The Placement of 2P Clitics in Ossetic
as a Main Clause Phenomenon

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The term "clitic climbing" (cf. Rizzi 1978) is typically used in the literature for cases where a clitic belonging to the infinitive is placed inside the clause of the c-commanding verb, creating a mismatch between syntax and semantics (cf. example 1a from Serbo-Croatian, where the second-position enclitic is placed in the main clause, and example 1b, which shows that such positioning is impossible with finite complements).

Clitic climbing has been observed both in languages with verb-adjacent clitics (French, Spanish) and in languages with second-position (2P) enclitics (Serbo-Croatian). However, the analysis of this phenomenon has mostly been limited to a narrow sample of several Romance and Slavic languages. Because of the scarcity of this sample, clitic climbing is usually understood as solely involving sentential complements.

I claim that there is at least one language, Ossetic[1], where clitic climbing is observed not only with sentential complements, but also with non-finite adverbial clauses. Based on the data of Ossetic, I also claim that the placement of 2P enclitics correlates with the presupposition vs. assertion distinction and must be added to the list of MCPs previously described in the literature (cf. e. g. Emonds 1970, Hooper and Thompson 1973, Green 1976).

Ossetic (North-East Iranian) has 2P clitics and possessive proclitics homonymous with the Genitive of the enclitics. The general rule for enclitic placement is in the second position in the clause; this includes subordinate clauses. In sentences with infinitival complements, clitic climbing, as it is traditionally understood, is observed (2).

Ossetic also possesses two deverbal forms used as converbs with the endings *-gă* and *-găjă* (Ablative of *-gă*). *-găjă* is the more prototypical converb (a "converb proper" in terms of Nedjalkov 1995), used to express manner, attendant circumstance, time and condition. *-gă* is used only in adverbial clauses expressing time and manner. Any argument of the converb in *-gă* can be expressed by a 2P enclitic positioned in the dependent clause (3a). On the contrary, clauses headed by the converb in *-găjă* do not have a position for 2P enclitics: the object can be expressed by a possessive proclitic (3b), while other arguments can be expressed by 2P enclitics which undergo obligatory climbing (3c).

I claim that the differences between the converbs in *-gă* and *-găjă* can be described in terms of the semantic/pragmatic opposition of presupposition vs. assertion (cf. e. g. Lambrecht 1994). Namely, converbs in *-gă* are always assertive, while converbs in *-găjă* always head clauses expressing presuppositon. For instance, wh-words can only be used with forms in *-gă* (4a), but not with forms in *-găjă* (4b). The following tests support my claim: the placement of focus particles, preverbal focusing, different types of dislocation, illocutionary force-changing devices, etc. The semantics of the forms, described above, also fit the pattern: only *-găjă* can be used in conditionals and to express attendant circumstance (background information).

This correlation between clitic climbing and presupposition vs. assertion is completely analogous to the same correlation proposed for MCPs in Hooper and Thompson (1973). This means that the placement of 2P enclitics has to be considered a MCP in Ossetic. If it is sufficiently attested typologically, this MCP ought to be considered on par with the phenomena previously described in the literature.

Data

(1) a. *Jan **ji** chtě [ukázat svoje stádo]*
Jan her-D wanted show-INF his.own herd
'Jan wanted to show her his herd' (Rezac n. d., p. 7)

b. *Dana <*tě> přišla aby <tě> potkala*
Dana <*you-A> came that <you-A> meet-3.SG
'Dana came to meet you' (Rezac n. d., p. 8)

(2) *žawər<=ăj> ra-jdəd-t-a kăn-ən<*=ăj>*
Zaur<=3SG.ENCL.GEN> PV-begin-TR-PST.3SG do-INF<*=3SG.ENCL.GEN>
'Zaur started to do it'

(3) a. *Rog-ăn=ăj fe-lvašt-a Galka,*
easy-DAT=3SG.ENCL.GEN PV-capture-PST.TR.3SG Galka
[*don-ərdăm=ăj šk'ăf-gă*]
water-DIR=3SG.ENCL.GEN carry-CONV
"Galka [a dog] captured it [another dog] easily, carrying it towards the water"
(Max Dug, № 8, 2002, p. 36)

b. *Je=žon-gă-jă, žawər wăddăr=ăj fărš-ə*
POSS.3SG=know-CONV-ABL Zaur still=3SG.ENCL.GEN ask-PRS.3SG
'Knowing it, Zaur still asks it'

c. *Birăğ<=săm> kăš-gă-jă<*=săm>*
wolf<=3PL.ENCL.ALL> look-CONV-ABL<*=3PL.ENCL.ALL>
a-žžad...
PREF-remain[PST.INTR.3SG]
"The wolf stood still, looking at them..." (Max Dug, № 4, 2001, p. 89)

(4) a. *Sə 'r-săxš-gă=mă fed-t-aj, Iliqo?!*
what PV-catch-CONV=1SG.ENCL.GEN PV+see-TR-PST.2SG Iliqo
'What did you see me catch, Iliqo?!'

b. **Sə kăn-gă-jă mad š-kʷəd-t-a*
what do-CONV-ABL mother PV-cry-TR-PST.3SG
'What was mother doing when she started to cry?'

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