

Chapter 6

6. Alanic Evidence

6.1. Medieval Documents

For the time being, three mediaeval Alanic documents have been discovered and published:

A. a short inscription (epitaph) dating from the 11th-12th centuries, found in 1888 near the river Zelenčuk in the Northwest Caucasus; it is written in Greek characters (cf. Zgusta 1987; Abaev 1949: 260 f.; Thordarson 1988);

B. a few Alanic verses noted by the Byzantine scholar Ioannes Tzetzes (12th century); they are written in Greek letters (cf. Abaev 1949: 254 ff.; Hunger 1953);

C. a brief glossary containing some words in use among the Hungarian Yass people (Alans who settled in Hungary in the 13th century), together with a Latin translation; the document dating from the year 1422 is written with Latin letters (cf. Németh 1959).¹³⁹

These texts do give us some information about the vocabulary and the phonetic history of Ossetic. For the historical morphology and syntax, however, they are of minor value.

6.2. Case forms

The nominative singular in *-æ* as recorded in the documents has already been treated above (cf. 4.12.3.). A genitive in *-i*, written *-η*, occurs several times in the Zelenčuk inscription:

σαχηρη φουρτ ηστορη φουρτ πακαθα(ρ)η φουρτ α(ν)παλανη φουρτ “son of Sakhir, Istor, Bæqætær, Ambalan” (based on Zgusta’s interpretation, cf. Zgusta 1987: 59).

We may note that the modifying genitive precedes the head; this is in accordance with the rules of the modern language.

In the Yass glossary we find examples of the enclitic possessive pronouns; cp. *da* = *dæ* “your” in *daban horz* (1. 1) = modern *dæ bon xorz* “good morning”. Note *horz* equally I. *xorz* rather than D. *xuarz*.

The enclitic *næ* is found in *nahechsa* = *næ xecau* “our master”; cf. D. *xecau*, I. *xicau* “master”.

The enclitic *dæ* appears in the Tzetzes text, too, in *ταπαγγάζ* = *dæ bon xorz*. As to *mæ* in *μέσφιλε*, if representing *me’fsinæ* (*mæ æfsinæ*) “my lady” in the same text, cf. 4.12.3. above.

A genitive plural of the demonstrative pronoun *a-*, *ανη*, seems to occur in the Zelenčuk epitaph: *ανη τζηρθε* “their tombstone”, cp. D. *ani*, gen. plur. (cf. 5.5.5. above).

¹³⁹ For a bibliography and an account of mediaeval Alanic in general cf. also Bielmeier in Schmitt 1989.