-hräq’-i “s/he brews vodka”

*2nd conjugation*

i-č’m-i “[hay] is mowed”

i-hräq’-i “[vodka] is brewed”

<sup>1</sup>Svan grammar has a lively morphophonemic component. Where clarity of presentation demands it, surface forms are followed by representations of the underlying morphology, signalled by an arrow (□).

i-šx-i “s/he burns his/her own sthg”	i-šx-i “sthg burns”
pxiž-e “s/he spreads sthg”	pxež-n-i “sthg is spread, scattered”
kwic-e “s/he cuts sthg”	kwec-n-i “sthg is cut”

3rd and 4th conjugation verbs are almost always intransitive, and do not come in pairs. Many 3rd conjugation verbs have stems containing the frequentative/durative suffixes *-ä:l-* or *-ie:l-*. In Georgian, the Series II forms of 3rd conjugation verbs assign ergative case to their subjects; the syntax of these verbs in the Svan dialects shows more variety, as we shall see. Here are some examples:

{3} <i>3rd conjugation</i>	<i>4th conjugation</i>
sip’ “sb/sthg turns”	sk’ur “sb is seated”
q’u:li “[cow] moos”	tera “sb/sthg is visible”
i-[]-ä:l “sb sings”	x-a-c’əx “sb needs sthg”
i-gi:c’-ä:l “sb/sthg swings”	x-o-šgur “sb is ashamed”
i-q’wi:l-ie:l “[goat] bleats”	x-o-xal “sb knows sthg”

**0.3. Telic and atelic verbs.** The verb-stem morphology of the Kartvelian languages reflects, fairly closely, the lexical-semantic distinction between TELIC and ATELIC VERBS [Holisky 1981; Harris 1985]. The 1st and 2nd conjugation classes of Svan and Georgian are composed largely of telic verbs, that is, verbs whose meanings include a salient change of state. The Vendler classification scheme employed by most semanticists recognizes two varieties of telic verbs, termed *accomplishments* (e.g. the English verbs “teach,” “break<sub>tr</sub>,” “kill,” “give”) and *achievements* (e.g. “learn,” “break<sub>intr</sub>,” “die,” “arrive,” “stand up”).

The 3rd and 4th conjugation classes contain (again, for the most part) verbs of ATELIC aspect. Atelics are opposed to telic verbs in that their meanings lack a salient change of state. There are two types of atelic verbs: *statives* (e.g. “have,” “know,” “be broken,” “be red,” “be standing”) and *activity verbs* (e.g. “sing,” “gallop,” “glow,” “misbehave”).

In this paper I will look at some of the morphological characteristics of the Series II verb forms in Svan. I will attempt to show that in Prehistoric Svan atelic verbs lacked Series II screeves. At a later point in the prehistory of Svan these verbs acquired a “pseudo-aorist,” a Series I screeve derived from the imperfect by addition of a preverb. In the most recent stage, the pseudo-aorist forms of atelic verbs took some on the syntactic and morphological characteristics of the (true) aorists of telic verbs. This process has taken somewhat different directions in the modern Svan dialects.

**§1. The morphology of Series II in Svan.** Most Svan aorists are conjugated in one of two ways, which I will term STRONG (athematic, with ablaut) and WEAK (thematic, without ablaut) inflections. Both inflection patterns employ two distinct stems, one for the 1st and 2nd singular subject (**S1/2sg**) form, and one for the 3rd singular subject and all persons in the plural (**S3/pl**), as in the following Upper Bal paradigms [Topuria 1967:137,141; the Prehistoric Svan forms, marked with a single or double asterisk, are from Kaldani 1978]:

{4}	<i>Weak aorist (1st conjugation verb)</i>
S1sg/O3 <sup>2</sup>	žo=xw- <b>žwem</b> □ ži-an=xw-o-žöm < *-žom-i “I wrecked sb’s sth”
S2sg/O3	žo=xw- <b>žwem</b> □ ži-an=x-o-žöm
S3sg/O3	žo=xw- <b>žom-e</b> □ ži-an=x-o-žom-e < *-žom-i-a
S1pl,incl/O3	žo=lw- <b>žom-e-d</b> □ ži-an=l-o-žom-e-d
S1pl,excl/O3	žo=xw- <b>žom-e-d</b> □ ži-an=xw-o-žom-e-d
S2pl/O3	žo=xw- <b>žom-e-d</b> □ ži-an=x-o-žom-e-d
S3pl/O3	žo=xw- <b>žom-e-x</b> □ ži-an=x-o-žom-e-x
{5}	<i>Strong aorist (1st conjugation verb)</i>
S1sg	o=č' <b>k'or</b> □ a=xw-č' <b>k'or</b> < *-č' <b>k'or</b> -∅ < **-č' <b>k'or</b> -i “I cut sthg”
S2sg	a=č' <b>k'or</b> □ a=x-č' <b>k'or</b>
S3sg	a=č' <b>k'wer</b> □ a=č' <b>k'ör</b> < *-č' <b>k'or</b> -i < **-č' <b>k'or</b> -i-a
S1pl,incl	a=l-č' <b>k'wer</b> -d □ a=l-č' <b>k'ör</b> -d
S1pl,excl	o=č' <b>k'wer</b> -d □ a=xw-č' <b>k'ör</b> -d
S2pl	a=č' <b>k'wer</b> -d □ a=x-č' <b>k'ör</b> -d
S3pl	a=č' <b>k'wer</b> -x □ a=č' <b>k'ör</b> -x

There is no stem alternation in the Svan optative screeve; for most verbs the optative stem is identical to the S1/2sg aorist stem.

According to the reconstruction proposed by Kaldani [1978], both inflection patterns, strong and weak, derive from the same Prehistoric Svan paradigms. For transitive verbs (almost all of which have 1st conjugation morphology in the modern dialects), the aorist desinences were *\*-i* in the S1/2sg stem, and *\*-i-a* in the S3/pl stem (*\*-a* is descended from the Common Kartvelian S3sg past-indicative ending, later extended to all plurals in the aorist). The aorists of intransitive verbs (i.e. 2nd/3rd/4th conjugation verbs in the modern dialects) lacked the *\*-i* suffix; their stem formants were *\*-∅* in the S1/2sg stem, and *\*-∅-a* in the S3/pl stem. The present-day strong aorists are descended from verbs which underwent loss of final vowels at a very early date, predating umlaut (marked with a double asterisk in the above paradigms). Weak aorists lost their final vowels somewhat later, after it had become a productive rule of Svan morpho-phonemics that deleted /i/ or /e/ triggered umlaut in the preceding vowel (the single-asterisk stage); hence the umlauted root vowels in the S1/2sg stems of weak aorists, and in the S3/pl stems of strong aorists.

**1.1. Preverbs and aspect.** The initial morpheme(s) in the verb forms in {4} and {5}, separated from the rest of the word by a double hyphen, are called PREVERBS. There are two sets of these prefixes in Svan: OUTER PREVERBS (e.g. *ži* “up, upon” in {4}), which are comparatively loosely connected to the following morphemes, and INNER PREVERBS (e.g. *an* “hither” in {4}, *a(d)* “away” in {5}), which are morphophonemically integrated into the verbal complex. Although preverbs may add a directional meaning to the significance of the verb, in many cases their semantic contribution is no more transparent than that made by their counterparts in the Indo-European languages (e.g. Russian *so=znat* “realize” [cp *s(o)* “with,” *znat* “know”]; English “put up

<sup>2</sup>In glossing the person marking of Kartvelian verbs, I employ “S” for “subject” and “O” for “object” affixes, with subscripts indicating person, number and the inclusive/exclusive distinction.

(with),” “take over”).

In Svan, as in Modern Georgian — and similarly to the Slavic languages — preverbs play a role in the signalling of aspectual distinctions. Svan and Modern Georgian 1st and 2nd conjugation verbs have paired Series I screeves, opposed (primarily) in perfectivity. The screeves in column (1) of fig {1} are imperfective, and those in column (2) are perfective. For most verbs the column (1) screeves lack preverbs, and the column (2) screeves have them, e.g.:

**{6} The aspect-marking role of preverbs in Series I**

*Modern Georgian*

	<b>imperfective aspect</b>		<b>perfective aspect</b>	
– <i>Pst</i>	present:	c'er-s	future:	da=c'er-s
+ <i>Pst</i>	imperfect:	c'er-d-a	cond/iter:	da=c'er-d-a
	“s/he writes, will write, was writing it”			

*Svan (Upper Bal)*

	<b>imperfective aspect</b>		<b>perfective aspect</b>	
– <i>Pst</i>	present:	t'ix-e	prfv future:	ä=t'xe □ an=t'ix-e
+ <i>Pst</i>	imperfect:	t'ix-a	prfv condl:	ä=t'xa □ an=t'ix-a
	“s/he returns, will return, was returning it”			
	<b>imperfective aspect</b>		<b>perfective aspect</b>	
– <i>Pst</i>	present:	a-gem	prfv future:	ad=gem-n-e □ ad=gem-in-e
+ <i>Pst</i>	imperfect:	a-gäm-da	prfv condl:	ad=gem-n-a □ ad=gem-in-a
	“s/he builds, will build, was building it”			

In the case of most Modern Georgian 1st and 2nd conjugation verbs, and many of their Svan counterparts, the presence or absence of a preverb is the sole indicator of aspect. For many other Svan 1st and 2nd conjugation verbs, perfective Series I screeves contain an additional suffix as well as a preverb [Topuria 1967:115-130; Chumburidze 1986: 184-215].

In the formal marking of aspectual distinctions in Series II screeves, there is a significant difference between Svan, on the one hand, and Modern Georgian, Laz and Mingrelian, on the other. The latter languages allow the same opposition of preverbed and preverbless forms in the aorist and optative screeves as is found in Series I ({7}).

**{7} The aspect-marking role of preverbs in Series II**

*Modern Georgian*

	<b>imperfective aspect</b>		<b>perfective aspect</b>	
+ <i>Pst</i>	impfv aorist	c'er-a	prfv aorist	da=c'er-a
<i>Modal</i>	impfv optative	c'er-o-s	prfv optative	da=c'er-o-s
	“s/he would/should write it”			

The presence of a preverb indicates that the narrative focus is upon the accomplishment or achievement of the denoted action, while the absence of a preverb indicates that the focus is upon

the period preceding accomplishment (whether or not this ever occurs). Imperfective aorists also can imply iteration in some contexts [Machavariani 1974: 120-1]. Shanidze [1953:272] illustrated this distinction by citing some Georgian proverbs which exploit the semantic difference between imperfective and perfective aorists, e.g. :

- {8} katamma čxrik'a, čxrik'a  
 “The chicken pecked and pecked {IMPFV AOR}”  
 da tavisı dasak’lavi dana gamo=čxrik'a-o.  
 “and (finally) pecked out {PFV AOR} the knife that will be used to kill it.”

For verbs having this opposition, the non-preverbed aorist (e.g. *čxrik'a* ) specifically draws attention to the period when the expected result was not (yet) achieved, and the preverbed aorist (e.g. *gamo-čxrik'a* ) signals achievement (in this case, the chicken’s pecking exposed the knife). Mingrelian imperfective aorists are used in similar contexts to the above (see the proverbs and riddles cited in Qipshidze 1914:183, #8-9), and also in conjunction with negative particles, as in this sentence from Saxokia [1988:268]:

- {9} č’k’ver osurk kot ko=kiminu, vart mitins orčkinu;  
 “The smart woman did it {PFV AOR}, but did not show it to anyone;”  
 xangak vart kininu do ki’anas kišiot’q’vinu.  
 “the foolish one did not do it {IMPFV AOR}, and let everybody know about it.”

Imperfective aorists and optatives are in fact awkward or unacceptable for many Georgian 1st conjugation and certain classes of 2nd conjugation verbs (so-called suffixal and root intransitives), and overall are used less often than their perfective counterparts, but they are by no means rare [see Machavariani 1974:120-1; Metreveli 1988]. By contrast, the formal opposition between preverbless and preverbed Series II screeves appears to be absent in Svan [Topuria 1967:139; Machavariani 1974:137].<sup>3</sup> There is no exact Svan parallel to the semantic distinction between perfective and imperfective aorists and optatives characteristic of Modern Georgian and the Zan languages.<sup>4</sup>

**1.2. The formation of Series II screeves for atelic verbs.** The preceding discussion of Svan morphology has dealt only with verbs of the 1st and 2nd conjugation classes. As noted earlier, these formal classes predominantly consist of telic verbs, the semantic representations of which contain a

<sup>3</sup>I have encountered no examples in texts, including Davitiani’s [1973] collection of Lower Bal Svan proverbs. Asked to translate the Georgian proverb in {8}, a Svan informant gave me a paraphrase with only one verb (a preverbed aorist). According to Machavariani [1974:137], “in Svan, unlike the other Kartvelian languages, imperfective (preverbless) aorists are very rare. V. Topuria [1967:139] considers the preverb to be an inseparable component of the Svan aorist.” In a footnote on the same page, Machavariani cites what he claims is the sole example he was able to find of a Svan imperfective aorist, devised by a Lashx informant: *xočid i xočid* “he was hitting him and hitting him” (Georgian “*urt’q’a da urt’q’a*”). Note, however, that Lashx is a Lower Svan dialect, in many respects more heavily influenced by Georgian than the relatively isolated Upper Svan dialects.

<sup>4</sup>Those Svan aorists which are attested without preverbs are aspectually perfective. They are believed to be relics, pointing to an earlier stage of Svan when preverbs did not have aspectual meaning [Topuria 1967:155-6; Machavariani 1974:137,139; Schmidt 1985].

prominent transition or change of state. The remaining conjugation classes (3rd and 4th) are composed almost exclusively of atelic verbs. Svan 3rd conjugation verbs are mostly activity verbs, and the 4th conjugation is made up of stative verbs. We will look at statives first, then activity verbs.

According to Gudjedjiani & Palmaitis [1986:88-90] “static verbs” generally only appear in imperfective (i.e. preverbless) screeves: the perfective future and conditional of Series I and both Series II screeves are lacking. The exceptions are stative verbs with pseudo-aorists and pseudo-optatives formed by the addition of a preverb to the imperfect and present conjunctive stems, respectively; these forms, therefore, are based on Series I, not Series II, stems [Topuria 1967:156-161,166; Machavariani 1974:138]. The difference in meaning between imperfect and pseudo-aorist — to judge from the Georgian glosses provided by Topuria — ranges from durative vs. momentaneous (*x-a-lo:n-(d-a) //at=lo:n* ) to state vs. inchoative (*x-a-lt’-ən-d-a //la=xlat’-ən-d-a* ). Here are some examples:

{10} **Preverbed screeves of Svan stative verbs (Upper Bal dialect)**

	<i>imperfect</i>	<i>pseudo-aorist</i>
(1)	x-a-lo:n-(d-a) “was offended [impf]” [ <i>c’q’inda</i> ]	<b>at</b> =lo:n □ ad=x-a-la-ən-(d-a) “was offended [prfv]” [ <i>ec’q’ina</i> ]
(2)	x-o-xal-d-a “knew” [ <i>icoda</i> ]	<b>lo</b> =x-xal-d-a □ la=x-o-xal-d-a “seemed/thought (sthg was the case)” [ <i>egona</i> ]
(3)	x-a-lt’-ən-d-a “loved” [ <i>uq’varda</i> ]	<b>la</b> =xlat’-ən-d-a □ la=x-a-lat’-ən-d-a “fell in love” [ <i>šeuq’varda</i> ]
	<i>present conjunctive</i>	<i>pseudo-optative</i>
(1)	x-a-lo:n-de:d-s	<b>at</b> =lo:n-de:d-s □ ad=x-a-la-ən-de:d-s
(2)	x-o-xal-de:d-s	<b>lo</b> =xw-xal-de:d-s □ la=x-o-xal-de:d-s
(3)	x-a-lt’-ən-de:d-s	<b>la</b> =xlat’-ən-de:d-s □ la=x-a-lat’-ən-de:d-s

This phenomenon is limited to Svan; there is nothing like it elsewhere in Kartvelian. Apparent parallels with Georgian (e.g. *uq’varda* “sb loved sb/sthg” and *še=uq’varda* “sb fell in love with sb/sthg”) are nothing more than. The first is formally the imperfect of a 4th conjugation stative verb (*u-q’var-s* ), and the second the aorist of a derived 2nd conjugation inchoative (*še=u-q’var-d-eb-a*); their morphological similarity is largely coincidental [Topuria 1967:159].

Most Svan activity verbs (3rd conjugation), in most dialects, inflect like weak 1st conjugation verbs in Series II and — also like 1st conjugation verbs — assign ergative case to their morphological subjects (e.g. *eĵ-ne:m ädšdira:le* “s/he-ERG played”). Preverbs are always present in the aorist and optative of Svan activity verbs; in this respect their morphology differs sharply from that of Georgian activity verbs, e.g.

{11}	<i>Aorist (3rd conjugation verb) — Upper Bal</i>
S <sub>1sg</sub>	ät=w-š <b>dir-ä:l</b> □ ad=xw-i-šdir-ä:l “I played”
S <sub>2sg</sub>	ät=š <b>dir-ä:l</b> □ ad=x-i-šdir-ä:l
S <sub>3sg</sub>	äd=š <b>dir-a:l-e</b> □ ad=i-šdir-a:l-e
S <sub>1pl,incl</sub>	a=l-š <b>dir-a:l-e-d</b>

S<sub>1pl,excl</sub>     ät=w-šdir-a:l-e-d  
 S<sub>2pl</sub>         ät=šdir-a:l-e-d  
 S<sub>3pl</sub>         äd=šdir-a:l-e-x  
 (cp Mod Geo equivalents: *v-i-tamaš-e*, *i-tamaš-e*, *i-tamaš-a* . . without preverbs)

The morphology and syntax of activity verbs is not uniform throughout the Svan-speaking territory, especially in the Lower Bal dialect region. We note, first of all, that one and the same verb may form its Series II stem according to different patterns in different dialects. The following activity verb (which means “they spat”) forms its aorist according to the 1st conjugation pattern in the Ecer subdialect of Lower Bal, while its cognates in the two Lower Svan dialects contain the suffix *-an/a:n-*, used to form the aorists of non-ablauting 2nd conjugation verbs. The syntax varies accordingly: the Ecer verb assigns ERG case, and its Lower Svan counterparts assign NOM [examples from Topuria 1967:237].

{12}	<i>Ecer (Lower Bal)</i>	<i>Lentex</i>	<i>Lashx</i>
present	i-t’bən-äl-x	i-t’bən-äl-x	i-t’bən-a:l-x
aorist	äd=t’əbn-al-e-x □ ad=i-t’əbn-al-e-x	čwäd=t’əbn-an-x □ ču-ad=i-t’əbn-an-x	čwed=t’əbn-a:l-a:n-x □ ču-ad=i-t’əbn-a:l-a:n-x

In the Laxamulan subdialect of Lower Bal Svan, athematic aorists, without umlaut, have been described for 3rd conjugation verbs, in particular activity verbs with stems ending in the frequentitive suffix *-äl/el-* [Kaldani 1978; Harris 1985:119-123]. Harris notes that athematic forms exist alongside, and are semantically equivalent to, thematic aorists formed from the same verbs. The most striking difference between the two sets of verb forms is in their syntax: the thematic aorists assign ERG case (e.g. *eĵ-nem äd=šdiral-e* “s/he-ERG played”), but their athematic equivalents assign NOM case (*eĵ-i äd=šdiral* “s/he-NOM played”). The two patterns are shown in {13} (forms elicited from A. Chkadua; cp Kaldani [1978:152]).

{13} *Aorist paradigms (3rd conjugation verb) – Laxamulan (Lower Bal)*

	<b>thematic</b>	<b>athematic</b>
S <sub>1sg</sub>	ot=šdir-al	ot=šdir-al □ ad=xw-i-šdir-al
S <sub>2sg</sub>	ät=šdir-al	ät=šdir-al □ ad=x-i-šdir-al
S <sub>3sg</sub>	äd=šdir-al-e	äd=šdir-al □ ad=i-šdir-al
S <sub>1pl,incl</sub>	o=l-šdir-al-e-d	o=l-šdir-al-d □ ad=l-i-šdir-al-d
S <sub>1pl,excl</sub>	ot=šdir-al-e-d	ot=šdir-al-d
S <sub>2pl</sub>	ät=šdir-al-e-d	ät=šdir-al-d
S <sub>3pl</sub>	äd=šdir-al-e-x “they [ERG] played”	äd=šdir-al-x “they [NOM] played”

Kaldani [1978] argues that the athematic pattern derives from the paradigm he reconstructed for Svan intransitive verbs (i.e. \*-Ø in the S<sub>1/2sg</sub> stem, and \*-Ø-a in the S<sub>3/pl</sub> stem, with later loss of the final vowel yielding an athematic S<sub>3/pl</sub> stem). Harris [1985:134-140] accepts Kaldani’s hypothesis, and provides further arguments to support the view that the (presently) athematic

paradigm for 3rd conjugation verbs is more ancient than the pattern with S3/pl -e ). The presence of this latter inflectional paradigm in Laxamulan, and, as the dominant pattern for 3rd conjugation verbs, elsewhere in Svan, is attributable to paradigmatic levelling under the influence of the weak 1st conjugation. The syntax of activity verbs in Series II, likewise, has been “borrowed” from the 1st conjugation, presumably because most of these verbs, although intransitive, have agents as subjects (in Harris’s terms, there has been a shift from ergative to ACTIVE case marking).

**1.3. Preverbed pseudo-aorists for Svan atelic verbs.** I find the Kaldani/Harris hypothesis convincing in most respects. Where I differ from them is in the classification of forms such as *äd=šdir-al* in Prehistoric Svan. It is my belief that these were not originally aorists — or Series II screeves of any sort — but rather SERIES I FORMS THAT WERE LATER REINTERPRETED AS AORISTS. The facts to support my view come from the Lower Bal subdialects. The imperfect stems of 3rd conjugation verbs in -*äl/el-* are marked by ablaut of the suffixal vowel to /a/, which Kaldani [1968] attributes to a now-lost imperfect-stem formant \*-a [exs from Topuria 1967:90, 91 n.1]:

{14}	<b>Imperfect stems of 3rd conjugation verbs (Lower Bal)</b>	
S3sg present:	i-šdr-äl “s/he plays”	i-burg-el “s/he wrestles”
S1sgimperfect:	xw-i-šdr-al	xw-i-burg-al
S2sg “ “	x-i-šdr-al	x-i-burg-al
S3sg “ “	i-šdr-al □ i-šdir-al < *i-šdir-äl-a	i-burg-al < *i-burg-el-a

Now compare the above forms with the athematic aorists of the same verbs in the Laxamulan subdialect (the aorist of *išdräl* is in {13}, that for *iburgel* is given below):

{15}	<b>Athematic “aorist” of 3rd conjugation verb (Lower Bal [Laxamulan])</b>	
S1sg	ot=burg-al □ ad=xw-i-burg-al	“s/he wrestled”
S2sg	ät=burg-al □ ad=x-i-burg-al	
S3sg	äd=burg-al □ ad=i-burg-al	

The correlation is the same for all other activity verbs in -*äl/el-* which I tested with my informants. Some examples are given below, along with the Georgian glosses provided by the informants. In each case, the Laxamulan forms derived by the addition of a preverb to the imperfect were glossed by Georgian aorists:

{16}	<b>Imperfects and pseudo-aorists of 3rd conjugation verbs (Laxamulan)</b>		
	<i>imperfect</i>	<i>pseudo-aorist</i>	<i>Georgian gloss of pseudo-aorist</i> [ S3sg forms]
	i-k’il-al	äd=k’il-al	ik’ivla “yelled, shrieked”
	i-q’ul-al	äd=q’ul-al	ib[ä]vla “mooed, lowed”
	i-bk’ər-al	äd=bek’ur-al	ibluk’una “stammered”
	i-k’ərək’ac-al	äd=k’ərək’c-al	ik’ak’ana “cackled”
	i-k’wc-al	äd=k’wec-al	ik’vnesa “sighed”
	i-c’kun-al	äd=c’kun-al	ic’veta “dripped <sub>intr</sub> ”

In the Laxamulan subdialect of Lower Bal, then, a sizeable number of atelic verbs — stative and activity verbs alike — have screeves with aorist-like semantics formed by adding a preverb (usually *ad-*) to the imperfect. The preverbed imperfects of activity verbs denote, according to my informants, actions which began and ended in the past, and which are represented as single events in the structuring of narrative (i.e. this screeve cannot be used when another event is described as occurring within the time frame of the activity in question). For some verbs, the preverbed imperfect conveys the additional sense of a single occurrence (semelfactivity), e.g. *eji äd=k'il-al* (□ *ad=i-k'il-al*) [s/he-NOM yell:Pvb+Impf] “s/he yelled (once), uttered a shriek” (cp imperfect *i-k'il-al*). Note also the following Lower Bal (Becho subdialect) forms, cited by Topuria [1967: 159, 166], who translates the Svan preverbed imperfect with a Georgian 2nd conjugation aorist (with punctiliar semantics):

{17}	<i>imperfect</i>		<i>pseudo-aorist</i>
	sip'-d-a		<b>an</b> =sip'-d-a
	“was turning” [Geo. <i>t'rialebda</i> ]		“turned (hither)” [Geo. <i>mot'rialda</i> ]
	<i>present conjunctive</i>		<i>pseudo-optative</i>
	sip'-d-e-s		an=sip'-d-e-s

A similar form, based on the same root but with a different preverb, occurs in an Upper Bal poem [Shanidze et al 1939: 150g; recorded in the village Mulakhi in 1927]. Here as well the editors gloss the Svan form with a Georgian 2nd conjugation aorist:

{18}	<i>čäž-ild</i>	<i>mörtente</i>	<i>lä=ǰ-sip'-d-a.</i>
	horse-DIM:NOM	back-to	turn:S3sg:O2:Pvb+Impf(“AOR”)
	“The horse turned around toward you.” [Geo. <i>cxeni uk'u šegit'rialda</i> ]		

(These latter two examples indicate that preverbed imperfects of 3rd conjugation verbs with aorist-like semantics were not limited to the Laxamulan subdialect of Lower Bal).

This phenomenon — the formation of a verb with semantics characteristic of Series II (i.e. punctiliar/semelfactive aspect) by the addition of a preverb to a Series I stem (imperfect or present conjunctive) appears to be limited to atelic verbs (3rd and 4th conjugations). On the other hand, the addition of a preverb to the imperfect or present conjunctive of a 1st or 2nd conjugation verb gives the (perfective) conditional and future conjunctive screeves, respectively, in both Georgian and Svan. The conditional is primarily used in (i) hypothetical or counterfactual constructions (“had you called me sooner, I would have come [*conditional* ] on time”); (ii) as a future-in-the-past (“the day before yesterday I heard that he would buy a car [*conditional* ] yesterday”) [Vamling 1989:70] and (iii) in descriptions of habitual past action (“as soon as the sun would rise, Peter would get up, dress, wash, eat breakfast, ...” [*all conditionals*]) [see Shanidze 1953:215; Machavariani 1974:120; Metreveli 1988]. Here is an example of a Svan perfective conditional, used to indicate the future-in-the-past in indirect speech:

- {19} [Upper Bal; Shanidze et al 1939:3851-52]  
 aš dam je:ka ugvarw čegmärs,  
 so not tell:S1sg:O2:AOR ignoble Chegem-PL-DAT  
 gela kurda:n ču=mi-c'wer-da!  
 G. K.-NOM avenge:S3sg:O1sg:Pvb+Impf(PRFV.CONDL)  
 “Didn’t I tell you low-life Chegemians that Gela Kurdan would avenge me!”  
 [Geo. *xom gitxarit ugvaro čegemlebs gela kurdani ai[ɸbda čems sixxls!* ]

The semantic range of these preverbed imperfects of Georgian and Svan telic verbs resembles that of the English and French constructions consisting of, formally speaking, the past tense of the future (for example, *would* + infinitive in English [*would* being the past-tense form of the future auxiliary *will*]; the French *conditionnel* [which bears the same morphological relation to the future as the imperfect to the present]). These facts can be represented with a sort of semantic algebra:

- {20} **Bracketing of morphological components for Svan telic verbs**  
 [preverb + present stem] + imperfect =  
 future + imperfect = conditional, future-in-the-past, &c  
 e.g. [ ču + mi-c'wer ] + da = ču=mi-c'wer-da “he would avenge me”

By contrast, the bracketing associated with the pseudo-aorists of atelic verbs is as follows:<sup>5</sup>

- {21} **Bracketing of morphological components for Svan atelic verbs**  
 preverb + [present stem + imperfect]=  
 perfective + past imperfect = perfective past (pseudo-aorist)  
 e.g. la + [xa-lat' + ən-da ] = la=x-lat'-ən-d-a “sb fell in love with sb”  
 ad + [ i-šdir-äl + a ] = äd=šdir-al “sb played”

I will not dwell on these alternative bracketings any further in the present paper, save to point out that Svan morphological algebra does not abide by the associative law. I expect to return to this and other issues associated with the evolution of the Svan aspectual system in future work.

**§2. Conclusion: Aorists and pseudo-aorists of Svan atelic verbs.** Here is my hypothesis for the origin of the aorist- and optative-like screeves of Svan atelic (3rd and 4th conjugation) verbs:

<sup>5</sup>I would not exclude the possibility that the preverbed imperfects of at least some atelic verbs, even in Laxamulan Lower Bal, could be interpreted according to the bracketing pattern in {20} as well as {21}. In one of the Laxamulan texts in Davitiani et al [1957:29735-36], what would appear to be the preverbed imperfect of a 4th conjugation verb is used in the description of a hypothetical situation, a usage one would associate with the conditional:

šomä mič es=c'əx-i-w, gam-s xät'xa.  
 when him/her:DAT need:O3:S3sg:Pvb+Impf(PRFV.CONDL) in.kind-DAT return:S3sg:O3:Impf  
 “If that person should ever be in need, (the family) would pay him back in kind.”

The problem needs further study. One notes that the suffix *-w*, a common imperfect stem formant with most classes of verbs in Laxamulan [Topuria 1967:91 note 1], is replaced by *-ən* in most stative (4th conjugation) verbs. The Lower Bal pseudo-aorist given by Topuria [op cit, p 157] for this verb is es=c'əx-ən [Geo *dascə'irda* ] “sb needed sthg”; hence the perfective conditional and pseudo-aorist are formally distinct, even though both consist of preverb + present stem + imperfect suffix.

1. At an earlier stage of Prehistoric Svan, only telic (1st or 2nd conjugation) verbs had opposed Series I and Series II stems. The punctiliar aspect associated with Series II was of a sort that placed the narrative focus upon a salient change of state, and as such was incompatible with atelic verbs, the semantics of which represent an event or state as essentially homogeneous, without a significant transition point.

2. Preverbs in Prehistoric Svan came to be linked with perfectivity (the accomplishment or achievement of an event). Because of their semantics they became an obligatory component of the perfective screeves of Series I and both Series II screeves for telic verbs (except for some relics from the earlier aspectual system, in which preverbs were not used to code aspect).

3. Although their core significance is atelic, some events associated with 3rd and 4th conjugation verbs can be represented as punctiliar (e.g. single, brief occurrences: “he uttered a cry”) and/or telic (e.g. the beginning of an event or state: “he fell in love with her”). To convey such representations, Prehistoric Svan speakers added preverbs to certain Series I screeves of atelic verbs. Hence the preverbed imperfects and conjunctives given in {10} and {15}-{18} above.<sup>6</sup>

{22} **Person-marking patterns for aorists in Upper Svan**

<b>Upper Bal</b>	<i>3rd conj [+ERG]</i>	<i>1st conj [weak]</i>	<i>3rd conj [+NOM]</i>	<i>2nd conj.</i>
S2sg:	ät=šdir-ä:l	ax-mär	ät=di:r-än	äx-mär-än
S3sg:	äd=šdir-a:l-e	an-mär-e	äd=di:r-ä:n	än-mär-ä:n

**Lower Bal**

<b>Becho</b>	<i>3rd conj [+ERG]</i>	<i>1st conj [weak]</i>	<i>3rd conj [+NOM]</i>	<i>2nd conj.</i>
S2sg:	ät=šdir-al	ax-mär	ät=dir-en	äx-mar-en
S3sg:	äd=šdir-al-e	an-mar-e	äd=dir-an	än-mar-an

<b>Ecer</b>	<i>3rd conj [+ERG]</i>	<i>1st conj [weak]</i>	<i>3rd conj [+NOM]</i>	<i>2nd conj.</i>
S2sg:	ät=šdir-äl	ax-mär	ät=dir-en	äx-mar-en
S3sg:	äd=šdir-al-e	an-mar-e	äd=dir-än	än-mar-än

<b>Laxamul</b>	<i>3rd conj [+ERG]</i>	<i>1st conj [weak]</i>	<i>3rd conj [+NOM]</i>	<i>2nd conj.</i>
S2sg:	ät=šdir-al	ax-mär	ät=dir-en	äx-mar-en
S3sg:	äd=šdir-al-e	an-mar-e	äd=dir-an	än-mar-an

**Laxamul** *athematic aorist (= preverb + imperfect)*

S2sg:	ät=šdir-al
S3sg:	äd=šdir-al [+NOM]

<sup>6</sup>According to the Svan speakers I consulted, many root 3rd conjugation verbs (i.e. those with stems lacking the frequentative/durative suffixes *-ä:l-* or *-ie:l-*) form neither true aorist nor pseudo-aorist screeves. This is especially true in Lower Bal (with its more conservative aspect-marking morphology), and also in Upper Bal. Chato Gudjedjiani provided over a dozen Upper Bal activity verbs the imperfects of which are not opposed to an aorist-like screeve, e.g. *ve:l-da* “bleated,” *txi:l-da* “snored,” *k’ð:r-a* “shone,” *swib-da* “danced.” Note also the lack of all preverbed screeves for some of the Lower Bal activity verbs listed in Gagua [1976:209-215].

4. The descendents of the preverbed Series I screeves of stative verbs seem to have changed little in the modern Svan dialects: they have recognizable imperfect and present-conjunctive stems (note the presence of the suffixes *-ən-*, *-d-a*, *-de:d-* in {10}, which are never used in the Series II stems of telic verbs, but which do appear in the Series I stems of these verbs). As for the preverbed imperfects and conjunctives of activity verbs, these still retain their original morphological and syntactic characteristics in Laxamulan. Elsewhere they have taken on, in varying degrees, the formal properties of 1st or 2nd conjugation (true) aorists and optatives. In {22} are representative verbs from four inflectional patterns: 1st conjugation [1st conj] with weak aorist (*ama:re* “sb prepares sthg”); 2nd conjugation [2nd conj] with suffixal aorist (*imä:ri* “sb/sthg gets prepared”); activity verb in *-äl/el-* which assigns ERG case in Series II (*išdräl* “sb plays”); activity verb in *-äl/el-* which assigns NOM case in Series II (*idiräl* “sb dines”).

In Upper Bal, and in the Ecer subdialect of Lower Bal, 3rd conjugation verbs have gone completely over to one or the other of the patterns characteristic of telic verbs. In Becho and Laxamulan the S1/2sg stem of the ERG-assigning 3rd conjugation lacks the umlaut which occurs in the 1st conjugation weak aorist.

5. These facts, in conjunction with the evidence presented by Kaldani [1978] and Harris [1985] which indicates the greater antiquity of the Laxamulan athematic aorist, lead me to reconstruct the following scenario for the development of 3rd conjugation aorists in Svan:

**Scenario for history of 3rd conjugation verbs in Svan:**

**Stage I.** 3rd conjugation verbs only form Series I screeves; they lack Series II screeves entirely. Their imperfect stems are formed by the addition of *\*-a* in all persons and numbers (Kaldani [1968]; Machavariani [1980]). This suffix was later lost, after it lowered the */e/* of *-el* activity verbs to */a/* (cp. present *iburg-el* “s/he wrestles,” imperfect *iburg-al* in {14}). The preverbed imperfects and present-conjunctives assign NOM case to their subjects ( *eji ad=i-burg-el* “s/he:NOM wrestled”), as is normal for Series I screeves.

**Stage II.** Accompanying a shift in the aspectual system of Prehistoric Svan, Series II ceases to be semantically incompatible with atelic verbs. The activity verbs in *-äl/el* take on Series II stems according to the patterns employed by telic verbs. Certain less agentive 3rd conjugation verbs (e.g. *i-rxun-äl* “it thunders”; but note also the quite agentive *i-dir-äl* “sb dines” in {22}) take on the inflectional characteristics of 2nd conjugation verbs in *-ä:n* (in the aorist series only). The rest form new screeves based on the 1st conjugation (along with ERG case assignment), but retain their old 3rd conjugation pseudo-aorists (preverbed imperfects) as well.

	<u>Old pseudo-aorist</u>	<u>1st conj pattern</u>	<u>2nd conj pattern</u>
S1/2sg:	-a:l	-ä:l	-än
S3sg/all pls:	-a:l	-a:l-e	-ä:n
	[+nom]	[+erg]	[+nom; Cp. present in -ä:l]

**Stage III. [Upper Bal]** The old pseudo-aorist pattern is completely lost, replaced by a pattern (and case assignment) modeled after the 1st conjugation.

**[Lower Bal]** Traces of the old pseudo-aorist [ps-aor] are retained to varying degrees, especially in the S1/2sg stem. In Laxamulan the pseudo-aorist and 1st-conjugation-based true aorist forms

continue to survive side-by-side.

	<u>Becho</u>	<u>Ecer</u>	<u>Laxamulan</u>	
S1/2sg:	-al	-äl/-al	[-al]	-al
S3sg/all pls:	-al-e	-al-e	-al	-al-e
	[+nom]	[+erg]		
	(1/2sg from ps-aor, 3sg/pls from 1st conj)	(mostly 1st conj, traces of ps-aor in 1/2sg)	(ps-aor)	(1/2sg from ps-aor, 3sg/pls from 1st conj)

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