

Tsez

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1. Introduction¹

1.1. Area and speakers

Tsez (Dido) is a member of the Tsezic group within the Nakh-Daghestanian language family. It has 12,467 speakers in the Russian Federation according to the 2010 census (VPN 2010). The name Tsez derives from the indigenous self-designation *cez* or *cezi*, while the alternative Dido is the Georgian designation. The traditional lands of the Tsez are more or less coterminous with the Tsunta district (*cuntinskij rajon*) in Daghestan, excluding the Bezhta division (*bežtinskij učastok*), inhabited by speakers of Bezhta and Hunzib, and the village of Genukh, where speakers of Hinuq live. Approximately half of the Tsez continue to live in this area, the other half have migrated to Lowland parts of Daghestan, in particular to the Shamkhal area near Makhachkala.

1.2. Dialects

The usually accepted subdivision of Tsez dialects follows that proposed by Imnajšvili (1963: 9–10), which recognizes a primary distinction between the Sagada (soʃ'o) dialect and the rest, which in turn are divided into Kidero (kidiro), Shaytl (ešiʃ'), Asakh (asaq), Shapikh (šapiħ), and Elbok (elboq') — the names in parentheses are the Tsez versions. The Mokok (newo) dialect is, however, sufficiently different from Kidero to be considered a separate dialect. The Sagada dialect diverges enough from the others to impair mutual intelligibility, and Sagada speakers need to make accommodations in interaction with speakers of other dialects. The other dialects are all mutually intelligible, and none has noticeably greater prestige than any other. The material in this article follows the Tsebari (ceboru) subdialect of Asakh, except where otherwise specified.

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1.3. Sociolinguistic situation

Tsez has the official status of an unwritten language. A primer for use in schools has been prepared (Alekseev 1993; Alekseev, Radžabov & Abdulaev 2003), but seems to be little used. Occasional pieces in Tsez appear in the local newspaper *Didojskie vesti* <<http://cunta.ru/didoyskievesti>>, as well as occasional small publications, e.g. of poetry. But by far the most substantial collection of Tsez texts is the folklore anthology (Abdulaev & Abdullaev 2010). All of these, like the dictionary (Xalilov 1999), make use of adaptations of Avar Cyrillic orthography (see section 2.2); Avar and Tsez phonologies are typologically quite close.

The traditional lingua franca of the area is Avar, which is still taught as a school subject in Tsez schools. However, the younger generation is more fluent in Russian, which is also the medium of education in Tsez schools. Prior to the break-up of the Soviet Union, the Russo-Georgian armed conflict, and the closure of the border, economic ties with the neighboring Georgian province of Kakhelia meant that there was also some knowledge of Georgian in the Tsez community; nowadays, there is no impetus to acquire or maintain competence in Georgian. At the end of the 20th century there were still a few elderly monolingual speakers of Tsez.

Tsez is the main language of everyday communication for Tsez speakers in the Tsunta District, and children grow up speaking it as their first and, at least until recently, only language before entering school. But two recent factors have made Russian more salient in village life: accessibility to modern media, and the influx of members of the armed forces into what is now an international frontier area.

1.4. State of research

Although some basic material on Tsez is provided in Dirr (1909), the first reasonably detailed published sketch of the language is Bokarev (1959); a more up-to-date sketch is provided by Alekseev & Radžabov (1989). The fullest monograph grammar to date is Imnajšvili (1963), while a grammar meeting contemporary standards is under preparation by Polinsky & Comrie (in prep). The latter will also include a full bibliography of earlier work. Xalilov (1999) is a dictionary of about 7500 entries, the first and so far only substantial dictionary of the language.

2. Phonology

2.1. Vowels and consonants

Tables 1–2 present the segmental phonemes of Tsez. In Table 1, the three series of plain stops are, in order: voiceless nonejective, voiceless ejective, voiced; the two

series of affricates are voiceless nonejective, voiceless ejective; the two series of fricatives are voiceless and voiced.

Tsez has no phonemic glottal stop, although a nonphonemic glottal stop occurs before word-initial nonpharyngealized vowels, e.g. *aw* [ʔaw] ‘mouse’.

The pharyngealized consonants shown in Table 1 can occur word-initially, -medially, and -finally, e.g. *qʰim* ‘head’, *oɸʰ* ‘leg’; they pharyngealize an immediately following vowel. Note that the expected /χʰ/ has shifted to /ħ/ and represents the only source of this phoneme in indigenous morphemes. In addition, Tsez has a phonetically identical pharyngealization that can occur only with word-initial (C)V sequences, as in *ʰo* ‘ax’, *ʰono* ‘six’; we represent this pharyngealization by means of a superscript symbol after the consonant (if any) and before the vowel. Words with initial *ʰV*, though phonetically [ʰVʰ], behave as vowel-initial for purposes of gender agreement, cf. *b-ʰaʎʰu-χ* ‘III-fall-PRS’. The precise phonological analysis of pharyngealization (or epiglottalization) in Tsez remains controversial: Starostin (1987: 465–466) and Nikolayev & Starostin (1994: 59, 115), like Bokarev (1959), treat it as a vocalic feature, while Kodzasov (1986) and Kibrik & Kodzasov 1990: 315, 318) argue that phonetically the locus of pharyngealization in Tsez is the consonant of a CV sequence. Our analysis here follows Maddieson et al. (1996). On this analysis, segmental /ʎ/ occurs only in loans.

Labialized consonants occur only prevocally, e.g. *ɸʰwaj* ‘dog’, and are rare other than in loans from Avar and in certain morphological forms, often as the result of the morphophonemic loss of the vowel /u/ before another vowel, e.g. stem *-esu-* ‘find’, infinitive *-esʰ-a*. Most consonants are attested labialized, with the exception of labials, *n*, *l*, *j*, and *ʃ* (though *rʰw* does occur, as do *qʰʰw*, *qʰw*, and *ɸʰw*). It should be noted, however, that the Mokok dialect has lost all labialization.

Table 1
Tsez Consonants (Nonlabialized)

	Plain stop			Affricate		Fricative		Nasal	Liquid	Semivowel
Bilabial	p	pʰ	b					m		w
Apical	t	tʰ	d	c	cʰ	s	z	n	r	
lateral				ʎ	ʎʰ	ʧ			l	
Palatal				č	čʰ	š	ž			j
Velar	k	kʰ	g							
Uvular		qʰ		q		χ	ɸ			
pharyngealized		qʰʰ		qʰ			ɸʰ			
Pharyngeal						ħ	ʕ			

The long vowel *a:* occurs only in native morphemes and only under certain morphological conditions, for instance as the result of vowel lengthening in some verb forms, e.g. *-iš-* ‘eat’, future indefinite *-a:š*. In the Asakh dialect, all vowel qualities are neutralized under lengthening to *a:*. Other dialects (e.g. Mokok) also have a low front vowel, representable as *ä:* and reflecting the lengthening of the front vowels *e* and *i*, and some also have a long mid back rounded vowel *o:*, reflecting the lengthening of the rounded vowels *o* and *u*. Distinctive vowel length appears to be being lost in the Kidero dialect (Kibrik & Kodzasov 1990: 329).

Table 2

Tsez Vowels (Nonpharyngealized)

	Short		Long	
	Front	Central	Back	Central
High	i		u	
Mid	e		o	
Low		a		a:

2.2. Script and transcription

Tsez is officially an unwritten language, and in practice various adaptations of the Avar writing system have been used. The most consistent such system used in running text is to be found in Abdulaev & Abdullaev (2003), which uses the correspondences shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Tsez phoneme : grapheme correspondences

a	a	d	д	š	ш
e	э, e	c	ц	ž	ж
i	и	c'	цI	j	й
o	o	s	с	k	к
u	y	z	з	k'	кI
		n	н	q	хъ
p	п	r	р	q'	къ
p'	пI	ʎ	лI	g	г
b	б	ʎ'	къ	χ	х

m	м	ɬ	лъ	ɸ	гъ
w	в	l	л	ħ	хъ
t	т	č	ч	ʕ	гI
t'	тI	č'	чI	h	гъ

For /e/, <e> is used after consonants, <ə> elsewhere. /ja/ and /ju/ are written <я>, <ю>. Long /a:/ and /ä:/ are written <ā>, <aъ>. Labialization is indicated by <в> after the consonant grapheme. /C^sV/ sequences are written <CVI>, while pharyngealization in the syllable coda is indicated by an apostrophe after the consonant grapheme.

2.3. Phonotactics

By far the most common syllable structure in native words is CV. Syllable-final consonants are also frequent morpheme-finally, whether or not word-finally, but are rare morpheme-medially. Syllable-initial vowels are found only word-initially (except in unassimilated loans), and phonetically take a prothetic [ʔ] (if nonpharyngealized) or [ʕ] (if pharyngealized). Examples: *besuro* ‘fish’, genitive 1 *besuro-s*, *kid* ‘girl’, *asa* ‘mountain ash’, *ʕomoj* ‘donkey’, *is* ‘bull’, equative 1 *is-ce*, *qondu* ‘cave’, *oc’c’ino* ‘ten’ (in other dialects *oc’ino*). Morpheme-medial clusters of two consonants are frequent in loans, e.g. *ʕaq’lu* ‘wisdom, intellect’ (from Arabic via Avar), *wacʕal* ‘cousin’ (from Avar). Most dialects allow syllable-final *w/jC* clusters, e.g. Mokok *zow-s* ‘be-PSTWIT’, but the Asakh dialect does not, e.g. Tsebari *zow-si*.

2.4. Prosody

Kibrik & Kodzasov (1990: 329) and Nikolayev & Starostin (1994: 115) note the existence of prosodic contrasts in Tsez words, but we have not investigated the area of prosody further. A targeted study is very much needed.

2.5. Morphophonemics

The major general phonological and morphophonemic processes are as follows:

1) A vowel is dropped before another vowel, e.g. *besuro* ‘fish’, in.essive *besur-a:*, *-ik’i-* ‘go’, infinitive *-ik’-a*, *haqu* ‘mouth’, in.essive *haq-a:*. However,

1a) Final *u* of a verb stem is realized as labialization of the preceding consonant before a vowel, e.g. *-esu-* ‘find’, infinitive *-es^w-a*.

2) Clusters of two consonants word-finally or of three consonants word-medially are broken up by inserting the vowel *e*, e.g. *is* ‘bull’, lative *is-er*, *-iš-* ‘eat’, causative *-iš-er-* (e.g. present *-iš-er-χo*, but infinitive *-iš-r-a*, where the environment for *e*-insertion is not met). However,

2a) After *j*, *i* is inserted rather than *e*, e.g. *zej* ‘bear’, genitive 1 *zej-is*. This applies specifically to the Asakh dialect, since other dialects allow final *jC* clusters, e.g. Mokok *zej-s*.

3) Verbs have a stem used in certain forms, for instance the future indefinite, which involves lengthening of the vowel before the last consonant of the stem, e.g. *-iš-* ‘eat’, future indefinite *-a:š*, *-ik’i-* ‘go’, future indefinite *-a:k’i*. The lengthened vowel, under appropriate circumstances, may be the inserted vowel, e.g. *t’et’r-* ‘read’, future indefinite *t’et’a:r*.

4) Some inflectional suffixes have the shape *-CV*, but drop the final vowel word-finally after a vowel. Compare *is* ‘bull’, super.essive *is-š’o*, super.lative *is-š’o-r* with *besuro* ‘fish’, super.essive *besuro-š’*, super.lative *besuro-š’o-r*. Such suffixes are represented as *-š’(o)*, etc.

There are other, more sporadic morphophonemic alternations. For instance, the past participle of the verb *t’et’r-* ‘read’ is *t’et’a:r-u* (< *t’et’r-* + past participle suffix *-ru* with lengthening of the vowel before the last consonant of the stem, followed by simplification of *rr* to *r*). The fourth morphological group of verbs involves an alternation between stem-final *d* and *j* (section 3.6.1).

3. Morphology: Word classes and inflection

3.1. Overview

Tsez morphology is largely suffixing, although there is also some stem-internal change, prefixing restricted to the gender prefixes, and occasional suppletion, e.g. in the second person singular pronoun. Reduplication is used to derive nouns, often with a change in the initial syllable of the second component, e.g. *χisi-basi* ‘changes’, *biχ-miχ* ‘herbs’, and also for onomatopoeia (e.g. *ħi-ħi* ‘neigh’) and to intensify the meaning of adjectives and verbs (e.g. *r-oč’i-r-oč’ij* ‘very cold’, *-ok’-ok’-* ‘strike repeatedly’).

The two most diametrically opposed word classes, nouns and verbs, are readily distinguished by their radically different morphologies. In particular, nouns obligatorily mark case, while verbs obligatorily mark tense-mood-aspect-evidentiality, except in

nonfinite forms, which have equally distinctive markers. Attributive and predicative adjectives do not inflect for case, though they do for number. Pronouns differ from nouns primarily in their more irregular morphology, while demonstrative pronouns used attributively have a simplified case opposition absolutive versus oblique. Numerals are identified primarily in semantic terms. Tsez has few basic adverbs, most being (either transparently or plausibly in diachronic terms) case forms of nouns or pronouns and converbs of verbs. There are also few basic postpositions, most also being usable as adverbs.

3.2. Nouns

3.2.1. Gender

Tsez has four genders (traditionally called noun classes) in the singular; in the plural, and also in some singular pronouns, there is a two-way distinction between gender I and gender II-IV (non-I). Gender is shown only by (i) the gender agreement prefixes on most vowel-initial adjectives and verbs, some adverbs, some postpositions (section 0) and one particle; (ii) the forms of certain pronouns and numerals, which have the two-way opposition I versus II-IV (sections 0–0). The gender prefixes referred to in (i) are shown in Table 4.

Table 4
Tsez Gender Prefixes

	Singular	Plural
I	Ø-	b-
II	j-	
III	b-	r-
IV	r-	

Gender I consists of all and only nouns denoting male humans and male supernatural creatures. The core of gender II comprises nouns denoting female humans, although it also contains a number of inanimate nouns. The core of gender III comprises nouns referring to animals, though it also contains a number of inanimate nouns and the nouns ‘child’ and ‘devil’. Gender IV contains only inanimate nouns. Both formal and semantic principles are involved in the assignment of inanimate nouns to genders (see Plaster et al. 2013 for details and overview of the earlier literature, and Gagliardi & Lidz 2014 for the acquisition of genders in child language). One formal principle is that

derived inanimate nouns are usually assigned to gender IV, e.g. abstract nouns with the suffix *-hi* (see also section 0 for the gender of compound nouns). We know of one noun with singular and plural genders that do not match: *χeχ-bi* ‘child, children’ is gender III in the singular (though this assignment is being replaced by gender I in current usage), but gender I in the plural.

3.2.2. Number and case

Tsez nouns distinguish overtly the categories of number and case. The morphology of number and case is in general straightforward, despite the relative richness of the case system. The main complication in Tsez noun morphology is that a large number of nouns have a stem, used before inflectional suffixes, that is distinct from the absolutive singular, viz. the so-called oblique stem. Some nouns with such a distinct stem use it before local case suffixes and equative *-ce*, while other such nouns use their absolutive singular as stem here (except for the IN series, where the same stem as in nonlocal oblique cases is used). Some nouns use different stems (one of which may be the same as the absolutive singular) before some combination of oblique singular, absolutive plural, and oblique plural. In addition, many nouns allow variants. The most frequent difference between the absolutive singular and the stem used for other forms is the addition of a final segment or segment sequence in the latter, e.g. *mec* ‘tongue’, in.essive *mec-r-a:*, lative *mec-r-er*, super.essive *mec-r-eʃ*, plural absolutive *mec-r-ebi*, lative *mec-r-eza-r*. But *hi* ‘water’ adds *-a:-* in the singular oblique (e.g. genitive 1 *h-a:-s*), but *-da-* in the plural absolutive (*hi-da-bi*), as well as having an idiosyncratic ergative singular *hij-a:*. Oblique singular stems ending in *o* usually shift this to *a* in the absolutive plural, e.g. *giri* ‘pole’, singular genitive 1 *giri-mo-s*, plural absolutive *giri-ma-bi*, genitive 1 *giri-mo-za-s*. The most frequent additions in the oblique stem are *-mo*, *-m* (these two largely in complementary distribution), *-r*, and *-jo*. Some nouns have more idiosyncratic relations between the absolutive singular and the stem used before case or number suffixes, such as loss of a final vowel (e.g. *boc'i* ‘wolf’, genitive 1 *boc'-es*) or even a longer sequence (e.g. *ozuri* ‘eye’, genitive 1 *oz-es*), internal vowel change (e.g. *buq* ‘sun’, genitive 1 *beq-es*); these processes can even be combined (e.g. *esij* ‘brother’, plural absolutive *es-na-bi*, *moči* ‘place’, genitive 1 *meč-o-s*). There are, however, no instances of suppletion in noun morphology.

Number is a binary distinction between singular and plural. For nearly all nouns, the singular is unmarked, the plural suffixed. The regular plural suffixes are absolutive *-bi*, oblique *-za-* (to which latter further case suffixes are added), e.g. *besuro* ‘fish’, plural absolutive *besuro-bi*, lative *besuro-za-r*. A small number of nouns take an alternative absolutive plural suffix *-a*, e.g. *β^ʰul* ‘stone’, plural absolutive *β^ʰul-a*, lative *β^ʰul-a-r* or, with etymologically double plural marking, *β^ʰul-a-za-r*. Two nouns use what is

etymologically a plural form as both singular and plural, namely *β^hana-bi* ‘woman, women’, *χeχ-bi* ‘child, children’; gender agreement, however, goes with the singular or plural sense.

The nonlocal cases are: absolutive -∅, ergative -a: (identical to in.essive) for most nouns, but -∅ for some nouns with an oblique stem ending in -o, genitive 1 -s (used as attribute to an absolutive head noun), genitive 2 -z (used as attribute to a non-absolutive head noun), lative -r (the same as the directional suffix discussed below), instrumental -d, and on the periphery of the system two equatives, in -ce and -q’a:j. The presence of two genitive forms reflects the limited case concord found in Tsez prenominal modifiers; these modifiers distinguish between the absolutive and all other cases of the head noun.

The singular forms of *besuro* ‘fish’ and *is* ‘bull’ are shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Tsez Case Marking

ABS	<i>besuro</i>	<i>is</i>
ERG	<i>besur-a:</i>	<i>is-a:</i>
GEN 1	<i>besuro-s</i>	<i>is-es</i>
GEN 2	<i>besuro-z</i>	<i>is-ez</i>
DAT	<i>besuro-r</i>	<i>is-er</i>
INS	<i>besuro-d</i>	<i>is-ed</i>
EQU 1	<i>besuro-ce</i>	<i>is-ce</i>
EQU 2	<i>besuro-q’a:j</i>	<i>is-q’a:j</i>

The equative 1 seems to be a case, on the basis of its attachment to oblique stems (see below), e.g. *ca-dara-ce* ‘like a star’ (*ca*, oblique stem *ca-dara-* ‘star’), but it can also attach to case-marked forms of nouns, e.g. *besuro-s-ce* ‘like a fish’s’.

The same suffixes are used in the plural, e.g. *besuro-bi*, *besuro-z-a:*, *besuro-za-s*, etc.

The spatial (local) cases form a rich array distinguishing seven locational series multiplied by four directional series multiplied by a non-distal versus distal (‘over there’) opposition, as in Tables 6–7. The suffixes shown with parenthetical *o* occur with this vowel except word-finally after a vowel, thus *is* ‘bull’, *is-χo*, *is-χo-r*, but *besuro* ‘fish’, *besuro-χ*, *besuro-χo-r* (see also Comrie & Polinsky 1998).

Table 6
Tsez Local Cases (Non-Distal)

	ESS	LAT	ABL	VERS	
IN	-a:	-a:-r	-a:j	-a:ʁor	‘in (a hollow obj)’
CONT	-ɬ	-ɬ-er	-ɬ-a:j	-ɬ-χor	‘in (a mass), among’
SUPER	-ʃ'(o)	-ʃ'o-r	-ʃ'-a:j	-ʃ'-a:ʁor, -ʃ'-a:-r	‘on (horizontal)’
SUB	-ʃ	-ʃ-er	-ʃ-a:j	-ʃ-χor	‘under’
AD	-χ(o)	-χo-r	-χ-a:j	-χ-a:ʁor, -χ-a:-r	‘at’
APUD	-de	-de-r	-d-a:j	-d-a:ʁor, -d-a:-r	‘near’
POSS	-q(o)	-qo-r	-q-a:j	-q-a:ʁor, -q-a:-r	‘on (vertical)’
	‘at’	‘to’	‘from’	‘towards’	

Table 7
Tsez Local Cases (Distal)

	ESS	LAT	ABL	‘behind’
IN	-a:z	-a:z-a-r	-a:z-aj	-a:z-a
CONT	-ɬ-a:z	-ɬ-a:z-a-r	-ɬ-a:z-aj	-ɬ-a:z-a
SUPER	-ʃ'-a:z	-ʃ'-a:z-a-r	-ʃ'-a:z-aj	-ʃ'-a:z-a
SUB	-ʃ-a:z	-ʃ-a:z-a-r	-ʃ-a:z-aj	-ʃ-a:z-a
AD	-χ-a:z	-χ-a:z-a-r	-χ-a:z-aj	-χ-a:z-a
APUD	-d-a:z	-d-a:z-a-r	-d-a:z-aj	-d-a:z-a
POSS	-q-a:z	-q-a:z-a-r	-q-a:z-aj	-q-a:z-a

Some Tsez nouns, which might be referred to as “spatial nouns”, have intrinsic localization without an overt suffix, e.g. *elo* ‘there’, *idu* ‘home; at home’, *neširu* ‘evening; in the evening’. Directional suffixes are attached directly to such nouns, e.g. *el-a:j* ‘from there’, *idu-r* ‘(to) home’, *neširu-r* ‘until evening’. Some local toponyms are spatial nouns, e.g. *newo* ‘Mokok; in Mokok’, while others have an inbuilt localization suffix, e.g. *asa-q* ‘Asakh, in Asakh’, with the possessive suffix *-q*.

3.2.3. Derivation of nouns

Tsez has a number of suffixes that derive nouns from other word classes:

-qu added to oblique stems forms agent nouns and names designating containers: *magala-qu* ‘baker’; *boc'-a-qu* ‘wolf-trap’ (where *-a* is the plural suffix). For agent nouns, this suffix alternates with the less productive suffix *-qan* borrowed from Avar: *qido-qu/qido-qan* ‘mason’.

-k'u forms names of instruments or evaluative names of persons, usually from the durative verb stem (see 3.6.6): *'uʃ'no-k'u* 'coward' (*'uʃ*- 'be afraid'), *'ija-k'u* 'cryer' (*'ijad*- 'cry, weep').

The suffix *-ʃi* forms abstract nouns from the singular absolutive of nouns denoting people, e.g. *laʃ-ʃi* 'slavery' (*laʃ* 'slave'), *učitel-ʃi* 'teaching' (as occupation; *učitel* 'teacher', from Russian). More typically, *-ʃi* is added to adjectives: *bercin-ʃi* 'beauty' (*bercinaw* 'beautiful'; note the truncation). If the adjective changes for gender, the gender IV form is used: *r-ig(u)-ʃi* 'grace, kindness' (*-igu* 'good'; truncation of the stem-final vowel is preferred in the Asakh dialect). For *-ʃi* nominalizing clauses, see section 0.

The non-productive derivational suffix *-ni* forms abstract nouns from verb stems as well as onomatopoeic nouns: *reč'-ni* 'sharpness' (*-eč'*- 'cut'). (See section 3.6.4 for the role of *-ni* in forming the masdar.)

-q'oj/-qoj/-ħoj (dialectal variants *-q'ow*, *-q'u*) derives the word for an enveloping object from a singular oblique noun stem: *reʃ'i-qoj* 'glove' (*reʃ'a* 'hand').

-bi/-zi attaches to place names, deriving names of residents: *newo-bi/newo-zi* 'residents of Mokok'.

-jo added to the lative singular derives nouns with the general meaning 'possessing X': *kot'u-r-jo* 'bearded man' (*kot'u* 'beard').

Examples of compound nouns include: *eni-obij* (variant *eni-obu*) 'parents (mother-father)', *ħot'o-č'el* 'stirrup (foot-place)', *rigu-žuka* 'anything (good-bad)'. Only the last member of the compound noun inflects. If one of the compound elements belongs to gender I singular, the compound is assigned to gender I plural (e. g. *eni-obij*), otherwise to gender non-I plural.

Compounding sometimes involves truncation of the final segment: *ʃ'iri-ku* 'shawl' (*ʃ'iri* 'above', *kur*- 'throw'), and can co-occur with suffixation: *debi-dej-ʃi* 'quarrel, dividing up (your-my-NMLZ)'.

3.3. Adjectives

3.3.1. Adjective inflection

True adjectives in Tsez show no case morphology when used attributively or predicatively, but do have a plural suffix *-t'a*, in addition to which some adjectives beginning with a vowel take gender prefixes, e.g. *-eʒora* 'long'. Adjectives used independently (i.e. without a head) decline as nouns, with slight differences in stem formation.

In addition, Tsez forms translation equivalents of adjectives by means of the genitive suffix *-s*, oblique *-z*, and the linker *-si*, oblique *-zo* (see section 0 on case

concord). The genitive suffix is attached to noun stems, e.g. *ger-es bełaj* (iron-GEN1 dagger) ‘iron dagger’; the attributive suffix is attached to other items, such as oblique case forms of nouns, as in *ʼaλ-a:-si χalq’i* (village-IN.ESS-LNK1 people) ‘people [living] in the village’ (see also 4.1), and certain verbal forms, e.g. *eχ^w-a:-si uži* ‘dead boy’, where *eχ^w-a:-si* is the resultative participle of *-eχu-* ‘die’ (section 3.6.4).

3.3.2. Derivation of adjectives

Two suffixes, *-šaj* and *-χu*, form adjectives with the meaning ‘containing/possessing X’ from an oblique nominal stem. *-šaj* implies that the contained object is inseparable or inalienable: *čakarjo-šaj čaj* ‘sweet (lit. sugar-containing) tea’; *-χu* implies that the contained object is separable, e.g. *cijo-χu raλ* ‘soil with crystals of salt’; but in modern Tsez this semantic difference is becoming obscured, e.g. *q’ot’ur-za-χu ged* and *q’ot’ur-za-šaj ged* ‘shirt with buttons’.

-taj is the caritive suffix (‘lacking X’), deriving adjectives from an oblique nominal stem: *cijo-taj* ‘unsalted’.

-mu derives adjectives from a singular absolutive noun: *borjo-mu* ‘sickly’ (*borjo* ‘sore, wound’), from other adjectives: *at’i-mu* ‘unripe’ (*at’ij* ‘wet’), and from verbs: *šakarja-mu* ‘jealous’ (*šakarjad-* ‘be jealous’).

An example of a compound adjective is *niga-c’uda* ‘bruised (green-red)’.

3.4. Pronouns

Morphologically, Tsez has distinct classes of personal pronouns (first and second person only — third person pronouns are expressed as demonstratives, *že* ‘he, she, it’, *žedi* ‘they’), demonstrative pronouns, and interrogative pronouns.

The first and second person singular pronouns are unusual in having a single form for both absolutive and ergative: *di* ‘I’, *mi* ‘you’. The oblique stem of ‘I’ is *da:-*, and that of ‘you’ is *debe-* before a syllable-final consonant (e.g. lative *debe-r*), *dow-* before a syllable-initial consonant (e.g. apud.essive *dow-de*). Both pronouns have irregular genitive 1: *dej* ‘my’, *debi* ‘your’ (the genitive 2 is regular: *da:-z*, *debe-z*).

The first and second person plural pronouns *eli* ‘we’, *meži* ‘you-all’ have the regular absolutive versus ergative distinction; they also make a gender distinction in oblique cases, with stems I *elu-*, *mežu-*, II-IV *ela-*, *meža-*. In addition to the regular genitives *elu-s*, *ela-s*, *elu-z*, *ela-z*, *mežu-s*, *mežu-z*, *meža-s*, *meža-z*, they also have special forms genitive 1 *eli*, *meži*, genitive 2 *eli-z*, *meži-z*, used where the possessor is a close group, typically a family; compare *eli enij* ‘our mother’ with *elu-s ʼaλ* ‘our village’. These same special genitive forms are also found with the demonstrative *žedi* in the meaning ‘they’: genitive 1 *žedi*, genitive 2 *žedi-z* for a close group possessor, genitive 1 *žedu-s*, *žeda-s*, genitive 2 *žedu-z*, *žeda-z* for all other possessors.

The demonstrative pronouns make a gender distinction I versus II-IV in the oblique forms, the proximal demonstratives also in the absolutive singular. The gender distinction is obligatory in the oblique singular, but generalization of the gender I form, to varying degrees, is found in the absolutive singular of the proximal demonstrative and in the oblique plural. The oblique forms given below are used attributively, and also serve as a base to which other case suffixes can be attached in independent use. The base forms of the proximal demonstrative, which occurs only prefixed, are singular absolutive I *-da*, II-IV *-du*, oblique I *-si*, II-IV *-ʃa* (which may optionally be reduced to *-ʃ* word-finally after a vowel), plural absolutive *-ziri*, oblique I *-zi*, II-IV *-za*. The prefixed forms are *je-da* (with *ji-* rather than *je-* except in the singular absolutive), *ej-da*, and *how-da*. The base forms of the distal demonstrative, which can occur in isolation, are singular absolutive *že*, oblique I *nesi*, II-IV *neʃo*, *neʃ*, plural absolutive *žedi*, oblique I *žedu*, II-IV *žeda*. The prefixed forms are *el-že* (with irregular singular oblique forms I *enesi*, II-IV *eneʃ(o)*) and *how-že* (with irregular singular oblique forms I *hemesi*, II-IV *hemeʃ(o)*).

The interrogative pronouns make no distinction of humanness in the absolutive (*šebi* ‘who, what’), but have distinct oblique stems *ʃa:-* ‘who’, *ʃina-* ‘what’. The human interrogative pronoun has an irregular ergative *ʃu*, while the nonhuman one has regularly *ʃin-a:*.

3.5. Numerals

Used attributively, numerals distinguish a nominative and an oblique form. When used nonattributively, the oblique form serves as a stem to which case suffixes are attached. (In addition, there are specifically gender I oblique forms with final *-e* rather than *-a*, but the forms in *-a* can also be used with gender I nouns.) The simple numerals are given in Table 8. ‘100’ has an alternative form *bišom*, which is preferred before *-no* in compound numerals.

Table 8

Tsez Simple Numerals

	Absolutive	Oblique
1	sis	sida
2	q ^ʃ ano	q ^ʃ una
3	ʃ ^ʃ ono	ʃ ^ʃ ora
4	ujno	ujra
5	ʃeno	ʃera
6	iʃno	iʃhira

7	ʰoʃno	ʰoʃʎora
8	biʃno	biʃʎira
9	oč'č'ino	oč'č'ira
10	oc'c'ino	oc'c'ira
20	qu	qura
100	bišon	bišonra
1000	ʰazar	ʰazarra

There are two ways of forming the teens. The first has the structure *oc'c'ino* followed by the unit, e.g. *oc'c'ino sis* '11'; its oblique form is *oc'c'ira sida*, while in nonattributive use only the last component is further declined, e.g. lative *oc'c'ira sida-r*. The second method uses the unit in modified form with the suffix *-oc'i*; oblique *-oc'ira*; the forms are set out in Table 9. The second method is not found in all dialects, but is the preferred variant in the Asakh dialect.

Table 9
Tsez Teens (Second Formation)

11	sij-oc'i
12	q'ʰaj-oc'i
13	ʰʰoj-oc'i
14	uw-oc'i
15	ʎew-oc'i
16	iʎ-oc'i
17	ʰoʃ-oc'i
18	biʃ-oc'i
19	eč'-oc'i

The Tsez numeral system from 20 to 99 is vigesimal, the relevant products of 20 being: *q'ʰano-qu* '40', *ʰʰono-qu* '60', *ujno-qu* '80'; the oblique forms simply add *-ra*. The higher hundreds and thousands are expressed as 'two hundred', etc. The thousands, hundreds, twenties, and numerals below 20 are combined, from higher to lower, each element linked to the following by *-no*, e.g. *q'ʰano bišom-no ʰʰono-qu-no oc'c'ino iʎno* '276'.

3.6. Verbs

3.6.1. Overview

Tsez verbs fall into four morphological groups according to the final segment of the stem. The first group consists of all verbs with stems ending in a consonant (other than those in the fourth group); such stems are invariable. The second group consists of all verbs with stems ending in *-i*; the final vowel drops before another vowel. The third group consists of all verbs with stems ending in *-u*; here the final vowel drops before another vowel but labializes the preceding consonant (except in the Mokok dialect, which lacks labialization). The fourth group consists of all verbs with variant stems ending in *-d/-j*; in general, the variant in *-d* occurs before a vowel (e.g. infinitive *-eχ^wad-a* ‘slaughter’), the variant in *-j* elsewhere (e.g. present *-eχ^waj-χo*, future indefinite *-eχ^wa:j*, causative *-eχ^waj-r-*, with the *j* remaining before an inserted vowel, e.g. causative present *-eχ^waj-ir-χo*). (In other dialects, short verbs in *-d/-j* have a stem in *-di* as an alternative to *-j*.) The only truly irregular verb is ‘to be’, which has suppletive stems *joł* (present), *a:nu* (present negative), *zow-* (past, e.g. past unwitnessed *zow-no*, past witnessed *zow-si*); several forms of the paradigm are missing, and are replaced by forms of *-iči-* ‘be located’ or *-oq-* ‘stay; become’.

3.6.2. Tense-Mood-Aspect-Evidentiality

Tsez has five simple indicative tense-aspect forms: past unwitnessed *-n(o)*, past witnessed *-s(i)*, present *-χ(o)*, future definite *-an*, future indefinite *-Ø* but with vowel lengthening, e.g. *-iš-* ‘eat’, *-iš-no*, *-iš-si*, *-iš-χo*, *-iš-an*, *-a:š*; *-esu-* ‘find’, *-esu-n*, *-esu-s*, *-esu-χ*, *-es^w-an*, *-a:su*. The past witnessed has a special form used in content questions, with the suffix *-a:*, e.g. *-iš-a:*, *-es^w-a:*; other tense-aspects use their ordinary forms in content questions. In polarity questions, *-a:* is added to the finite verb form (e.g. present *-ik’i-χ-a:*), but again the past witnessed is exceptional, taking a special suffix *-ija:* (after consonants), *-ja:* (after vowels), e.g. *-iš-ija:*, *-esu-ja:*. The future forms have an almost complementary distribution across persons: the definite is used with first person, the indefinite is used with second and third.

In addition, there are periphrastic forms, a selection of which are presented here. The combination of the infinitive with the present tense of ‘be’ gives emphatic future, e.g. *-ik’-a joł* ‘shall go’. The progressive uses the imperfective converb and the appropriate tense-aspect of the auxiliary ‘be’, e.g. *-ik’i-χ zow-si* ‘was going’. The completive uses the perfective gerund and the auxiliary ‘be’, e.g. *-ik’i-n zow-si* ‘had gone’. The perfect uses the resultative participle and the auxiliary ‘be’, e.g. *-ik’-a:si zow-si* ‘had gone’. The present participle with the auxiliary ‘be’ gives an intensive, e.g. *-ik’i-χo-si zow-si* ‘intended to go’. Resultatives use the imperfective or perfective gerund plus the resultative participle of *-iči-* ‘be located’ and the auxiliary ‘be’, e.g. *-ik’i-n -ič-a:-si zow-si* ‘was gone’; *-ik’i-χ -ič-a:-si zow-si* ‘was in the state of being on his way hence’.

The second-person imperative has a zero suffix for intransitive verbs and for derived transitive verbs, e.g. *-ik'i* ‘go!’, *aj-ir* ‘bring!’ (causative of *aj-* ‘come’), the suffix *-o* for simple transitive verbs, e.g. *kur-o* ‘throw!’, though there are a few anomalous formations. The optative is formed from the imperative with a final *-ǰ*, e.g. *kur-o-ǰ* ‘let him throw’ (see also 4.3.3).

3.6.3 Negation

Negation is expressed basically by a suffix *-č'V*, though with several idiosyncrasies, different in different dialects. Using the stem *-ik'i-* ‘go’, the forms are past unwitnessed *-ik'i-č'ej*, past witnessed *-ik'i-č'u-s* (also: *-ik'i-č'u*, with no tense suffix), present *-ik'i-χ-a:nu* (cf. *a:nu*, the suppletive negative of present *joł* ‘be’), future definite *-ik'-a:-č'i-n*, future indefinite *-a:k'i-č'i*. The negative finite past unwitnessed form *-ik'i-č'ej*, identical to the negative perfective converb, is, incidentally, characteristic of the Asakh dialect; most other dialects have a form like Mokok *-ik'i-n-a:nu*, paralleling the negative present.

Prohibition is expressed by the portmanteau suffix *-no* with vowel lengthening, e.g. *-a:š-no* ‘don't eat!’, with addition of *-ǰ* for the negative optative: *-a:š-no-ǰ* ‘let him not eat!’

3.6.4 Nonfinite Forms

Participles form a unified class in terms of their external syntax, but not in terms of their internal structure. The past participle in *-ru* (with vowel lengthening) behaves like an adjective, and is thus invariable except for gender agreement, e.g. *-a:š-ru* ‘having eaten’; its negative has the suffix *-č'i* before the past participle suffix, e.g. *-a:š-č'i-ru* ‘not having eaten’. The resultative participle in *-a:-si* (e.g. *-es^w-a:-si* ‘in the state of having found’) and the present participle in *-χo-si* (e.g. *-esu-χo-si* ‘finding’) contain the attributive suffix *-si*, and thus have oblique forms in *-a:-zo*, *-χo-zo*. The present participle negates as expected, with addition of *-si* to the negative present (e.g. *-ik'i-χ-a:nu-si* ‘not going’), but the negative resultative participle is a portmanteau adjective form in *-ani* (e.g. *-ik'-ani* ‘in the state of not having gone’).

Tsez has a rich set of converbs (gerunds, verbal adverbs), and the following list, illustrated by *-ik'i-* ‘go’, is not exhaustive. Converbs derive from the verb stem, sometimes with vowel lengthening, sometimes with the help of a locational series marker, which is sometimes preceded by the suffix *-za-*, sometimes with the help of some other suffix not found elsewhere in Tsez morphology. Converbs used for expressing temporal relations are set out in Table 10.

Table 10

Temporal converbs

Relationship between the action expressed by the main verb (M) and by the converb (C)	Form	Additional characteristics
C and M are simultaneous	ik'i-χ	manner of action
	ik'i-λ'	punctual
	ik'i-λ'orej	simple simultaneous
	ik'i-zej	simple simultaneous
C precedes M	ik'i-n	manner of action
	ik'i-nosi	simple anterior
	a:k'i-run	immediate anterior
C follows M	ik'i-zaλ'or	simple posterior
	ik'-a-ce	terminative

The perfective (completive) and imperfective (durative) converbs are identical in form to the past unwitnessed and present respectively. Other converbs are locative (*-a:k'i-z-a:*), causal (e.g. *-ik'i-χoj*, *-ik'i-za-λ'*, *-ik'i-za-q*), conditional (*-ik'i-na:j*, *-ik'i-ŋi*), concessive (*-ik'i-ŋin*). See also 4.4.3.

The infinitive takes the suffix *-a*, e.g. *-iš-a* 'to eat', *-ik'-a* 'to go'. A verbal noun (masdar) has the suffix *-(a)ni*, e.g. *-iš-ani* 'eating', *reč'-ni* 'cutting' and is always of gender IV.

3.6.5. Potential and Causative Forms

Two derived forms are sufficiently productive to be considered part of the paradigm, the potential in *-ŋ* and the causative in *-r*, e.g. from *-iš-* 'eat' potential *-iš-eŋ-* (before a vowel, *-iš-ŋ-*), causative *-iš-er-* (before a vowel, *-iš-r-*).

3.6.6. Derivation of verbs

-k'- derives transitive verbs from qualitative adjectives (*at'i-k'-* 'dampen, soak', cf. *atij* 'wet') and adverbs (*bito-k'-* 'move', cf. *bittaj* 'over there').

-ŋ- and *-χ-* derive intransitive verbs from a similar group of qualitative adjectives and adverbs: *at'i-ŋ-* 'become wet', *ade-χ-* 'move forward' (cf. *ada:j* 'in front').

For causative and potential derivatives, see section 3.6.5. Some morphological causatives are lexicalized, e.g. *-egi-r-* 'send', cf. *-egi-* 'fade; tear oneself away').

Tsez forms durative (habitual-iterative) verbs with the suffixes *-nod*, *-nad*, *-anad*; the choice of suffix is lexicalized, and may vary dialectally. Examples are *-^ʃuλ*- ‘fear’, *-^ʃuλ*-*-nod*- ‘fear habitually’, *kur*- ‘throw’, *kur-nod*- ‘be engaged in throwing’. Such derivatives of transitive verbs may either remain transitive, or become intransitive taking the erstwhile agent as sole core argument — this is the only known instance of verb lability in Tsez.

Examples of compound verbs include: *-ik*’*i-neχ*- ‘go back and forth (go-come)’, *t*’*it*’*i-eč*- ‘hash (tear-cut)’. If a verb inflects for gender in isolation, it does so too as a component of a compound verb.

A highly productive way of forming new verbs is by combining a lexical item with a light verb, typically *-oq*- ‘stay, become’ for intransitive verbs and *-od*- ‘do’ for transitive verbs. The notional component is often borrowed from or via Avar (infinitives, masdars, adjectives and nouns) or Russian (infinitives and nouns). For example: *t*’*amizi* *-od*- ‘cause’ (Avar *t*’*amize* ‘to force’), *woržizi* *-oq*- ‘fly’ (Avar *-oržize* ‘to fly’; the Avar gender prefix has been fossilized in Tsez), *χabar* *b-od*- ‘talk’ (Arabic via Avar *χabar* ‘story’), *bercin* *-oq*- ‘be decorated’ (Avar *bercinaw* ‘beautiful’), *razwod* *b-od*- ‘divorce’ (Russian *razvod* ‘divorce’), *paradat* *-od*- ‘sell’ (Russian *prodat* ‘to sell’). Some compounds containing a nominal component have a fixed gender prefix, usually gender III (but note *sapu* *j-od*- ‘destroy’, gender II).

Besides regular combinations, whose semantics is quite transparent, Tsez has a few lexicalized idioms with other verbs, e.g. *rok*’*λ*’*o-r* *-aj*- ‘remember (heart-SUPER-LAT arrive)’, *rok*’*u* *r-eχu*- ‘feel pity (heart die)’. The verb *riλu* *r-iλ*- ‘plough (ploughing field plough)’ includes a cognate object.

3.7. Adverbs

Tsez has few simple adverbs, i.e. that are neither synchronically nor plausibly diachronically derived, e.g. *λ*’*iri* ‘above’, *ži* ‘now’, *dahaw* ‘a little’ (a loan from Avar). At most a couple of simple vowel-initial adverbs take agreement prefixes, e.g. *-^ʃaλo* ‘quickly’. Many adverbs are spatial case forms of nouns or of stems not occurring in isolation, e.g. *χeχti*-*λ*’ ‘quickly’, the super.essive of *χeχti* ‘speed’; *žaq*’*ut*’ ‘today’, i.e. *ž-a-q*’*u-t*’ ‘that-day-CONT’; *ade-r* ‘forwards’, with the lative suffix attached to a stem also found in the verb *ade-χ*- ‘advance’. Spatial nouns (3.2.2) stand at the border-line between nouns and adverbs. Adverbs of manner are often converbs, e.g. *q*’*aλin* ‘aloud’, i.e. *q*’*aλi-n* shout-IPFVCVB, or truncated forms of adjectives with an invariable gender prefix, e.g. *rig* ‘well’, cf. *-igu* ‘good’.

An example of a compound adverb is *taqqo-naqqo* ‘back and forth (on that side-on this side)’.

3.8. Postpositions

Many Tsez postpositions also function as adverbs, e.g. *igo* ‘near’, and it is questionable whether the adverb/postposition distinction is justified here. However, there are some clear instances of postpositions, e.g. *’olo* ‘because of’, *-ite* ‘as, like’, the latter requiring a gender prefix.

3.9. Minor classes

Tsez has a rich set of particles, most of them occurring as clitics and expressing various communicative functions. For example, the particle *-tow* is used for general emphasis and *-kin* is used for focusing; the particle *-gon* marks a contrastively topicalized constituent. Two clitics, *-ʃin* and *-ʃaχ*, are used to mark finite complements, mainly representing reported speech (see section 0). Free particles include *hudu* ‘yes’, *a:j* ‘no’, and *-uj* ‘well (then)’, the only vowel-initial particle to take a gender prefix.

Tsez has few conjunctions appearing as separate words, although there are coordinating conjunctions *ja* ‘or’ and *amma* ‘but’ (section 4.7).

4. Syntax

4.1. Noun phrase and postpositional phrase

A noun phrase can be represented by a noun with modifiers, or a pronoun, or a substantivized expression. Substantivized expressions include participles with the nominalizing suffix *-ʃi*, *masdars*, and substantivized restrictive adjectives, which all inflect for case:

- (1) *ič’č’a j-eže-ni-r ʃomoj teʃ-no.*
INTNS II-older-RESTR-LAT donkey.ABS give-PSTUNW
‘(They) gave the donkey to the oldest one [of the girls].’

Dependent elements precede the head noun. The neutral order of preposed modifiers is as follows: (i) relative clause, (ii) unemphatic possessive pronoun, (iii) emphatic possessive pronoun, (iv) restrictive adjective, (v) demonstrative, (vi) numeral/quantifier, (vii) non-restrictive adjective, though the order of (iv), (v), and (vi) can vary:

- (2) [*sideni ʃaʃ-a: b-iči-χosi*]
another village-IN.ESS IPL-be-PRSPTCP

nesi-s b-aq'ʰu žuka-t'a-ni ʰagarʰi
 he-GEN1 1PL-many bad-DISTR-RESTR relative
 ‘his many unpleasant relatives who live in the next village’

In addition, oblique noun phrases can appear as modifiers if they take the linker *-si* (*-zo* if the head noun is in an oblique case):

- (3) a. *ħon-ʰ'o-si ʰadala*
 hill-SUPER.ESS-LNK1 fool.ABS
 ‘the fool on the hill’
- b. *ħon-ʰ'o-zo ʰadala-r*
 hill-SUPER.ESS-LNK2 fool-LAT
 ‘to the fool on the hill’

Modifying nominals typically precede other adjectives.

Adpositional phrases are always head-final. Tsez has a number of postpositions, for example, *ada:z/ada:j* ‘in front, ahead, before (location in space or time)’, *ʰolo* ‘because of’, *soder* ‘after, following’, *χiza:z/χiza:j* ‘after, behind (location in space or time)’, etc. (see also 0). The boundary between postpositions and adverbs is not always clear. Additionally, the spatial suffixes on nouns (see section 0) may be analyzed as postpositions rather than case affixes.

4.2. Clause structure

4.2.1. Word order

Tsez is consistently head-final: it uses postpositions, prenominal relative clauses, adjectives, genitives, and numerals, and places dependent clauses before main clauses. In clauses with several nominals, the neutral order is (i) Agent (Experiencer), (ii) Recipient (Addressee, Goal, Beneficiary), (iii) Patient, (iv) Locative, (v) Instrument; the order of locative and instrumental can vary. Despite the strong head-final features, the position of the predicate is often clause-medial. Such word order is common in everyday speech and seems to be increasing, possibly under the influence of Russian.

4.2.2. Case alignment and valency changes

Tsez is morphologically ergative. All intransitive verbs take an absolutive subject, although this fact may be obscured by argument drop and by the low type frequency of absolutive agreement, which is only visible on a subset of verbs and predicative complements. Transitive (including ditransitive) verbs take an ergative and

absolutive argument. A subset of two-place verbs, mostly verbs of cognition and perception, take a lative experiencer and absolutive stimulus.

4.2.3. Gender agreement and cross-reference

Within noun phrases, certain modifiers agree with the head noun in gender and number. Within clausal syntax, the predicate and some adverbs agree with the absolutive noun phrase in gender and number, regardless of the transitivity of a clause. Agreement is marked by gender prefixes (see 0) which combine only with a subset of vowel-initial adjectives, adverbs, and verbs. Agreeing adjectives, adverbs, and verbs make up only a small proportion of total adjectives, adverbs and verbs in Xalilov (1999), but they are highly frequent (Gagliardi & Lidz 2014: 68). As a result, agreement is very frequent in the language system and is highly visible to a child language learner.

If several absolutives are linked by *-n(o)* ‘and’, then if at least one of the nominals belongs to gender I singular, the agreement is gender I plural, otherwise, it is gender non-I plural (the same agreement principle is observed with compound nouns):

- (4) a. *kid-no uži-n b-aj-si.*
 girl.ABS-and boy.ABS-and IPL-come-PSTWIT
 ‘A boy and a girl arrived.’
 b. *kid-no meši-n r-aj-si.*
 girl.ABS-and calf.ABS-and nIPL-come-PSTWIT
 ‘A girl and a calf arrived.’

Tsez also has long-distance agreement, whereby the absolutive argument in an embedded clause which is itself in the absolutive argument position determines agreement on the predicate of the clause immediately above it. For example, in 0 the matrix verb *-ik^wad-* ‘see’ agrees with the absolutive noun phrase *elus B^way* ‘your dog’ contained in the embedded nominalized clause (that clause is shown in brackets):

- (5) *da:r [elu-s B^way k’et’u-za-ł χiza:j*
 me-LAT we-GEN1 dog(III) cat-PL.OBL-CONT.ESS behind
k’āli-ru-ti] b-ik^waj-si.
 run-PSTPTCP-NMLZ III-see-PSTWIT
 ‘I saw how our dog was chasing cats (lit. ran behind cats).’

Long-distance agreement can alternate with local agreement; the choice between long-distance agreement and local agreement is determined by the information-structural

status of the absolutive noun phrase that triggers agreement. In Tsez, long-distance agreement occurs when the absolutive noun phrase is interpreted as topic, thus encoding this topicality (Polinsky & Potsdam 2001).

4.3. Major Sentence Types

4.3.1. Declarative clauses

It is common to find impersonal constructions with meteorological verbs, which are often taken cross-linguistically to be aivalent. However, meteorological descriptions in Tsez allow for the introduction of the absolutive argument *ɤudi* ‘day’ (gender IV) or *hawa-baq* ‘weather (lit. air-sun)’ (gender IV), and if a meteorological predicate can manifest agreement, it registers agreement in gender IV regardless of the presence of an overt absolutive argument. Consider the following examples, where 0 shows overt agreement and 0 does not:

- (6) a. *ɤudi* *r-oč’ow joł.*
 day(IV).ABS IV-cold be.PRS
 ‘It is cold.’
- b. *ɤudi* *tatanu joł.*
 day.ABS.IV warm be.PRS
 ‘It is warm.’

One-place verbs form intransitive clauses, with the argument in the absolutive case, irrespective of volitionality:

- (7) *is* *b-eχu-s.*
 bull.ABS III-die-PSTWIT
 ‘The bull died.’
- (8) *ečru žek’u* *qoqołi-s.*
 old man.ABS laugh-PSTWIT
 ‘The old man laughed.’

In the ergative clause, the agent is in the ergative case, and the patient is in the absolutive:

- (9) *žek’-a:* *gulu* *žek’-si.*
 man-ERG horse.ABS hit-PSTWIT

‘The man hit the horse.’

Both the ergative and the absolutive noun phrases can be omitted if they are recoverable from the context; in other words, Tsez is a pro-drop language, with pro-drop affecting both subjects and objects.

A number of verbs describing physical contact take the instrument in the absolutive and the patient in an oblique case. If the patient is animate, it appears in the genitive 2, being linked to the recoverable body-part nominal in a spatial case:

- (10) *žek'-a: gulu-z (gugjo-š') čuret' b-ok'-si.*
man-ERG horse-GEN2 back-SUPER.ESS whip.ABS III-hit-PSTWIT
‘The man whipped the horse (lit.: hit the whip (on) the horse’s (back)).’

Ditransitive verbs take the agent in the ergative, the patient in the absolutive, and the recipient in the lative if the transfer of possession/information is permanent, but in a locative case if the transfer is temporary or incomplete:

- (11) a. *ʔal-a: kid-b-er surat teš-si.*
Ali-ERG girl-OS-LAT picture.ABS give-PSTWIT
‘Ali gave the girl a picture (for good, e.g. as a gift).’
b. *ʔal-a: kid-be-q-or surat teš-si.*
Ali-ERG girl-OS-POSS-LAT picture.ABS give-PSTWIT
‘Ali lent the girl a picture.’

The causative suffix *-r-* derives transitive verbs from intransitive or affective verbs, and ditransitive verbs from transitive verbs; in the latter, the causee appears in the poss.essive case.

- (12) *objj-a: kid j-oχi-r-si.*
father-ERG girl.ABS II-run-CAUS-PSTWIT
‘The father made the girl run.’

- (13) *añ-a: meši b-esu-r-si.*
shepherd-ERG calf.ABS III-find-CAUS-PSTWIT
‘The shepherd found the calf.’

- (14) *añ-a: čanaq'an-qo zej žek'-er-si.*
shepherd-ERG hunter-POSS.ESS bear.ABS hit-CAUS-PSTWIT

‘The shepherd made the hunter hit the bear.’

The affective clause has a perception verb or a psychological verb as predicate; the experiencer is in the lative case and the stimulus in the absolutive:

- (15) *año-r* *meši* *b-esu-s*.
shepherd-LAT calf.ABS III-find-PSTWIT
‘The shepherd found the calf.’

The potential clause is used with the potential form of a transitive verb (potential forms of intransitive verbs retain a single argument in the absolutive):

- (16) *k’et’u-q* *κ’aj* *ħaλu-t-χo*.
cat-POSS.ESS milk.ABS drink-POT-PRS
‘The cat can drink (the) milk.’

Lexically intransitive verbs can occur in a similar construction, with the patient in the absolutive and the agent in the poss.essive, with the meaning of an involuntary action:

- (17) *uži-q* *č’ikaj* *j-eχu-s*.
boy-POSS.ESS glass(II).ABS II-break(intr)-PSTWIT
‘The boy accidentally broke the glass.’

The biabsolutive construction occurs with two types of analytical verbal predicates: the participial predicate expressing durative action and the transitive subject resultative. The durative predicate can occur in the ergative or in the biabsolutive construction:

- (18) *už-a:/uži* *t’ek* *t’et’er-χo* *zow-si*.
boy-ERG/.ABS *book.ABS* *read-IPFVCVB* *be-PSTWIT*
‘The boy was reading a book.’

The transitive subject resultative expresses the state of the subject resulting from the respective action, and can occur only in the biabsolutive construction. It can be formed only from those transitives which can form an ergative clause and then exclusively from those which express an action with observable consequences:

- (19) *uži/*už-a: žin t'ek t'et'er-χo Ø-ič-a:si joł.*
 boy.ABS/-ERG still book.ABS read-IPFVCVB I-be-RES be.PRS
 'The boy is still engaged in reading a book.'

For a detailed analysis of Tsez biabsolutives, see Gagliardi et al. (2014).

4.3.2. Interrogative clauses

Yes-no questions are marked by the interrogative suffix *-(j)a:* which is added to the constituent which is the focus of the question (see also 0). The focused constituent usually remains in situ.

- (20) a. *k'et'u ɸ^hutk-a: joł-a:?*
 cat.ABS house-IN.ESS be.PRS-Q
 'Is the cat in the house?'
 b. *k'et'u-ja: ɸ^hutk-a: joł?*
 'Is it the cat that is in the house?'
 c. *k'et'u ɸ^hutk-a:-ja: joł?*
 'Is it in the house that the cat is?'

In content questions, the position of a *wh*-word depends on whether it is replacing an argument or an adjunct. The fronting of a *wh*-word is obligatory or strongly preferred for adjuncts but rather uncommon for arguments. In those cases when an argument *wh*-word is fronted, it receives a restricted, discourse-linked interpretation, compare 0 and 0:

- (21) a. *neti obij kidir-a:-ɸor Ø-ik'i-χ?*
 when father.ABS Kidero-IN-VERS I-go-PRS
 b. *??obij kidir-a:-ɸor neti Ø-ik'i-χ?*
 father.ABS Kidero-IN-VERS when I-go-PRS
 'When is father leaving for Kidero?'

- (22) a. *kid-b-a: šebi t'et'er-χo?*
 girl-OS-ERG what.ABS read-PRS
 'What is the girl reading?'
 b. *šebi kid-b-a: t'et'er-χo?*
 'Which thing is the girl reading?'

Multiple Wh-questions are rare, and the order of wh-words is fixed. Most likely such multiple wh-word clusters are set phrases which cannot be expanded. For example, 0 is possible but none of the combinations in 0 are allowed:

- (23) a. *tu šebi r-oj-χo?*
 who.ERG what.ABS IV-do-PRS
 b. **šebi tu r-oj-χo?*
 ‘Who is doing what?’
- (24) a. **kid-b-a: šebi neti r-oj-χo?*
 girl-OS-ERG what.ABS when IV-do-PRS
 b. **šebi neti kid-b-a: r-oj-χo?*
 ‘When is the girl doing what?’

In questions, the verb appears in the declarative form in all tenses except the past witnessed affirmative, where special forms are used (see 0).

4.3.3. Imperatives and optatives

Direct commands are expressed by the imperative and prohibitive forms of the verb:

- (25) *ik'i/a:k'i-no.*
 go.IMP/go-PROH
 ‘Go./Don’t go.’

The optative, which is frequent in formulaic expressions, can express a command directed to someone other than the addressee:

- (26) *debe-r huni r-egir-oχ.*
 you-LAT road.ABS IV-send-OPT
 ‘Bon voyage (lit. may it send the road to you).’

4.3.4 Exclamatives

Dice ‘how much/many’ is the most common wh-expression used in exclamatives, for example:

- (27) *Oh dice di akiĭ-a:!*

oh how_much 1SG.ABS get.tired-PST.INTERR
 ‘Oh how tired I am!’

A common way of conveying the exclamative meaning is through the use of a non-witnessed past tense predicate. In exclamative contexts, this tense form can be used to comment on the event that is ongoing on at the moment of the utterance:

(28) *Dice Ø-eženi obiy ħarλi-n!*
 how.much I-old father(I).ABS snore-PSTUNW
 ‘Does father snore!’

4.4. Complex sentences

4.4.1. Relative clauses

The predicate of a relative clause is a participle. Arguments and adjuncts are accessible to relativization using the same participial form:

- (29) a. *už-a: kid-b-er gagali teλ-si/teλ-χo.*
 boy-ERG girl-OS-LAT flower.ABS give-PSTWIT/give-PRS
 ‘The boy gave/gives a flower to the girl.’
- b. *kid-b-er gagali ta:λ-ru/teλ-χosi uži*
 girl-OS-LAT flower.ABS give-PSTPTCP/give-PRSPTCP boy
 ‘the boy who gave/gives a flower to the girl’
- c. *už-a: gagali ta:λ-ru/teλ-χosi kid*
 boy-ERG flower.ABS give-PSTPTCP/give-PRSPTCP girl
 ‘the girl to whom the boy gave/gives a flower’
- d. *už-a: kid-b-er ta:λ-ru/teλ-χosi gagali*
 boy-ERG girl-OS-LAT give-PSTPTCP/give-PRSPTCP flower
 ‘the flower that the boy gave/gives to the girl’
- e. *už-a: kid-b-er gagali ta:λ-ru/teλ-χosi kudi*
 boy-ERG girl-OS-LAT flower.ABS give-PSTPTCP/give-PRSPTCP day
 ‘the day on which the boy gave/gives a flower to the girl’

Constituents of embedded clauses can also be relativized. Possessive phrases cannot be relativized.

(30) *ʕal-a: r-od-a bajbik b-a:j-ru ɸʕutku*
 Ali-ERG IV-do-INF beginning III-do-PSTPTCP house

‘the house that Ali began to build’

- (31) *už-a: ʰoʂʰ r-ec^wa:r-u enij
 boy-ERG spindle.ABS IV-break-PSTPRT mother
 ‘the mother whose spindle the boy broke’

In addition, Tsez has correlative clauses formed using wh-words and the interrogative form of the verb (see 0). In the example below, the bracketed material is the correlative and the demonstrative *hemesi* is its correlate in the related clause.

- (32) [na:si uži ičʰčʰa ada:z Ø-aj-χo]
 which boy(I).ABS most first I-come-PRS
hemes-a: aħi b-od-o.
 that-ERG alarm.ABS III-do-IMPER
 ‘The boy who comes first is to sound the alarm (lit. which boy comes first, he is to sound the alarm).’

Tsez correlative formation is quite free and is possible for all clausal constituents.

4.4.2. Complementation

Typically, the predicate of a complement clause is a participle, marked optionally by the nominalizing suffix *-ħi*. If such a complement clause is in the absolutive position it determines verbal agreement in gender IV (as in (33)), or its own absolutive argument can determine agreement by long-distance agreement (section 0).

- (33) obi-r uži-r magalu b-a:ti-ru-ħi r-ij-si
 father-LAT boy-LAT bread(III).ABS III-want-PSTPTCP-NMLZ IV-know-PSTWIT
 ‘The father knew that the boy wanted bread.’

In addition to nominalized complement clauses, Tsez has finite-verb complements marked by the enclitics *-ħin* and *-ħaχ* (section 0). These clitics function as complementizers, heading finite clauses. Such clauses typically occur as complements of propositional-attitude verbs, and in this context, first and second pronouns in the complement clause can be interpreted as referring to the speech act participants or to the attitude holder:

- (34) irbahin-a: [di ʔajibijaw joł-ħin] eħi-χ.

Ibrahim-ERG me wrong/foolish be.PRS-QUOT say-PRS

(i) ‘Ibrahim says that I was wrong.’ (speech-act-participant interpretation)

(ii) ‘Ibrahim_i says that he_i was wrong.’ (attitude-holder interpretation)

This pattern whereby the semantic value of a pronoun (indexical expression) can be changed from being determined by the utterance context to being determined by the context of the reported speech act is known as indexical shift. For details on indexical shift in Tsez, see Polinsky (2015).

4.4.3. Adverbial clauses

Adverbial clauses with converbs are very common; on the formation of converbs, see 0.

Examples of temporal adverbial clauses:

(35) *buq b-aj-nosi eli ciqq-a:-kor b-ik'i-s.*
sun III-come-ANTCVB we.ABS forest-IN-VERS IPL-go-PSTWIT
‘When the sun rose we went to the forest.’

(36) *is-χo Ø_i rok'u-n r-εxu-n*
bull-AD.ESS heart-and IV-die-PFVCVB
ʔomoj-a:j neχo-r sis ʔaq'lu b-oj-no.
donkey-ERG 3SG.nI-LAT one advice.ABS III-do-PSTWIT
‘The donkey felt sorry for the bull and gave it a piece of advice.’

The arguments of the embedded and matrix clause need not be coreferential.

Example of a locative adverbial clause:

(37) *enij-a: magalu χa:ci-za:-kor uži Ø-ik'i-s.*
mother-ERG bread.ABS leave-LOCCVB-VERS boy.ABS I-go-PSTWIT
‘The boy went to the place where mother left the bread.’

Example of a causal adverbial clause:

(38) *obij Ø-aj-zaχ' /-zaq uži β^ʔab^ʔu Ø-izi-s.*
father.ABS I-come-CAUSCVB boy.ABS glad I-become-PSTWIT
‘The boy was happy that/because the father had come.’

4.4.4. Other clause types

Infinitival clauses occur with modal verbs (e.g. *-a:j* ‘must’, *koʕ:* ‘be able’), phasal verbs (e.g. *bajbik b-od-* ‘begin’, *-oq-* ‘become’— often in the meaning ‘set to’), verbs of motion, psychological verbs (e.g. *-eti-* ‘want’, *-^suʕ-* ‘be afraid’), and with *t’amizi -od-* ‘cause’. The ad.essive case of the masdar, expressing purpose more strongly than the infinitive, can also be used with some of these verbs:

- (39) a. *da:-r new-a:-ʕor ujtow ik'-a r-eti-n.*
 me-LAT Mokok-IN-VERS just_so go-INF IV-want-PSTUNW
 ‘I wanted to go to Mokok just for the heck of it.’
- b. *da:-r new-a:-ʕor (*ujtow) ik'-ani-ʒ r-eti-n.*
 me-LAT Mokok-IN-VERS just_so go-MSD-AD.ESS IV-want-PSTUNW
 ‘I wanted to go to Mokok [on purpose].’

Four verbs: *-oq-* ‘begin’, *-iħ^w* ‘start, begin’, *-ik-* ‘begin (lit.: go)’, and *-iç-* ‘continue’, take infinitival complements exhibiting a pattern whereby the subject of the matrix verb is coreferential to the subject of the infinitival complement, but only the latter can be expressed. The matrix verb agrees with the silent subject in gender, which indicates that the subject, although unexpressed, is in the absolutive case.

- (40) a. *[beliqan-ä kawu-bi ser-a] Ø-iħu-n/*r-iħu-n.*
 hunter-ERG gate(II)-PL.ABS unlock-INF I-begin-PSTUNW/IV- begin-PSTUNW
 ‘The hunter began to unlock the gates.’
- b. **[kawu-bi ser-a] beliqan Ø-iħu-n.*
 gate(II)-PL.ABS unlock-INF hunter,ABS I-begin-PSTUNW

This pattern, first noted in Kibrik (1981: 38–39), has become known as backward control (see Fukuda (2008) for an overview of the phenomenon from a cross-linguistic perspective and Polinsky & Potsdam (2002) for a detailed syntactic analysis of the Tsez data).

Clauses with the masdar in the poss.essive case occur with psychological verbs:

- (41) *enij sasaq irbahin aj-ani-q*
 mother.ABS tomorrow Ibrahim.ABS come-MSD-POSS.ESS
j-^suʕ'-no j-iç-a:si joʕ.
 II-afraid-IPFVCVB II-be-RES be.PRS

‘The mother is afraid that Ibrahim will come tomorrow.’

4.5. Negation

Sentential negation is expressed by negative forms of the verb (see 0). Multiple negation is impossible. Constituent negation is expressed by the negative particle *a:nu* following the negated constituent:

- (42) *di t'ek kibī a:nu t'et'er-χo.*
me book.ABS slowly not read-PRS
‘I am not reading slowly.’

4.6. Comparative constructions

Tsez does not have an overt comparative morpheme meaning ‘more’ or ‘less’. Comparatives of superiority are expressed by putting the standard of comparison in the super.ablative form, which precedes the gradable adjective. Consider the following example:

- (43) *zarema-tow-χ'a:j bercinaw*
Zarema-FOC-SUPER-ABL beautiful
‘more beautiful than even Zarema’

If the amount phrase is present in a comparative, it appears in the in.essive form:

- (44) *jaq'suŋ lera garadus-j-a: huŋ-zo-χ'a:j tatanu (joŋ).*
today five.OBL degree-OS-IN.ESS yesterday-LNK2-SUPER-ABL warm be.PRS
‘It’s five degrees warmer today than yesterday.’

Tsez also has comparative correlatives of the type *the more... the better*. In such comparative correlatives, the relative clause always appears with the equative suffix *-ce*, and the parallel clause is expressed by a regular finite construction. In the following example, we show the relative clause in brackets:

- (45) *[eli b-eže b-a:q-ru]-*(ce)*
we(IPL).ABS IPL-big IPL-become-PST.PTCP-EQU
r-aq'su šebīn r-a:j elu-r.
IV-many thing(IV).ABS IV-come.FUT.DEF we-LAT
‘The older we get, the more we know (lit. the bigger we become, the more things

will come to us).’

4.7. Co-ordination and chaining

Noun phrases are coordinated by means of the suffix *-n(o)*, e.g., 0. Disjunction is expressed by the placement of *-ja* ‘or’ (see 3.9) on each constituent:

- (46) *k’et’u-ja* *κ^{sw}aj-a*
 cat-or dog-or
 ‘a cat or a dog’

Coordination of clauses is rare; usually coordinate clauses are not linked by conjunctions, but conjunctions are not disallowed.

- (47) *werharaw* *q’aj-λ’o* *a:či*,
 winner shepherds’_cabin-SUPER.ESS be.FUTINDEF

q’uraw *ʔijət’a* *a:či*.
 loser at_the_herd be.FUTINDEF
 ‘The winner gets the best (lit. the winner will be at the shepherds’ cabin, the loser will be with the herd).’

Coordination is also observed in conditional sentences with the conditional adverb *yoɦi* ‘assuming; if’:

- (48) a. *tatanu* *ɓudi* *r-oq-χo* *joɦi*
 warm day IV-become-PRS COND
eli *ker-a:-ɓor* *esanad-a* *b-ik’-an*.
 we river-IN-VERS bathe-INF IPL-go-FUTDEF
 ‘If the day became warm, we would go to the river.’
 b. *tatanu* *ɓudi* *r-oq-si* *joɦi*
 warm day IV-become-PSTWIT COND
eli *ker-a:-ɓor* *esanad-a* *b-ik’-a* *zow-si*
 we river-IN-VERS bathe-INF IPL-go-INF be-PSTWIT
 ‘If the day had become warm, we would have gone to the river.’

The rich inventory of converbs available in Tsez allows it to use clause chaining freely; in such chains, a number of converbal clauses are linked to a single finite clause. The

clause chain structure is often reinforced by the addition of *-n(o)* ‘and’ to the constituent immediately preceding the converb. In the following example, two converbal clauses are connected to the finite clause:

- (49) *[sasaqozoχ [uži-r-no j-ij-č’ej] maño-r-no*
 early_in_the_morning lad-LAT-and II-know-NEG.PFVCVB outside-LAT-and
j-oq-no] *q’orol-a: uži-z obiy-qo*
 II-become-PFV.CVB widow-ERG lad-GEN2 father-POSS.ESS
esi-n nesi-ǰ’ ja:t-ru q’wariŋi-t-a:j.
 tell-PSTUNW that.I-SUPER.ESS be-PSTPTCP sadness-CONT-ABL
 ‘In the morning the widow slipped outside unnoticed by the young man and told his father about the woes that befell him.’

4.8. Non-verbal predication

The copula combines with predicative adjectives and noun phrases. It is freely omitted in natural speech, cf. 0 above.

- (50) *ʼali-s obij año joł.*
 Ali-GEN1 father shepherd be.PRS
 ‘Ali’s father is a shepherd.’

4.9. Information structure

Tsez has several particles that mark information-structural categories. In particular, *-n(o)* and *-gon* mark topic and contrastive topic respectively; particles *-kin* and *-tow* mark focus material. Long-distance agreement (see section 0) encodes the topic status of the absolutive argument that triggers such agreement.

5. Lexicon

Although no study on the Tsez lexicon as detailed as that conducted by Comrie & Xalilov (2009) for Bezhta has been carried out, the general line of the results for Bezhta carries over to Tsez. The percentage of loanwords in Bezhta obtained there for the relevant lexical sample puts Bezhta somewhat below Japanese and Indonesian (and well below English), and somewhat above Vietnamese and Swahili (Tadmor 2009: 56). There is a substantial body of non-borrowed lexicon, much of it traceable back to Proto-Nakh-Daghestanian or intermediate nodes, e.g. *enij* ‘mother’, *is* ‘ox’, *mʼali* ‘mountain’, *huni* ‘road’ (Nikolayev & Starostin 1994: 201–202, 680–681, 834, 606–607).

The three main sources of borrowed vocabulary are, in descending order, Avar, Russian, and Georgian. Avar has provided many words, including some for concepts already present in Tsez culture, but also reflecting early Tsez contact with the outside world, both physical and cultural; examples are *halmaḥ* ‘friend’, *raḷad* ‘sea’, *gurḥi* ‘compassion’. A particularly large proportion of Tsez adjectives are of Avar origin, e.g. *bercinaw* ‘beautiful’. (In the Avar etymon, the final *-w* is a gender I suffix, but in Tsez the adjective is invariable for gender.) Avar verbs are borrowed in the infinitive form accompanied by a Tsez light verb, usually *-oq-* ‘become’ for intransitives and *-od-* ‘do’ for transitives, e.g. *bak’arzi -oq-/od-* ‘gather (tr/intr)’. Avar has also been the conduit for many “orientalisms”, i.e. loans into Avar from Arabic, Persian, or Turkic languages, e.g. *q’alam* ‘pencil’, *ʕumru* ‘life’; *daru* ‘medicament’, *kumak* ‘help’; *huruš* ‘rouble’. Georgian has provided a substantial number of nouns reflecting the pre-technological modern world, e.g. *k’owzi* ‘spoon’, *burti* ‘ball’. Currently, Russian is the main source of loans, including internationalisms. Especially earlier loans from Russian often show some phonological adaptation or other modifications, e.g. *doḡtur* ‘doctor’ (Russian *doktor*), *gazit*, *gazjat*, *gazijat* ‘newspaper’ (Russian *gazeta*), *pabrika* ‘factory’ (Russian *fabrica*), *iškap* ‘cupboard’ (Russian *škap*). Russian verbs, like Avar verbs, are borrowed as infinitives with a Tsez light verb, e.g. *paradat -od-* ‘sell’ (Russian *prodat* ‘sell’) Loans from Russian also include discourse particles, especially in slang.

More comparative work is needed before loans from other Tsezic or from Andic languages can be consistently identified, but *bišon* ‘hundred’ is clearly a loan from an Andic language (Nikolayev & Starostin 1994: 588).

6. Sample text

This text was recorded in Tsebari in July 1994 by Ramazan Rajabov. The narrator is Zahir Rajabov, then aged 58.

ʕomoj-no is-no

donkey-and bull-and

zow-no-ḷax zow-č’ej-ḷax sida ʕaḷ-a: sis žek’u.
 was-PSTUNW-QUOT be-PSTUNW.NEG-QUOT one.OBL village-IN.ESS one man

nesi žek’u-s zow-no ʕomoj-no is-no.
 that.I.OBL man-GEN1 be-PSTUNW donkey-and bull-and

sidaquḷ is-a: neširu-r riḷu riḷi-n,

once bull-ERG evening-LAT ploughing plough-PFVCVB

akił-no, idu-r b-aj-nosi,

be tired-PFVCVB home-LAT III-come-ANTCVB

ʔomoj-qo-r ʔarza b-oK-no.

donkey-POSS-LAT complaint III-take-PSTUNW

dej ʔomoj, akił-no b-eχu-χ.

me-GEN1 donkey tire-PFVCVB III-die-PRS

di hoboj da:-ʔ bet'erhan-es gurhi-n a:nu.

me now me-SUPER.ESS master-GEN1 compassion-and be.NEG.PRS

šebi-tow di r-od-an howži?

what-indeed me IV-do-FUTDEF Now

is-χo rok'u-n r-eχu-n,

bull-AD.ESS heart-and IV-die-PFVCVB

ʔomoj-a: neło-r sis ʔaq'lu b-oj-no.

donkey-ERG that.nIPL-LAT one advice III-do-PSTUNW

neł-a: r-oł-χo-łin b-iči-łin ełi-n.

that.nI-ERG IV-be_sick-PRS-QUOT III-be.IMP-QUOT say-PSTUNW

hudaj Is ʔomoj-a: a:łi-ru-χo-r

next_time Bull donkey-ERG say-PSTPTCP-AD-LAT

r-oł-χo-łin b-iš-č'ej b-iči-n.

IV-be_ill-PRS-QUOT III-eat-NEG.PFVCVB III-be-PSTUNW

bet'erhan-a: χabar-kin b-oj-č'ej is-ez meč^w-a:

master-ERG talk-even III-make-NEG.PFVCVB bull-GEN2 place-IN.ESS

ʔomoj riłu-ł b-iži-n.

donkey ploughing-CONT.ESS III-take-PSTUNW

sidaquł b-ik'i-n ʔomoj riłu-ł,

once III-go-PSTUNW donkey ploughing-CONT.ESS

q'ʔuna bude-ł b-ik'i-n.

two.OBL day-CONT.ESS III-go-PSTUNW

b-eχu-n *tatu* *ʔomoj-is.*
III-die-PSTUNW strength donkey-GEN1

neł-a: *ełi-n* *žek'u-r* *b-a:j-ru* *ʔaq'lu*
that.nI-ERG say-PSTUNW person-LAT III-make-PSTPTCP advice

q'ʔime-z *žukz-a:-r* *b-a:su-łin*
self-GEN2 malice-IN-LAT III-find.FUTINDF-QUOT

neł'osi *bet'erhan-a:* *hoboj* *jedu* *is*
later master-ERG now this.nI bull

b-eχu-χ-łin *b-eχ^waj-no* *kur-no.*
III-die-PRS-QUOT III-cut-PFVCVB throw-PSTUNW

hudu *cezj-a:* *ełi-χosi* *joł:*
yes Tsez-ERG say-PRSPTCP be.PRS

ħalt'o-q *b-ʔa:ł'-ru* *posu* *mač'i-ł* *b-a:χu.*
work-POSS.ESS III-fear-PSTPTCP cattle dagger-SUB.ESS III-die.FUTINDF

The donkey and the bull

Once upon a time in a certain village there lived a man. That man had a donkey and a bull. Once, when the bull came home tired after having ploughed the field till evening, he complained to the donkey. “Dear donkey, I am dead tired. My master has no pity on me now. What should I do now?” The donkey felt sorry for the bull and gave him a piece of advice. He said he should pretend to be sick. Next day, the bull, as the donkey had said, pretending to be sick, did not eat. The master, without even saying a word, took the donkey instead of the bull to plough. One day the donkey went to plough, two days he went. The donkey grew weak. He said that advice given to a person brings evil to oneself. Later, the master, saying that this bull was now dying, suddenly slaughtered it. That is why the Tsez people say: The animal that is afraid of work will die under the dagger.

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Abbreviations

ABL – Ablative
ABS – Absolutive
ANTCVB – Anterior Converb
AD – Localization ‘at’
APUD – Localization ‘near’
CAUS – Causative
CAUSCVB – causal converb
COND – Conditional
CONT – Localization ‘in (a mass)’
DISTR – Distributive
EQU – Equative
ERG – Ergative
ESS – Essive
FUTDEF – Future Definite
FUTINDF – Future Indefinite
GEN1 – Genitive 1
GEN2 – Genitive 2
IMP – Imperative
IPFVCVB – Imperfective Converb
IN – Localization ‘in a hollow space’
INF – Infinitive
INS – Instrumental
INTNS – Intensifier
intr – intransitive
LAT – Lative
LOCCVB – Locative Converb
LNK1 – Linker 1
LNK2 – Linker 2
MSD – Masdar
NEG – Negation
NMLZ – Nominalizer
OBL – Oblique
OPT – Optative

PFVCVB – Perfective Converb
PL – Plural
POSS – Possessive
POT – Potential
PROH – Prohibitive
PRS – Present
PRSPTCP – Present Participle
PSTPTCP – Past Participle
PSTWIT – Past Witnessed
PSTUNW – Past Unwitnessed
Q – Interrogative
QUOT – Quotative
RES – Resultative
RESTR – Restrictive
SUB – Localization ‘under’
SUPER – Localization ‘on’
tr – transitive
VERS – Versative

The Roman numerals I–IV are used to indicate genders; nI means ‘non-I’ gender. To avoid confusion, the first person singular pronoun is glossed ‘me’.