The Diachronic Puzzle of Georgian NP-Clitics

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Form-meaning mismatches

Research Focus

Old Georgian NP/DP shows four interesting phenomena:

1. Post-nominal definiteness marking with igi/ese/ege

2. Indefinites with =me (on wh-stems) & postposed erti

3. Additive enclitic =(a)c (Modern -c/-ts)

4. Case concord (Suffixaufnahme)

Goal:Test whether these elements are truly Wackernagel clitics or distinct DM processes (features + PF operations)

Research Focus

Traditionally described as NP-2P clitics;

Reanalyzed here in Distributed Morphology as Local Dislocation (D[+def]), scope-aligned edge attachment (Add[+add]), and NP-bounded AgrCase Concord (Suffixaufnahme), with diachronic change via lexicalization and impoverishment.

OG Definiteness Markers

- *igi* ‘that (distal)’
- *ese* ‘this (near speaker)’
- *ege* ‘that (near addressee)’

Dual life:

Prenominal, stressed: classical demonstrative use.

igi k’atsi
that man
‘that man’

Post-nominal, enclitic, unstressed: definite article use.

k’ats=igi
man=DEF
‘the man’

Clitic status: Boeder (1995), Harris (2002), Testelets (1998): NP-2P clitics, predicted to attach after first NP word.

OG Definiteness Markers

Placement: predicted NP-2P (Boeder, Harris), but corpus shows strong noun adjacency preference.

lamazi=igi k’aci “the beautiful man” (Adj host, rare).

isni dɣuare ul-ta=igi
“the twelve men” (plural mismatch: sg. article, pl. head).

lamazi=igi
“the beautiful one” (N ellipsis).

Constraint: Host hierarchy N ≫ A ≫ Num; prosodic repair if N absent.

3 Step Analysis (OG)

Step 1

Syntax builds D[+def].
Demonstratives distinguished by [±proximal], [±speaker], [±addressee].

Step 2

/ese/ ⇔ D[+def, +prox, +speaker]
/ege/ ⇔ D[+def, +prox, +addressee]
/igi/ ⇔ D[+def] elsewhere

Operation: Local Dislocation (LD) with Host Hierarchy = N ≫ A ≫ Num/Q.
Prosodic contingency: if N is ellipsed/deaccented → attach to leftmost lexical host.

Step 3 (PF)
N host (dominant): k'aci=igi 'the man'.
Rare A host: lamazi=igi k'aci 'the beautiful man'.
Number mismatch (clitic-like)

Ellipsis host: lamazi=igi 'the beautiful one'.

→ Not a free NP-2P rule; constrained LD predicts the attested pattern.

3 Step Analysis (MG)

Step 1 (Syntax):

- **D[+def] present in structure.**

Step 2 (Vocabulary Insertion):

- **Impoverishment: delete exponent for D[+def] at VI → no article allomorph.**

Step 3 (PF linearization):

- **Enclitic article absent; demonstratives es/is used instead.**

Wh-indefinites & NP+erti

/=me/ ⇔ D[+indef, −spec] / _ [+wh].

Restriction: attaches only to [+wh] stems (e.g., vin=me, ra=me).

no NP=me attested in my sample.

/erti/ realizes indefiniteness with specificity (often analyzed on Num); contrasts with =me (non-specific).

- Old Georgian: case precedes =me → *raj-s=me*

NP+erti:

Postposed numeral → "a certain N" (*k'atsi erti*).

Preposed numeral → "one N" (*erti k'atsi*).

3 Step Analysis

Step 1

Syntax: D[+indef].
If a QP with [+wh] is present → licenses =me.
If a NumP with erti is present → licenses the "a certain N" reading.

Step 2

Vocabulary Insertion (context-sensitive):

/=me/ ⇔ Dº[+indef, –specific] / __ [+wh]

/erti/ ⇔ Dº[+indef, +specific] (via Numº[one])

Step 3

PF linearization (Old Georgian):

Case attaches before =me → *ra-s=me, vin-is=me*.

Postposed erti → *k'aci erti* "a certain man".

Diachrony of Wh-indefinites & NP+erti

- Old Georgian:

Two complementary indefinite strategies:

=me → non-specific indefinites (weak existentials). case precedes clitic (vin-s=me).

erti (postposed) → specific indefinites (anchored existentials).

-Middle Georgian:
NP+erti fades

- Modern Georgian:

Modern: Fusion(wh+me) → portmanteau; case outside (e.g., *vinme-s, rame-s*).

Blocking: erti (D[+indef, +spec]) bleeds =me in specific contexts.

Modern: specific-indef use lost (competition outcome).

Additive clitic =ts

- Function: enclitic marker of additivity “also/too.”
- Domain: [+add]; enclitic with scope = XP (NP, PP, RC). Placement is scope-sensitive, not blind 2P.
- Prosody: unstressed enclitic, phonologically dependent.
- Diachrony: Old G = enclitic at left edge of XP; Modern G = enclitic at right edge.
- Clitic does not cross RC/PP boundaries → scope-bounded alignment.

3 Step Analysis

Step 1

A single Add0 head merges with XP (NP, PP, or RC).
Merge site = scope domain:
Add0 with RC → narrow scope in the relative clause.
Add0 with PP → scope over NP containing that PP.

Step 2

Vocabulary Insertion
/=ts/ → Add0[+ADD]

PF rule: Align(Add, Edge, XP).
OG: left edge; MG: right edge.

Host filter: nearest lexical prosodic word
No verbs, no RC/PP crossing.

Step 3

Attested:
NP: *k'atsi=ts*;
PP: *mis tana=ts*;
AdvP: *axla=ts*.

- A true clitic, but scope-aligned rather than free 2P.

Suffixaufnahme

Descriptive facts

Possessors and other dependents show double case:

perx-ni k'ac-isa-ni
foot-NOM.PL man-GEN-NOM.PL
"the man's feet."

Concord is NP-bounded; no spreading into PPs attested.

Semantics: concord only (no new θ-roles).
Old G: robust in 5th–10th c.; Middle G: weakened;

Modern: Modern loss via Impoverishment: copied [Case] features deleted, leaving only GEN on possessor.

3 Step Analysis

Step 1

Outer K assigns case to NP; possessor inside NP gets GEN from inner K.

AgrCase node (dissociated) available for Concord.

Step 2
/-is/ ⇔ GEN; /-ni/ ⇔ NOM.PL.

PF Concord: copy outer [Case] onto N/A with [Concord] inside NP (NP-bounded; no PP).

Modern: Impoverishment deletes copied AgrCase.

Step 3

Old G: both cases surface →

k'ac-is-a-ni
man-GEN-TV-NOM.PL).

Modern G: PF impoverishment deletes outer AgrCase →

k'ac-is
man-GEN

Conclusions

Georgian NP clitics are not one homogeneous Wackernagel system. They represent different PF processes predicted by DM.

- Articles: LD with host hierarchy; article lost via Impoverishment.
- =me/erti: wh-licensed =me → Fusion in MG; erti (specific) lost via competition.
- =ts: scope-aligned edge clitic; L-edge (OG) → R-edge (MG).
- Suffixaufnahme: Concord (AgrCase), NP-bounded; lost via Impoverishment.

Georgian “NP-clitics” form a mosaic of DM PF operations (Local Dislocation, Concord, lexicalization, scope alignment). The Wackernagel unification is too broad; DM accounts for both synchronic restrictions and diachronic change.

References

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