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The prehistory of the synthetic comparatives“  
von Jost Gippert (1996).

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Jost Gippert

## The formation of comparatives in the history of Georgian

### Part I: The prehistory of the synthetic comparatives<sup>1</sup>

A remarkable difference between Modern Georgian and the Old Georgian literary language consists in the fact that comparative forms of adjectives were built in a highly synthetic way in the latter whereas the modern language has analytic ones. The Old Georgian comparatives, nowadays used with a "superlative / elative" function only, were commonly formed with a prefixed *u-* plus a suffix that appeared either as a shorter variant, *-e* or *-o*, or as a longer, declinable one, *-ēs-* (< *-eys-*) or *-oys-*. The Old Georgian Bible translation reveals examples like *u-did-e* / *u-did-ēs-i* "bigger" from *did-i* "big, large" (e.g. Ps. 134,5), *u-boroṭ-e* / *u-boroṭ-ēs-i* "worse" from *boroṭ-i* "bad, evil" (e.g. Dan. 3,32), or *u-pr-o* / *u-pr-oys-i* "more" (e.g. Lc. 7,43), obviously related to the root which is present in *pr-iad* "very". The last named short form, *upro*, is the element used in the modern language to build analytic comparatives of all adjectives such as, e.g., *upro didi* "bigger".

It can easily be shown that the synthetic type was inherited from Proto-Kartvelian, given that similar formations exist in the Zan languages as well as Svan; cp. Megrelian *u-magal-aš-i* "highest" (from *magal-i* "high"), Laz *u-žgi-š-i* "best", or Svan *xo-lqmaš-a* "strongest" (from *ləqmäš* "strong"). Curiously enough, all sister languages show the same tendency as Georgian does, in that these formations are restricted to superlative / elative functions today while real comparatives are built analytically: Megrelian uses *umosi*, Laz, *dido*, and Svan, *gun* or *zğəd* as equivalents of Georgian *upro*.

As to the origin of the synthetic formation, a theory first published by I. QIPŠIṢE (KIPŠIDZE) in his Grammar of Megrelian has become widespread. According to this theory, the prefix appearing as *u-* both in Megrelian and Georgian, is identical with the versional marker of a third person in finite verbal forms and refers to the object of the comparison:

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<sup>1</sup> A preliminary version of this article was read on the occasion of the VII. Caucasian Colloquium in Marburg, 19.7.1994; the present edition is the first printed one. A second part concerning the historical development within Georgian has meanwhile been published separately (in: Studies in Caucasian Linguistics. Selected papers of the Eighth Caucasian Colloquium, ed. H. VAN DEN BERG, Leiden 1999, 32-44).

"Сравнительная степень образуется, какъ и въ грузинскомъ, съ помощью мѣстоименнаго объективнаго префикса родительнаго отношенія 3-го лица უ *ego*, resp. *ему* .. и суффикса ღო, окончанія Р. падежа, предворяемаго гласнымъ ა: ა-ღო." (KIPŠIDZE 1914, p. 033)

It is not clear whether this interpretation was developed by KIPŠIDZE himself or whether he learned it from N.Ja. MARR. In an article that appeared one year later than the Megrelian Grammar but was obviously written some time before, this author had come to the same conclusion after rejecting an alternative hypothesis considered by himself earlier, according to which the *u-* element had to be connected with the Kartvelian negative prefix:

"Сначала въ префиксѣ -უ -и грузинской сравнительной степени (она же и превосходная) мы усматривали известную отрицательную частицу: предполагалось, что форма უდიდესი *u-did-eys-i* *величайший* представляетъ цѣлое отрицательное сужденіе «не (u-) есть (-eys-) [болѣе] великій», но сванскій эквивалентный префиксъ ხო- ღო-, напр. ხობ ღო-ღა *лучший, хороший* сразу открылъ, что въ обсуждаемомъ картскомъ образовательномъ элементѣ имѣемъ не известную отрицательную частицу უ- u-, а не менѣе известную объективную мѣстоименную частицу Р. падежа უ- u- (<\*wi), дѣйствительный эквивалентъ сванскаго ხო- ღო-, что касается окончанія -eys-, то это суффиксъ -e и окончаніе Р. падежа (-e-is > eys). Слѣдовательно, г. უდიდესი *u-di-eys-i* буквально значитъ «его *великій*» > *величайший*, а св. ხობ ღო-ღა «его *хороший*» > *лучший*." (MARR 1915, p.51)

As the quotation shows, the decisive argument for MARR's changing his mind was the discovery that the Svan equivalent of the Georgian *u-* prefix was the element *xo-* otherwise appearing as a versional object marker. In his Grammar of Old Literary Georgian (1925), MARR further proposed that the Georgian word *xucēs-i*, "vulgar" *xuces-i* "priest" had to be identified with the Svan comparative *xo-ša* "older, elder", thus revealing the prefix beginning with *x-* in Georgian too. MARR considered this to be a borrowing from Svan:

"ხუცესი-ო, вульг. ხუცესი-ო *священникъ* ... Эта основа пока въ грузинскомъ наблюдаена лишь въ видѣ ხუცესი, но она также усѣченная изъ ხუცა, она также заимствована изъ сванскаго. Въ ხუცესი налицо — сванская сравнительная степень корня უ — ხო-ღო *старший, большой* .. съ перерожденіемъ უ въ (ხ /) ც согласно свистящей природѣ грузинскаго и съ діалектическимъ передвиженіемъ ო въ უ въ префиксѣ ხუ-." (MARR 1925, p. 58 sq.)

In the same way, MARR regarded the Georgian versional object marker *u-* itself as a borrowing from Svan:

"Частица უ- представляетъ заимствованный, съ потерю спиранта ჰ, изъ сванской діалектической среды префиксъ \*ჰუ- / \*ხუ-, разновидность ხო-, объективнаго префикса Р. падежа въ современномъ сванскомъ языкѣ ..." (ib., p. 91 sq.).

This view cannot be upheld any longer, of course. But the hypothesis that the comparative prefix was the same as the verbal version marker was further supported when in the 1920ies, the so called *Xanmeti* and *Haemeti* texts came to light. Here, the prefix of the comparative forms appeared as *xu-* and *hu-*, resp., i.e. it

showed the characteristic feature of these most ancient texts in the same way as the verbal prefix *did*; cp. the *xanmeṭi* forms *xu-did-ēs-i* "bigger" (Lc. 20,47), *xu-pr-oys-i* "more, bigger", *xu-mcir-ēs-i* "smaller" (Mt. 11,11), *xu-mžob-ēs-i* "better" (Mt. 5,29), *xu-meṭ-ēs-i* "bigger" (Mt. 5,37), *xu-advil-ēs-i* "lighter" (Lc. 16,17), *xu-çinar-ēs-i* "earlier" (Jo. 5,7), *xu-mravl-ēs-i* "more" (Mt. 21,36) or the *haemeṭi* form *hu-advil-ēs-i* "lighter" with a verbal form like *xu-brzan-a* "he ordered (to) him" (Mt. 8,9), Svan *xo-sgož* "id."

The importance of the *xanmeṭi* and *haemeṭi* variants was underlined by A. ŠANIŽE in a paper about personal markers in nominal forms in the Kartvelian languages, read on a session of the linguistic section of the Rustaveli Institute in 1934 (ŠANIŽE 1934/1981, p. 402 sq.). In his Grammar of Old Georgian, this author stated briefly:

"უძველეს დროს უფროსობითი ხარისხის სახელებს წინ ერთოდა ხ (ხანმეტობის დროს) ან ჰ (ჰანმეტობის დროს): ხუმჯობესი (ჰუმჯობესი). ეს ხ (ან ჰ) წარმოშობით არის მე-3 ობიექტური პირის ნიშანი: ხუმჯობესი — მისი მჯობი." (ŠANIŽE 1976, 56; similarly in the German edition, 1982, 63).

ŠANIŽE further concluded that if forms like *xumžobēsi* contained a third person object marker, a complete paradigm of all persons must once have existed in Kartvelian:

"ამის გვერდით უნდა არსებულებოდა მიმჯობესი (ჩემი მჯობი) და გიმჯობესი (შენი მჯობი), აგრეთვე გუმჯობესი და მიმჯობესი (ჩვენი მჯობი).." (ib.)

In order to motivate the assumption of a "personal conjugation" within nominal forms, he compared the system of possessive marking by prefixes to be found, e.g. in North West Caucasian languages; cp. his example taken from Abkhaz (ŠANIŽE 1934/1981, 406; transcription and translation J.G.):

1.	<i>s-ab</i>	"my father"	<i>s-an</i>	"my mother"
2.	<i>w-ab</i>	"your (masc.sg.) father"	<i>w-an</i>	"your (masc.sg.) mother"
	<i>b-ab</i>	"your (fem.sg.) father"	<i>b-an</i>	"your (fem.sg.) mother"
3.	<i>y-ab</i>	"his father"	<i>y-an</i>	"his mother"
	<i>l-ab</i>	"her father"	<i>l-an</i>	"her mother"
	<i>a-ab</i>	"its (non-hum.) father"	<i>a-an</i>	"its (non-hum.) mother"

ŠANIŽE's proposal was not universally adopted though. In 1940, K. DONDUA argued against it that in no Kartvelian language any traces of a first or second person marking within comparative forms persist. At least in the most conservative language of the group, viz. Svan, he would have expected remnants of such a salient feature:

"Однако при таком допущении необходимо будет учесть тот факт, что ни в грузинском, ни в мегрельском, ни даже в сванском мы не находим никаких следов изменения сравнительно-превосходной степени в 1-м и во 2-м лице; трудно допустить, чтобы эта морфологическая особенность в одинаковой мере бесследно могла исчезнуть в названных языках, если она в них и в самом деле существовала.

Особенно странной такая судьба сравнительной степени может показаться для сванского языка, который, как известно, единственный из картвельских языков сохранил .. столь древнюю .. форму выражения лица, какой является грамматическая категория инклюзива-экслюзива." (DONDUА 1940, 38 / 1975, 105).

Additional support for ŠANIŽE's hypothesis is available, however, if we compare not the possessive marking of the North West Caucasian languages but the way they build their own comparative forms. At a first glance, the system of today's Abkhaz and Adyghe languages seems to be quite similar to the one of Modern Georgian, in that comparatives are usually formed by combining the normal ("positive") form of the adjective with an adverbial element equivalent to Georgian *upro* meaning "more", viz. Abkhaz *ejħa* and Adyghe *naħ*. Cp. the Adyghe sample sentence (ROGAVA-KERAŠEVA 1966, 73):

*ar naħ daxā χuš' r'əgā*  
"he/she became **more beautiful**."

It can be shown, however, that Abkhaz *ejħa* has to be considered as a synthetic comparative form of its own, just as Georgian *upro* which derived from Old Georgian (*xu-pr-o(ys-i)* "bigger". Cp. the following examples from Bible translation (Jo. 19,11) where Abkhaz *ejħa* is used as an attributive adjective meaning "greater", equivalent to Old Georgian *uproysi / udidēsi*, Xanmeṭi *xudidēsi* (and Greek μείζων)<sup>2</sup>:

Jo. 19,11:	διὰ τοῦτο ὁ παραδούς μέ σοι <b>μείζονα</b> ἁμαρτίαν ἔχει.
Xanmeṭi:	<i>amistws mimcemelsa mas čemsa še'nda` <b>xudidēsi</b> codvay xakus.</i>
Protovulgate (DE):	<i>amistws mimcemelsa mas čemsa šenda <b>udidēsi</b> codvay akus.</i>
Adiši (C):	<i>amistws romelman mimca me šen, <b>uproysi</b> brali akus.</i>
Abkhaz (a):	Убри акынтә уара сузтаз <b>енха</b> гунаха имоуп.

"Therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the **greater** sin."

Another example from Bible translation shows that Abkhaz *ejħa* is able to incorporate person marking with respect to the object of comparison, just in the way ŠANIŽE expected Proto-Kartvelian comparatives to have done:

Jo. 21,15:	Σίμων Ἰωάννου, ἀγαπᾷς με <b>πλέον</b> τούτων;
Xanmeṭi:	<i>simon ionayso, giḡuar mea <b>xupro`ys`</b> amatsa?</i>
Protovulgate (DE):	<i>simon ionayso, giḡuar mea <b>uproys</b> amatsa?</i>
Adiši (C):	<i>simon ionayso, giḡuar me <b>umetes</b> amatsa?</i>
Abkhaz (a):	Симон, Иона иџа, егъырт <b>реиħа</b> бзиа сыубоу Сара?

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me **more** than these?"

<sup>2</sup> Quotations from Abkhaz Bible translation are taken from the editions Stockholm 1981 (a: Gospel of John) and Tiflis 1912 (b: Four gospels). The Georgian *xanmeṭi* quotations are taken from the edition KAŽAIA 1984, the quotations from the Adiši New Testament (C) and the Protovulgate (DE) from the edition ŠANIŽE 1945. The Greek text is given according to the edition NESTLE-ALAND 1963, English translations according to the King James Bible.

Here, the comparative form *ejħa* has a prefix *r-* which obviously refers to the plural pronominal *eg'art*, "the others" (here corresponding to Georgian *amat-sa*). In the same way, a reference to a first person singular object of comparison is met with in St. John's gospel:

Jo. 14,28:	.. ὅτι ὁ πατήρ μείζων μου ἐστίν.
Protovulgate (DE):	.. <i>rametu tamam čemi uproys čemsa ars.</i>
Adiši (C):	.. <i>rametu tamam čemi udides ars čemsa.</i>
Abkhaz (a):	.. избан акузар Аб Сара дсеиħауп. ".. for my Father is <b>greater than I.</b> "

Here, the form in question, *dsejħaup*, contains object marking (*-s-*, 1st person singular, congruent with *sara* "I") as well as subject marking (*d-*, 3rd person singular masc., congruent with *ab* "father"); additionally, it contains the suffix *-up* turning it into a finite stative verbal form "he is bigger than I". In another translation of John, an alternative method of marking the object of comparison was used. Here, the stative verb has the subject marking only (*d-ejħa-up*), whereas the first person singular object appears in the shape of the pronoun *sara* plus a postpositional *s-ačkəs* "with respect to me" only:

Abkhaz (b):	.. избан акузар, С'–Аб Сара сѳцкѳс деиħауп һа иħаз.
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In yet another passage from John, the two Abkhaz translations behave just the other way: Here, the older one has a subject plus object marking in the comparative form, whereas the younger one uses *-ačkəs*:

Jo. 8,53:	μη σὺ μείζων εἶ τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἀβραάμ, ὅστις ἀπέθανεν;
Xanmeti:	<i>niukue šen xuproys xar mamis'a</i>
Protovulgate (DE):	<i>niukue šen uproys xar mamisa čuenisa abrahamisa, romeli moħuda?</i>
Adiši (C):	<i>nutu šen udides xar mamisa čuenisa abraamisa, romeli-igi moħuda?</i>
Abkhaz (b):	Нас Уара иѳсыз ҳаб Абраам иацкѳс уеиħану?
Abkhaz (a):	һаб Авраамі иѳсѳз Уарà уреиħаума?

"Art thou **greater** than our father Abraham, which is dead?"

Note that in *u-r-ejħa-u-ma* "are you greater than he", the object is marked (by *-r*) as a 3rd person plural, most probably in the sense of a *pluralis maiestatis* referring to the patriarch Abraham.

The formation of comparatives that comprise both subject and object marking, thus producing stative verbal forms rather than adjectival ones, is not restricted to *-ejħa-* "more" in Abkhaz as one might suggest on the basis of the examples quoted above. Thus, the Abkhaz grammar by ARSTAA and ČKADUA (1966, 61) provides an example of *-ejc°a-* "worse" treated in the same way (with *d-* subject marker 3rd person singular, *-i-* object marker 3rd person singular, finite ending *-up*):

Акуш деилагар абзамыку диеицəууп.
"When a wise (man) is confused, he is <b>worse</b> than a fool."

It must be stated, though, that in modern Abkhaz, only a few comparatives exist that are capable of being "inflected" like this; to my knowledge, there are only two more of them, viz. *ejγ* 'better, more' and *ejca* "smaller, less", *ejħabə* "older" and *ejçbə* "younger" being derived from *ejħa* "greater" and *ejca* "smaller", respectively. It is certainly not by chance that all these forms contain an element *ej-* which seems to be identical with the marker of the so-called "reciprocal version" in verbal forms (cp. *ej-š'to-up* "they follow each other"). This cannot combine with an object marker, however, so that it is not exactly the same element.

In the Circassian languages, similar features are not easy to find. When personal objects are involved in a comparison using *nah* "more" plus adjective in literary Adyghe, personal pronouns seem to suffice normally as in the following sentence (with *oš* "you"; ROGAVA-KERAŠEVA 1966, 73):

Ощ нахь паги а чым еІэты.

"This earth will bear even a (man) **more severe than you.**"

There is a peculiar case though where a personal prefix is added to *nah* in Adyghe, viz. where this is used in the sense of a superlative form, comparing a given subject with "all" others. The prefix in question is *a-*, identical with the personal marker of a 3rd person plural object in verbal forms; Adyghe *a-nah* is thus equivalent to Abkhaz *r-ejħa* "more than they". Cp. the following two sentences (ROGAVA-KERAŠEVA ib.):

Тэ тиметро - дунаим тетмэ анахь дэгъу.

"Our underground is **better than (all) the (ones) existing** in the world."

Китхэр псэушгъхэ пстеуми анахь иных.

"Whales are **bigger than all (other) animals.**"

For the Šapsuğ dialect of Adyghe, Z. KERAŠEVA mentioned forms like *yə-dăğ<sup>o</sup>ə* "better" which has to be considered as a derivation of *dăğ<sup>o</sup>* "good", being characterized by an object marker of the 3rd person, *yə-* (KERAŠEVA 1957, 59; cf. ROGAVA 1980, 42).

In this way, it is well conceivable that the integration of personal markers in the formation of comparative forms was a common feature of North West Caucasian. Returning to Kartvelian forms as represented by Old Georgian (*xanmeti*) *xu-did-eyš-i*, we have to note the striking similarity of both the functional elements and their arrangement if we compare them with their Abkhaz equivalents:

Abkhaz *dieic<sup>o</sup>ouḗ* "he is worse than he":

<i>d-</i>	<i>i+</i>	<i>ei-</i>	<i>c<sup>o</sup>a-</i>	<i>uḗ</i>
3.ps.sg.subj.	3.ps.sg.ind.obj.+	versional marker (?)	root	(finite) suffix

Georgian *xuzwrēs-i* "worse (than he)":

*( $\emptyset$ )-	<i>x+</i>	<i>u-</i>	<i>zwr-</i>	<i>eyš-</i>	<i>i</i>
(3.ps.sg.subj.)	3.ps.sg.ind.obj.+	versional marker-	root	suffix	nom.ending

On the basis of this similarity, we should indeed expect forms like \**mididēs-i* "bigger than me", matching Abkhaz *dseihaup*, to have existed within Kartvelian once, as A. ŠANIŽE suggested. Given that personal marking with respect to the object of comparison is hardly attested elsewhere, the South and North West Caucasian languages would surely deserve typologists' attention (neither H. JENSEN in his article in 1934 nor P.K. ANDERSEN in his 1983 book took any notice of an "incorporational" type of comparatives as established here); and given that both language groups have always been located in a close geographical neighbourhood, we could even presume that the similarities are vestiges of an areal interrelationship ("Sprachbund") that might have existed in former times.

Several problems persist, however, that have to be explained before we can take these assumptions for granted.

First, we have to consider the fact that within Old Georgian, the object of comparison cannot be regarded as a simple indirect object because it does not appear in the dative case but in the dative of the hypostatical genitive paradigm (at least when it is a personal pronoun). Cp. the following examples (Mt. 3,11 / Lc. 12,24):

Protovulgate (DE):	<i>xolo romeli-igi čemsa šemdgomad movals, uzlieres ars čemsa.</i>
Adiši (C):	<i>xolo šemdgo[m]ad čemsa mom[a]vali uzlier[ēs] čemsa ars.</i>
	"But he that cometh after me is mightier <b>than I.</b> "
Xanmeṭi:	<i>raoden xumžobes xart tk(ue)n mprinvelta?</i>
Protovulgate (DE):	<i>raoden tkuen umžobes xart mprinvelta?</i>
Adiši (C):	<i>ravden tkuen umžobes xart mprinveltasa?</i>
	"How much more are ye better <b>than the fowls?</b> "

If *uzlieres- čemsa* really substitutes a former \**mizlieres-* (*me*), the usage of the hypostatical genitive (*čem-sa*, *mprinvelta-sa*) can be regarded as an easy way of avoiding the incongruence that originated by the loss of non-third person marking; *čem-i* "mine" (sc. "my body") is a third person, not a first one. In this way, the usage of *čemsa* instead of \**me* does not contradict the assumption that *u-zlieres-* etc. are marked for a third person object.

Second, we have to cope with the question what the suffixal elements in comparative forms such as *udid-ēs-i* and *udid-e* are. In the corresponding Abkhaz forms, there can be no doubt that the suffixes have to be classified as verbal morphemes: *-up* in *dseihaup* "he is bigger than me" is the same element as *-up* in *st°o-up* "I am standing", i.e. the marker of finiteness in stative verbs. If we consider that in Kartvelian languages, personal marking is restricted to verbal forms normally, we should therefore expect that their comparatives were verbal forms originally too.

In this connection, it would be necessary first to investigate whether the difference between the so called longer and shorter forms can be accounted for on syntactical grounds. At a first glance, it seems that the short form was predestined for usage as a predicate form in copular sentences such as Mt. 5,29 in the Adiši gospels:

Adiši (C): .. *rametu umžobe ars šenda, rayta çarçqmdes erti asota šentagani* ..  
 "for it is **profitable** for thee that one of thy members should perish .."

It has to be stated, though, that from earliest times on, the endingless form of the longer stem was used equivalently in this environment; cf. the same passage in the *xanmeti* text and the Protovulgate:

Xanmeti: .. *r(ametü) xumžobēs ars šenda r(ayt)a çarçqmdes erti asota šentagani* ..  
 Protov. (DE): .. *rametu umžobēs ars šenda, rayta çarçqmdes erti asota šentagani* ..

In the next verse from within Matthew (5,30), in an otherwise identical sentence, even the Adiši text prefers the longer form:

Adiši (C): .. *rametu umžobes ars šenda, rayta çarçqmdes erti asota šenta[gani]* ..  
 Xanmeti: .. *r(ametü) xumžobēs ars šenda r(ayt)a çarçqmdes erti asota šentagani* ..  
 Protov. (DE): .. *rametu umžobes ars šenda, rayta çarçqmdes erti asota šentagani* ..

As was stated above, N.Ja. MARR proposed that the element *-eys/-oys-* of the (longer form of the) comparatives could be interpreted as being a genitive stem, built upon the shorter form (in *-e/-o*) by addition of the genitive ending *-is-*. This assumption seems to be well supported by the similar appearance of derived genitive stems from adverbs ending in *-e*, such as *garešēs-i = gareše-ys-i* "the outer one" from *gareše* "outside" or *çinašēs-i = çinaše-ys-i* "the former one" from *çinaše* "before". But this would imply that shorter forms such as *(x)udide* or *(x)upro* would have to be regarded as adverbial forms originally, not verbal ones, and we have to consider that adverbs like *gareše* could as easy be nominalized by simply adding the case endings; cp. Ez. 42,7 with nominative *garešē = gareše-i* beside the genitive stem *garešēsa- = gareše-ysa-*:

*da nateli garešē vitarca igi saqdarni ezoysa mis garešēsani* ..  
 καὶ φῶς ἔξωθεν ὄν τρόπον αἰ ἐξέδραι τῆς αὐλῆς τῆς ἔξωτέρως ..  
 "And light **from outside**, like the thrones of the **outer** court .."

Furthermore, the problem remains that even in *xanmeti* texts, several examples occur where the suffixes are not written *-ēs-* or *-oys-* but *-es-* and *-os-*; note, e.g., the following examples (Jo. 16,7 / Mc. 12,43):

Xanmeti: .. *xumžobes ars [tk(ue)n]da r(ayt)a me [çarv]ide* ..  
 Protovulgate (DE): .. *umžobes ars tkuenda, rayta me çarvide* ..  
 Adiši (C): .. *umžobe ars tkuenda, me tu mivide* ..  
 "It is **expedient** for you that I go away .."  
 Xanmeti: .. *kurivman am[an] glaxaḡman xupros qovelta šemoçira pasis sacavsä* ..  
 Protov. (DE): .. *kurivman aman glaxaḡman uproys qovelta šemoçira pasis sacavsä amas* ..  
 Adiši (C): .. *kurivman glaxaḡman uproys qoveltasa šecira šesaçiravsä amas zeda* ..  
 "This poor widow hath cast **more** in, than all they which have cast into the treasury".

Is it really believable that this is a mere matter of orthography as Z. SARՉVELAՉE proposed (1984, p. 276 sq.)?

A lot of further investigations will be necessary in order to finally decide these questions, and it may well be that some of them will remain unanswered, simply because Georgian written tradition began too late to preserve clear vestiges of the original state. But the assumption that Kartvelian comparatives once had personal (object) marking has a good deal in its favour if we take the parallel from North West Caucasian as established here seriously.

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