Linguistic and Orthographic Implications of Analyzing Dizin Possessive Prefixes and Verbal Agreement Proclitics as Just One Set of Proclitic Personal Pronouns

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Background on the Language

- *Dizin* (most common self-name of the language)
  - Most common in literature are *Dizi* (recent) and *Maji* (1960s)

- Language Classification:
  - An *Omotic* language
  - A *Maji* (Yilma 2003: 59) or *Dizoid* (Bender 2000: 2 and elsewhere) language (along with *Sheko* and *Nayi*)

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Defining "Clitic"

- "A **clitic** is a bound morpheme that functions at a phrasal or clausal level, but which binds phonologically to some other word, known as the **host**" (Payne 1997: 22).

- A **proclitic** precedes its host.
- An **enclitic** follows its host.

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The Main Problem and the Proposed Solution

Problem:
In Beachy 2005 I had presented two sets of morphemes which were practically identical morphologically:
1) a set of "possessive prefixes"
2) a set of "verbal agreement proclitics"

Solution:
Call both "proclitic personal pronouns"

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Evidence for Being Bound

- Place assimilation:

ʔŋ̍= **al**	'we staying'
ʔŋ̍= **ga͡ts**	'we gathering'
ʔn̍= **dir**	'we sweeping'
ʔm̍= **bud**	'we pulling out'

- Mother-tongue speakers tend to write them as prefixes, not separate words

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Evidence for Being Proclitics, Not Inflectional Verbal Prefixes

- Mobility (data from Mershi, et. al. 2007: 12)

ኡድግት ዪራን አይ�গ?   /   ዪራን አኡድግት የኔ?

udəgət jiran ā̱= jɛ -ni?   /   jiran ā̱= udəgət jɛ -ni?
in_dark why you.SG= come -Q / why you.SG= in_dark come -Q
'Why did you come in the dark?'

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My Paradigm Shift

- **A clitic should be given a grammatical category of its own**, rather than treating it as an affix on a noun or verb or some other grammatical category (Black 2007).
- This sounded very different from the possible "**genuine prefix-conjugation**" that Bender (2000: 152) wrote of.

A Logical Next Question

- If the verbal person, gender, number proclitics should be called pronouns, **why not call the possessive prefixes "proclitic pronouns" as well?** Then we can have one set of morphemes, rather than two.

The Orthographic Aspect of My Paradigm Shift

- "Orthographically, such clitics may be written attached to another word … **or they may be written independently**."

  (Black 2007)

The Current Analysis

- á (-∅)=   'he/it (-GEN)='
- ʃ (-∅)=   'she (-GEN)='
- ā (-∅)=   'you.SG (-GEN)='
- ʔŋ̄ (-∅)=   'I (-GEN)='
- íʃ (-ā) (-∅)=   'they (-DU) (-GEN)='
- ʃt(ɪ̄) (-ā) (-∅)=   'you.PL (-DU) (-GEN)='
- ʔŋ̄ (-ā) (-∅)=   'we (-DU) (-GEN)='

Linguistic Implications

(1) **Comparing Dizin with the other Omotic languages**
(2) **Can clitics be morphologically complex?**
(3) **Optional clitic doubling**
(4) **"Reduced root pronouns"**

Comparing Dizin with Other Omotic Languages

- "[Keefer's Dizin data] is quite remarkable in that it may be the first genuine prefix-conjugation I have encountered in Omotic ([see] also Sheko and Nayi below …). But of course this may be an independent development and may not be directly related to the Macro-Cushitic prefix conjugations" (Bender 2000: 152).

Omotic 'Short-Form' and 'Extended Form' Independents

- "Usually, [Omotic] possessives can be taken as basic because they are identical to 'short-form' independents in first and second persons, whereas independents have 'extended forms' which include case suffixes …" (Bender's 2000: 4).

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Are 'Short-Form' Independents Clitics?

- Are some of these Omotic "short-form independents" actually clitic pronouns instead of independent pronouns? Further investigation would be helpful.

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Morphologically Complex Clitics?

- "The question of whether clitics may be morphologically complex has received a certain amount of attention" (Halpern 1998: 120).

- -a 'DUAL' (slide 10) and -Ø 'GEN' (slide 16) support the claim that clitics can be composed of more than one morpheme.

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Support from Overt 'GEN': -kŋ

1a. **jatn -kŋ** oti   kot͡ʃin   2a. **iz -kŋ** tiras

fox -GEN bovine female   he -GEN shadow

'the fox's cow'   'his shadow'

1b. **jatn -Ø**   oteni   2b. **á -Ø=**   saras

fox -GEN cow   he -GEN name

'the fox's cow'   'his name'   16

Optional Clitic Doubling

Clitic doubling (when a noun phrase and a co-referential clitic pronoun appear in the same clause) is common in Dizin verbal constructions, including questions:

  ake$_i$ ā= dad$_i$ iʃ$_i$= ti -ŋ?

  these   your.SG= child   they= BE -Q.PRS

  'Are these your children?'

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Absent Clitics

- iʒ$_i$ boz   ti -j?   (i$_i$= ti -j)

  she   guest   BE –Q.FUT

  'Is she a guest?'

- ik$_i$ t'us –ki –ni?   (á$_i$= t'us –ki –ni)

  who?   know -PRF -Q

  'Who knows?'   18

No Null Agreement Morphemes Needed

- From **the former "verbal conjugation" paradigm**, for each of the examples where no agreement prefix is visible, we would need to posit a null agreement marker.

- But with **the current "optional clitic doubling" paradigm**, no such null morphemes are needed.

"Reduced Root Pronouns"

kar ʔŋ̄ =kojs   jo -ŋ.   (jinu =kojs)
to   me =toward   come -IMP
'Come to me.'

ʃigŋ k'ab ā =dakŋ   hot -i -go. (etu =dakŋ)
quickly   you.SG =near appear -FUT -3ms
'Quickly he will appear near you.'

A Diachronic Perspective

- Since independent pronouns in various languages have been known to evolve into clitics, which in turn have evolved into affixes, these constructions are assumed to be **leftovers** from the era when all the present day pronoun clitics were still fully independent pronouns.

A Synchronic Perspective

- The data is consistent with the view that "a given linguistic element can have different morphological statuses" (Idiatov 2005: 71).

  In other words, while the linguistic elements ā 'you.SG' and ʔŋ̄ 'I/me' are usually proclitics, they can also be independent roots.

Orthographic Implications

- Adding a space after a non-genitival proclitic pronoun
- Adding a hyphen after a genitival proclitic pronoun
- A more morphemic orthography
- Eliminating an editing problem

Considering New Conventions

- Currently all Dizin proclitic pronouns are written as prefixes. This is understandable since derivational and inflectional affixes are never written as separate words, and until recently these morphemes were thought to be prefixes rather than proclitics. Now other options need to be considered.

Adding a Space after a
Non-Genitival Proclitic Pronoun

Phonetic:	[ʔn̄sisa]
With morpheme breaks:	ʔn̄= sis -a
Glosses:	I= hear -JUS
Translation:	'Let me hear.'
Current orthography:	እንሲሳ።
Suggested orthography:	እን ሲሳ።

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English Articles as Examples

- For evidence that clitics can be successfully written as separate words, we need look no further than the oft-cited proclitics: **a**, **an**, and **the**. Though these are phonologically bound to the words that follow them, they are written as separate words with good results.

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Fewer and Shorter Wordforms

- With this proposed orthographic change, readers will encounter:
    - fewer unique wordforms and
    - shorter wordforms
- Thus, words should be easier to recognize, increasing fluency

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Adding a Hyphen after a
Genitival Proclitic Pronoun

- For background on the suggestion for genitival proclitic pronouns, we need to first consider a separate orthographic challenge having to do with grammatical tone. Allan (1976: 379) presented the following two sentences:

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An SOV Clause

jāàbà kìānàs sʌ̄gō
man dog+OBJ he+saw
'The man saw the dog.'

Current Orthog.: ያባ ኪያናስ ሰጎ።

Suggested Orthog.: ያባ ኪያናስ ሰጎ።

(No change suggested here.)

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An OV Clause

jáàbà kìànàs sʌ̄gō
man's dog+OBJ he+saw
'He saw the man's dog.'

Current Orthog.: ያባ ኪያናስ ሰጎ።

Suggested Orthog.: ያባ-ኪያናስ ሰጎ።

(The ambiguity is addressed with a hyphen, not with tone marks.)

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Showing the Correspondence

This recursive genitive shows the correspondence between the two uses of the hyphen:

ā -∅= baːb -∅   saɾ   iki   tɛ -ni?
your.SG -GEN= father -GEN name what? BE -Q
'What is your father's name?'

Current Orthog.:   አባብ ሳር ኢኪ ተኔ?

Suggested Orthog.:   ኦ-ባብ-ሳር ኢኪ ተኔ?

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A More Morphemic Orthography

Dizin is written with the Ethiopic abugida script, so attaching prefixes to roots that begin with a vowel can change the orthographic shape of the root significantly.

Old: ኢሻል (iʃal)   '3p= staying'

New: ኢሽ አል (iʃ al)   'they= staying'

Another option: ኢሽአል (iʃal) 'they= staying'

Reading fluency could improve with a more morphemic orthography.

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Eliminating an Editing Problem

- Since a few of these proclitics are segmentally identical to the "extended form" independent pronouns, (e.g. ኢታ (ítã) 'you_two') writing them all as independent words will eliminate the editing problem of not knowing whether to write them as words or prefixes.

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Conclusion

- We do not need to be left in the uncomfortable position of having **one set** of possessive prefixes and **another set** of verbal agreement proclitics that are essentially identical morphologically. Instead, both are best seen as **just one set** of proclitic personal pronouns.

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Suggestions for Future Research

- Compare pronoun systems of other Omotic languages (possible clitic analyses)
- Discover precise rules for Dizin clitic doubling
- Determine how tone changes on the possessive pronominal proclitics
- Test suggested orthography changes with a number of Dizin speakers

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