

A multifunctional clitic in Argobba

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1. General information about the language

1.1. General remarks

1.1.1. Sociolinguistics

Geographical Distribution of Argobba

- more ethnic Argobba than Argobba speaker, most Argobba switched to Amharic or Oromo
- several regional varieties, not all described
- data in this presentation from variety spoken in two villages Shonke and T'ollaha

Sociolinguistic situation of Argobba of Shonke and T'ollaha

- several hundred speakers (or up to 3000?)
- minority language, dominant languages Oromo and Amharic
- intensive multilingualism and language contact effects
- language locality surprisingly high

1.1.2. Classification

Dominance of ignorance

- for decades knowledge about the language was dominated by works of Leslau (1959, 1997)
- discussion of classificatory status: individual language or dialect of Amharic
- with no doubt genetically closest relative of Amharic

Argobba as *older sister* of Amharic

- Argobba is in fact much more conservative than Amharic
- preserved pharyngal consonants
- verbal morphology more complex than Amharic
- preservation of Ethiosemitic agreement markers
- preserved many common Ethiosemitic lexical roots

1.2. Typological features

- nonlinear morphology with root-template system
- verb final language,
- nouns are marked for number and case
- dependent marking in NPs
- head marking in VPs

2. Some remarks on the verbal morphology

Table 1 shows the basic structure of different paradigms based on the the verbal root s-b-r with the meaning ‘to break’.

Table 1: Basic structure of verbal inflection

Template	Base	paradigm	example	gloss
$C_1\text{ }3C_2C_2\text{ }3C_3$	<i>s3bb3r-</i>	perfektive	<i>s3bb3r-ew</i>	„I broke“
$C_1\text{ }3C_2C_3$	<i>-s3br-</i>	imperfektive	<i>inn3-s3br</i>	„we break“
$C_1C_2\text{ }3C_3$	<i>-sb3r-</i>	jussivs	<i>yi-sb3r-u</i>	„they should break“
$C_1\text{ }3C_2C_3C_3$	<i>s3birr-</i>	converb	<i>s3birr-o</i>	„he breaks and ...“

3. Some notes on the syntax

3.1. Structure of appositional phrases

(1)

PRP	noun	ADV/RN/PP
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Example (2) *intɜɜaro liɜla* „above the gravel“ illustrates the typical structure of appositional phrases in Argobba which consist of a preposition (**intɜ-**) that indicates the general relational meaning, a nominal head and an adverb, a post-position or a relational noun (**liɜla**) which specifies the relational meaning.

- (2) *intɜɜaro liɜla ɜafɜr iddewwɜlɜll*
intɜ-ɜaro **liɜla** ɜafɜr \emptyset -iddewwɜl-ɜll- \emptyset
 FROM-gravel **above** earth 3SG.M-be-put.inIPFV-AUX-3SG.M
 ‘Earth is being put above the gravel’

3.2. Structure of subordinate clauses

Subordination of adverbial clauses are marked on the verb. Argobba has different types of temporal clauses which express different temporal relations such as simultaneity (3) or posteriority (5).

3.2.1. Temporal clauses expressing simultaneity

The construction of temporal clauses expressing simultaneity consists of a verb in the imperfective paradigm which has a prefix **s-** as subordination marker.

(3)

temporal clause	main clause
s- + verb.IPFV	finite verb

- (4) *tɜbetu siwe? liɜačč tɜniɜiččɜm*
 tɜ-bet-u s-y-we? liɜ-ačč tɜniɜičč-ɜm
 IN-house-POSS.3SG.M WHEN-3SG.M-enter.IPFV chid-PL sleep.CVB-3PL
imbɜrɜy
 imbɜr-ɜy
 PAST.AUX-3PL
 ‘When he entered his house, his children had fallen asleep.’

3.2.2. Temporal clauses expressing posteriority

The construction of temporal clauses expressing posteriority is parallel to the construction of appositional phrases. Since relativized verbs behave syntactically like nouns, they can function as head of an appositional phrase. The construction

consists of a verb in the relative perfective form which is preceded by a preposition **int3-** with ablative meaning ‘from’ and followed by a specifying postposition **amoče** meaning ‘away from the point of reference’.

(5)

temporal clause <i>int3-</i> + REL-verb.PER + <i>amoče</i>	main clause finite verb
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- (6) *niščitti* *doriččin* *intišerr3h3čč* *amoče*
 nišč-tti dor-čči-n **int3**-i-šerr3h-3čč **amoče**
 woman-ART.F chicken-ART.M-ACC FROM-REL-buy.PFV-3SG:F after
l3hita *haw3čč3ya*
 l3-ħit-a haw-3čč-3ya
 FOR-sister-POSS.3SG:F give.PFV-3SG:F-OBJ.3SG:F
 ‘After the woman had bought the chicken, she gave it to her sister.’

3.3. A case of grammaticalization: from temporal to conditional clause

Another construction illustrates the grammaticalization from temporal meaning to conditional meaning. The construction in question (7) uses the ablative preposition **int3-** which is combined with a verb in the relative perfective. Depending on context and semantics of the verb this construction can either have an ambivalent reading as in (8), i.e. expressing either time or real condition, or it marks only real condition as in (9).

(7)

Protasis <i>int3-</i> REL-verb.PFV	Apodosis finite verb
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- (8) *intim3t't'ex* *innixedinna*
int3-i-m3t't'-ex inn-xed-nna
when-REL-come.PFV-2SG.M 1PL-go.IPFV-AUX.1PL
 ‘As soon as/ In case you come, we will go.’
- (9) *ini s3riččin* *intidd3d3y*
 ini s3ro-čči-n **int3**-i-dd3d-3-i
 DEM cloth-ART.M-ACC **if**-REL-like.PFV-3SG.M-OBJ.3SG.M
yiš3rriħabb
 y-š3rriħ-3bb
 3SG.M-buy.JUS-OBJ.3SG.M
 ‘If he likes this cloth, he should buy it.’

4. The particle =ga

4.1. Morphosyntactic properties of =ga

The enclitic =ga can attach to a remarkably wide range of words: nominals (nouns, pronouns, demonstratives) as well as numerals, relativized verbs, verbs, the existential and the copula.

While the etymology of the particle is not clear (there is a enclitic =ga in Amharic with a locative meaning), its functional distribution is clearly the result of a grammaticalization process from time > condition (cf. Heine und Kuteva 2002: 202).

4.2. Marking temporal phrases

4.2.1. With nouns

In (10) double marking local-temporal prefix *b3-* and =ga.

- (10) *b3s3bas3batga indig s3wačč ħall3k'3y*
b3-s3bas3bat = ga indig s3w-ačč ħall3k-'3y
 IN-seventyseven = **time** many person-PL pass.away.PFV-3PL
 'In seventy-seven many people died.'

But in (11) there is only =ga as marker of the temporal relation.

- (11) *zuhurga ħalk'3ll*
zuhur = ga ħalk'-3ll-∅
 noon = **time** 3SG.M-end.IPFV-AUX-3SG.M
 'It will end at noon.'

4.2.2. With pronouns, demonstratives and numerals

When =ga is be attached to pronouns such as the indefinite pronoun *manim* 'any' in (12) or the selecting interrogative pronoun *et* 'wich' in (13), with a demonstrative (14) or with a numeral (15) it conveys still the lexical meaning 'time'.

- (12) *manimga t3betiyye m3mti? if3rkillix*
manim = ga t3-bet-yye m3mti? t-ferk-ll-x
 any = **time** TO-house-POSS.1SG come.VN 2SG.M-can.IPFV-AUX-2SG.M
 'You can come to my house at any time.'

- (13) *etiga ?at3ll*
et = ga ∅-?at-3ll-∅
 which = **time** 3SG.M-enter.IPFV-AUX-3SG.M
 'When will he come home?'

- (14) *?oga t3k'3bbill3na bimb3rena*
 ?o = **ga** t3k'3bill-3na bi-mb3r-ena
 DEM = **time** accept.CVB-1PL COND-AUX-1PL
 'If we had accepted it at that time'
- (15) *g3m3ša malst ħandga immittiherr3s n3y*
 g3m3ša malst ħand = **ga** imm-y-ttiherr3s n3-y
 g3m3ša say.INF one = **time** REL-3SG.M-be.plowed.IPFV COP-3SG.M
 'Gämäsha means (a field) which is plowed once.'

4.3. Marking temporal clauses

4.3.1. With relativized verbs

In the examples (16) and (17) the particle = **ga** functions as the head of a relative clause, thus the whole construction must be analyzed as a NP with = **ga** as its head meaning 'time'.

- (16) *?amir it'3rr3rga f3r3nǰ*
 ?amir i-t'3rr3r-∅ = **ga** f3r3nǰ
 order REL-be.serious.PFV-3SG.M = **time** white.man
m3t't'3l3na
 m3t't'-3-l-3na
 come.PFV-3SG.M-APPL-OBJ.1PL
 'At the time when the order (of the government) became serious the white people came for us (to our help).'
- (17) *if3nadd3ŷiga abbayye f3k'i aħm3d int3wanša midir*
 i-f3nadd3ŷ-∅ = **ga** abbayye f3k'i aħm3d int3-wanša midir
 REL-explode.PFV-3SG.M = **time** Abbayye Fäqi Ahmed FROM-cave earth
issebb3r biyy3m d3ngič'č'3m it't'3y
 issebb3r-∅ biyy-3m d3ngič'č'-3m it't'-3y
 break.PFV-3SG.M sag.CVB-3PL be.frightened.CVB-3PL come.out.PFV-3PL
 „When it burst Abbayye Fäqi Ahmed, thinking that the earth was broken, was shocked and came to of the cave.“

4.3.2. With verbs

The examples (18) and (19) represent the stage where the = **ga**-construction can't be analyzed as a NP since the relative marker *i-* is absent. Thus = **ga** has developed in a pure marker for syntactical subordination, here with a temporal meaning.

This process can be illustrated as *Relative-verb.PFV = ga* > *Verb.PFV = ga* (cf. Heine et al. 1991: 229)

- (18) *ʔattenaga* *innif3č'inna*
 ∅-ʔatt-ena = **ga** inn-f3č'-nna
 REL-enter.PFV-1PL = **time** 1PL-grind.IPFV-AUX.1PL
 'When we come home, we will grind.'
- (19) *m3ggabit weʔga* *z3riʔ yafattiħall*
 m3ggabit weʔ-∅ = **ga** z3riʔ y-afattiħ-3ll-∅
 March enter.PFV-3SG.M = WHEN seed 3SG.M-start.IPFV-AUX-3SG.M
 'When March comes seeding begins.'

There are some few examples in my corpus where =**ga** in fact attaches to a temporal clause which is subordinated with the prefix *s-*, i.e. attaching to a verb in the imperfective form (20).

- (20) *iyyiħadd3r* *sik'et't'ilga*
 iyyi-i-ħadd3r-∅ s-y-k'et't'il = **ga**
 PROG-REL-spend.night.PFV-3SG.M WHEN-3SGM-continue.IPVF = **time**
s3f3ra intaxxidexum irdata annaw3xmum
 s3f3ra int-al-xid-exum irdata al-nn-aw-3xmu-m
 resettlement IF-NEG-go.PFV-2PL help NEG-1PL-give.IPFV-OBJ.2PL-NEG
al3y
 al-3y
 say.PFV-3PL
 'After a certain time had passed they told us: "We don't give you help if you don't go to the resettlement.'

4.3.3. A completive aspect with restricted distribution

The particle is also used in a special construction which marks a type of completive aspect. This construction consists of a verb in the converb paradigm which is followed by the quasi-auxiliary *addemm3r* to which =**ga** is attached (for quasi-auxiliaries cf. Heine 1993: 15). The converb as well as the quasi-auxiliary are inflected for the subject. This construction can only be used for forming subordinate clauses. i.e. this 'completive aspect' has a restricted distribution.

- (21)

verb.CVB	addemm3r-SUB	= ga
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- (22) *k'zħawa š3čičč3na addemm3renaga s3l3wat*
k'zħawa š3čičč-3na addemm3r-ena = ga s3l3wat
 coffee drink.CVB-1PL finish.PFV-1PL-time salawat
innilinna
 inn-l-nna
 1PL-say.IPFV-AUX:1PL

‘Having drunk coffee we say the Salawat-prayer.’

- (23) *g3misso* *addemm3rga* *ay3ma*
 g3miss-o addemm3r- \emptyset = **ga** ay3ma
 plow.first.CVB-3SG.M finish.PFV-3SG.M = **time** ayema
immibbehal *hall*
 imm-y-bbehal hall- \emptyset
 REL-3SG.M-be.called.IPFV EX-3SG.M

‘Having plowed for the first time there is something called ayema.’

4.4. Marking conditional clauses

4.4.1. Grammaticalization of the construction

The development from a marker of temporal clauses to a marker of conditional clauses is a common grammaticalization process (Heine und Kuteva 2002: 202). The construction in (24) is structurally identical with the construction marking temporal clauses. But it marks now real condition.

- (24)
- | | | |
|----------|-------------|-------------|
| protasis | | apodosis |
| verb.PFV | = <i>ga</i> | finite verb |

4.4.2. Marking real condition with verbs

While example (25) illustrates the ambiguity, or in other words, the transitional stage in the grammaticalization process, the examples (26), (27) and (28) are clearly examples for conditional clauses.

- (25) *azihara* *ziŋe s3w* *motiga* *to* *n3y*
 a-zihara ziŋe s3w mot- \emptyset = **ga** to n3-y
 GEN-pilgrimage day person die.PFV-3SG.M = **time** there COP-3SG.M
immikk'omm3t' *hinč'et*
 imm-y-kk'omm3t' hinč'et
 REL-3SG.M-be.cut.IPFV wood

‘When/if someone dies on the day of pilgrimage it is there that wood is cut.’

- (26) *w3zz3hga* *n3hase* *ʕasraħammist* *dr3s* *n3y* *t'ef*
 w3zz3h- \emptyset = **ga** n3hase ʕasraħammist dr3s n3-y t'ef
 be.much.PFV-3SM = **if** August fifteen UNTIL COP-3SG.M t'ef
immizzerri?
 imm-y-zzerri?
 REL-3SG.M-be.sowed.IPFV

‘If it is much it is until August fifteen that T’ef will be sown.’

- (27) *f3rr3k3yga* *tidar3min* *henjull3y*
 f3rr3k-3y = **ga** tidar-3m-n henj-u-ll-3y
 can.PFV-3PL = **if** marriage-POSS.3PL-ACC hold.IPFV-3PL-AUX-3PL
 ‘If they can (live as man and wife), they hold on their marital life.’

- (28) *affir3k3yga* *abbaw3min* *iyixadd3m3y*
 al-fir3k-3y = **ga** abba-3m-n iyy-i-xadd3m-3y
 NEG-can.PFV-3PL-**if** father-POSS.3PL PROG-REL-serve.PFV-3PL
b3handu *ik’k’emm3t’ull3y*
 b3-hand-u Ø-ikk’emm3t-’u-ll-3y
 AT-one-ART 3-sit.IPFV-3PL-AUX-3PL
 ‘If they cannot (live as man and wife), they live together with their father helping him.’

4.4.3. Marking real condition with the existential verb

Examples (29) and (30) show the combination of = **ga** with the affirmative and negative forms of the existential verb *hall*.

- (29) *t’3yyak’i* *halliga* *l3t’3yyak’i* *iwwedd3ll*
 t’3yyak’i hall-Ø = **ga** l3-t’3yyak’i Ø-iwwedd-3ll-Ø
 questioner EX-3SG.M-**if** FOR-questioner 3SG.M-be.told.IPFV-AUX-3SG.M
 ‘In case there is a questioner it will be told to him (the questioner).’

- (30) *t3k’3bbaym* *yatiga* *b3gidd*
 t3k’3bbay-m yat-Ø = **ga** b3-gidd
 reveiver-TOP NEG.EX-3SG.M = **if** WITH-obligation
hababill3mi
 hababill-3m-i
 soothe.CVB-3PL-OBJ.3SG.M
 ‘If there isn’t someone who accepts (listens) then they soothe him strongly ...’

4.4.4. Marking real condition of nominal clauses

The combination of = **ga** with the copula *n3-* is a construction which is almost unique among Ethiosemitic languages. Usually, Ethiosemitic languages and even other languages of that area too, use a split system, i.e. one type of copula in the main and another in subordinate clauses.

- (31) *d3lgonna k'3mis n3yga š3mla*
 d3lgo = nna k'3mis n3-i = **ga** š3mla
 wrap = and dress KOP-3SG.M = **if** embroidery
yat3wom
 yat-∅-3W-O-M
 NEG.KOP-3SG.M-APPL-OBJ.3SG.M-N
 'When it is a wrap and a dress, then it doesn't have embroidery on it.'
- (32) *b3ɣara n3yga t3safimti*
 b3ɣara n3-y = **ga** t3-safimt = gi
 bull COP-3SG.M = **if** IN-seven = place
innis3ɣd3bbinna
 inn-s3ɣd-3bb-nna
 1PL-divide.IPFV-OBJ.3SG.M-AUX.1PL
 'When it is a bull we divide it into seven parts.'
- (33) *simot l3ham s3w n3yga to*
 s-y-mot l3ham s3w n3-y = **ga** to
 WHEN-3SG.M-die.IPFV old man COP-3SG.M = **if** there
t3šexačč gibbi n3y immikk'ebb3r
 t3-∅-šex-ačč gibbi n3-y imm-y-kk'ebb3r
 AT-GEN-Sheikh-PL compound COP-3SG.M REL-3SG.M-be.buried.IPFV
 'When someone dies (and) when (if) he is an old person, then he will be buried in the place of the sheikhs (saints).'

Abbreviations

ADV	adverb	OBJ	object agreement marker
APPL	applicative		
AUX	auxiliary	PFV	perfective
DEM	demonstrative	PROG	progressive marker
COMP	complementizer	P	plural
COP	copula	POSS	possessive suffixe
CVB	converb	PP	postposition
DEF	definite article	PRP	relational prefix
EX	existential verb	REL	relative marker
GEN	genitive marker	RN	relational noun
IPFV	imperfective	SG	singular
JUS	jussive	SUB	subject
M	masculine	TOP	topic marker
NEG	negation marker	VN	verbal noun
NEG.EX	negative existential verb		

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