

Sheko subject clitics - the link between syntax and information structure

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1. Introduction



the Sheko language

- AA, Omotic, Majoid branch
- 40.000 speakers
- 3 variants, Sheko - Tepi - Guraferda
- farmers. coffee, honey
- 4 tones: à a ā á from low (1) to high (4)
- SOV

(1) pronominal subject clitics, pronouns

| | | |
|-----|--------------|-------------|
| 1sg | n = | nata |
| 2sg | ha = | yeta |
| 3ms | há = | áz |
| 3fs | yí = | íz |
| 1pl | ń = | náta |
| 2pl | ítí = | ítí |
| 3pl | íŷi = | íŷi |

Final (main) verbs

(2) **íŷi** = **bàʒ.ù** **-k'e** **-k** **-ə**
 3PL = work -quit -REAL -STI
 clitic = stem.expletive vowel -aspect -modal -stance
 'they have worked (and are not longer working)'

| | |
|--------------|------------|
| Realis | -k |
| Obvious | -kn |
| Irrealis | -m |
| Jussive | - |
| (Imperative) | - |
| Implicative | -a |

- (3) **gāār** = **á** **-s** **-ə**
 bear.fruit = 3MS -OPT -STI
 stem = clitic -modal -stance
 ‘may it bear fruit’

Realis **-k**
 Obvious **-kn**
 Optative **-s**

Converb (medial verb)

- (4) **há = bǎʒ.ù** **-tə**
 3MS = rise -SS
 clitic = stem.expletive vowel -switch-reference
 ‘he worked and he...’

Restrictions of clitic placement:

Imperative - no clitic

Optative - only following stem

Irrealis, Jussive, Implicative - not following stem

Converb - not following stem

(Realis, Obvious - no restrictions)

Other restrictions of clitic placement

never encliticized to subject NP

(rarely co-occurs with subject pronoun)

does not encliticize to NP containing modifiers (?)

2. Subject topicality scale

highly topical

not topical

zero; clitic; pron/NP-plus-proclitic; pron (no clitic); indefinite NP (no clitic), copula.

- | | | | | |
|-----|---------------------------------|--|---|------------------------------------|
| (5) | yīs-tà DIST.M-LOC | yí-baad-ñ-s-əra 3FS.POSS-younger.sibling-DEF-M-ACC | wor-kèsù-tə draw-go.out.CAUS-SS | úʃtà ground.LOC |
| | bàrù-tə throw.away-SS | ʃēʔi-ra stone-ACC | haaku-tə pick-SS | yáb-m-s man-DEF-M |
| | goom-tə pile-SS | yí-baad-ñ-s 3FS.POSS-younger.sibling-DEF-M | kòb-tə take-SS | ūk'-ñ-s-a milk-DEF-M-ACC |

wùšk-kòb-tə yí = k'yààz-yèg-ṅ

untie-take-SS 3FS = leave-come-DS

'Then she drew her brother out, left him on the ground, gathered stones, stacked them in the man's pot, took her brother, unknotted and took the milk, and she left;...'

(6) **áskṅ góri bàtà an-tə há = ūk'-ṅ-s-əra bōndu um-tə**
3MS-DAT head on put-SS 3MS = milk-DEF-M-ACC copious eat-SS

há = saw-tə há = kúúṣ-ṅ-ṣ-əra baas-ṅ
3MS = reach-SS 3MS = plug-DEF-M-ACC want-DS

'...he put (the plug) on his head and he ate his fill of the milk and then he searched for the plug...'

(7) **ha = yeta yòwk'a fín-yēg-ṅ há = ?áz kēēs-téé-t = á**
2SG = 2SG INTJ descend-come-DS 3MS = 3MS go.out-come.NV-SS = 3MS

'... and well, you come down; he climbs up and he...'

(8) **há = ge-ṅ yí = bārkāy(-ṅ) k'ay-tə**
3MS = say-DS 3ES = monkey.F-DEF rise-SS

'...said he; the monkey rose and...'

(9) **íṣ k'ay-tə**
3ES rose-SS

'she rose and...'

(10) **dōwā ki-ṅ dōwa tə/t = í ki-ṅ**
deer exist-DS deer COP/COP = 3FS exist-DS

'there was a deer;...' 'it was a deer that was there;...'

extra-clausal topic

(11) **ṅ-kòòsù = ee náta kōynēb dàdù tə-k = ə**
1PL.POSS-tradition-STI 1PL Koyneb child COP-REAL = STI

'As for our tradition, we are the children of Koyneb.'

3. Focus indicated by clitics only

3.1 Constituent focus

Non-subject constituents - enclitization to wh-word, argument, adverb (discourse structuring!)

(12) **yír = a ha = na-ṅ āts-o yí = ge-ṅ**
what = 2SG 2SG = 1SG-DAT give-STIADDR 3FS = say-DS

zūnkù = ṅ ṅ = ye-kṅ āts-ā-m-ə há = ge-ṅ
sheep = 1SG 1SG = 2SG-DAT give-POT-IRR-STI 3MS = say-DS

'she said: "WHAT will you give me?" (and) he said: "I'll give you A SHEEP."

- (13) **nā = ɲ** **íʃi-ra** **án-á-o**
 where = 1SG 3PL-ACC put-POT-STI.ADDR
 ‘WHERE can I put them?’
- (14) **yis-t = íʃi** **tūbsū** **?yatsɲ** **gé-m- ə**
 DIST.M-LOC = 3PL seven moon say-IRR-STI
 ‘THEN they would say: “Seven months”.’

Subject constituent - no clitic, full subject NP. Often with copula (section 4).

- (15) **ɲ-bayɲ** **nata** **gasku-k-ə**
 1SG.POSS-wife 1SG insult-REAL-STI
 ‘MY WIFE insulted me.’
- (16) **yis** **kòòsù-rà** **itī** **māāk-o**
 DIST.M tradition-acc who tell-STI.ADDR
 ‘WHO will tell this traditional wisdom?’
- (17) **bārkāy** **ʃòòn** **tə** **tʃ’āārū** **fōōt-ā-m-ə**
 monkey heart COP medicine become-POT-IRR-STI
 ‘A monkeys’ heart will/could be medicine.’

3.2 Polarity focus

Subject clitic follows verb stem. Final verbs (Realis and Obvious). Frequent in yes-no questions.

- (18) a. **ɲ = t’ùùs-k-ə**
 1PL = know-REAL-STI
 ‘we know it’
- b. **t’ùùs = ɲ-k-ə**
 know = 1PL-REAL-STI
 ‘we KNOW it, we DO know it’
- (19) a. **sāāy-ɲ-s-a** **ye-kɲ** **mààk = ɪ**
 fable-DEF-M-ACC 2SG-DAT tell = 3FS.Q
 ‘Did she tell you the story?’
- b. **mààk = ɪ-k**
 tell = 3FS-REAL
 ‘She DID.’
- (20) a. **baak-ɲ-s** **ɲ = fyààn-kì-kn-yà**
 yam-DEF-M 1SG = peel-exist-KNOWN-STD
 ‘But I am peeling the yams!’ (Context: father asked teenage daughter to do something for him.)

- b. **bàɜ = á-kn**
 work = 3MS-KNOWN
 ‘It WORKS.’ (Context: machine works properly after it is switched on)

Compare withthetic sentences: subject clitic follows verb stem (Realis).

- (21) a. **írú k’yar = á-k-ə**
 rain beat = 3MS-REAL-STI
 ‘It rains!’
- b. **şāād kī = á-k-ə**
 pond exist = 3MS-REAL-STI
 ‘There is a pond.’ (Context: introduction of *şaad* in the discourse. It is a well with water which reportedly contains minerals stimulating milk production of cattle.)

- (22) **úʦú dàdù íʃi-kn kī = á-k-ə**
 five child 3PL-DAT exist = 3MS-REAL-STI
 ‘They have five children.’ (There’s five children to them)

Thetic sentences with medial verbs: no clitic, cf. subject topicality scale

- (23) **yí = téé-bààstà myāngū ìy kī-ñ**
 3FS = go.NV-WHILE spirit house exist-DS
 ‘while she went, there was the house of a spirit;...’

3.3 VP focus

Final verbs: proclitic to verb stem

- (24) **há-bààb òtì há = ʃéc-á-m-ə há-bààb guy**
 3MS.POSS-father cow 3MS = herd-POT-IRR-STI 3MS.POSS-father grassland
- há = búúts-á-m-ə há-bààb kaci há = yáán-á-m-ə (...)**
 3MS = cut-POT-IRR-STI 3MS.POSS-father yam 3MS = plant.yam-POT-IRR-STI
- háák’astà yis kááy-ə dēyg-ñ-k’erà dēd-ñ-s-k’erà**
 now DIST.M be.not-STI child:F-DEF-INCL child-DEF-M-INCL
- tàmāār-ì-ta íʃ = nòŋ-kì-k-ə wó-kà òmhirt-ì-k’à**
 education-house-LOC 3PL = talk-exist-REAL-STI down-IN education-house-IN
- āşū-ka íʃi = kààs-kì-k-ə**
 foot-WITH 3PL = play-exist-REAL-STI

‘He herds his father’s cattle. He cuts his father’s grassland. He plants his fathers’ yam. (...) This is not so now. The girls and boys are talking at school. Down at the school they are playing with their feet.’

- (25) a. **bádign yír = í bàzù-kì**
 Badign what = 3FS work-exist.Q
 ‘WHAT does Badign do?’
- b. **baakà yí = fyaan-kì-k-ə**
 taro 3ES = peel-exist-REAL-STI
 ‘She PEELS TARO.’

- (26) a. **Gurma-o**
Gurma-STI.ADDR
'What about Gurma?'
- b. **zeed-k'a** **há = gadu-k-ə**
eight-IN 3MS = start-REAL-STI
'He started in the eight grade.'

Medial verbs:

no clitic (but usually the first and last clauses of a series do have clitics)

- (27) **há = zūyɲ-a** **baaʃ-gyaʔu-tə** | **íʃ-k̀n** **báátʃí-ra** **kyānū** **bàtə**
3MS = ewe.DEF-ACCslaughter-chew-SS 3FS-DAT skin-ACC dog on.LOC
- sìp'ù-tə** | **íʃ-k̀n** **kum-k'à** **gyādū an-tə** | **há = kòb-tee-t = á**
sew-SS 3FS-DAT neck-LOC rope put-SS 3MS = take-go.NF-SS = 3MS
- '... he slaughtered and ate the sheep, and sewed her skin on the dog, and put a rope around her neck, and he brought her and he...'

proclitic (attaches to first constituent in the clause)

- (28) **ásk̀n** **gérì** **bàtə** **an-tə** | **há = ūk'-n̄-s-əra** **bondu**
3MS-DAT head on put-SS 3MS = milk-DEF-M-ACC copious
- um-tə** | **há = saw-tə** | **há = kúúʃ-ń-ʃ-əra** **baas-̀n** |
eat-SS 3MS = reach-SS 3MS = plug-DEF-M-ACC want-DS
- '...he put (the plug) on his head and he ate his fill of the milk and then he searched for the plug...'

- (29) **...há = yēē-kì-bààstà** | **íʃì = byāāsū** **baaỳn**
3MS = come.NV-exist-WHILE 3PL = crocodile wife.F.DEF
- yārti-nonko** **see-tə** | **íʃì = íʃ-k̀n** **mààk-̀n** |
friend-ASSOC see.NV-SS 3PL = 3FS-DAT tell-DS
- yí = byāāsū** **baaỳn** **k'ay-tə** | **yí = zérk̀n** **k'oy...**
3FS = crocodile wife.F.DEF rise-SS 3FS = day one
- 'while he came (from the house of the monkey), the friends of the crocodile's wife saw him and told it to her, and the wife of the crocodile rose and one day she...'

proclitization to the medial verb stem puts a preceding constituent in focus

- (30) **há-k'amù-k̀n** **k'aabu-tə** **k'íʃ-tə** **na-̀n** **há = k'aab-̀n**
3MS-servant-DAT pour-SS drink-SS 1SG-DAT 3MS = pour-DS
- '...pours for his servants, drinks, pours for ME;...'

enclitic (clitic attaches to the medial verb of the preceding clause)

- (31) **íḡi = k'ay-t = á¹** **kót-ḡ-s-əb** | **tàftù-t = á** **bábḡ**
 3PL = rise-SS = 3MS little-DEF-M-REL pat-SS = 3MS father.1SG.POSS.VOC
bábḡ **ge-b-tà** | ...
 father.1SG.POSS.VOC say-REL-LOC

'they awoke and the little one patted (the beehive) and when he said: "Daddy, daddy!"...'
 (Context: children discover that their father has left them in the night, having put a beehive in the place where he slept.)

- (32) **yááb ḡub-ḡtà** | **yēē-t = á** **fòòt-àb** **ēkī** |
 man die-COND come.NV-SS = 3MS become-REL money
zúnkù **bááḡ-t = á** | **yérbrḡ** **ḡō-ḡū-t = á** | ...
 sheep slaughter-SS = 3MS blood spill-CAUS-SS = 3MS

'If someone died, he would come and slaughter some livestock, a sheep, and spill the blood and...'

Clitic occurs twice -why? under which circumstances?

- (33) **yí = bārḡy-ḡ** **k'ay-t = í** | **yí = fārā** **yaaf-ḡ**
 3FS = monkey.F-DEF rise-SS = 3FS 3FS = horse find-DS
 'the monkey rose and found a horse'

- (34) **há = duum-t = á** **há = súk-ḡ-s-ārā** **ḡāzū-t = á**
 3MS = fist.hit-SS = 3MS 3MS = rope-DEF-M-ACC snap-SS = 3MS
há = ʔis-ḡ-s-ārā **kyāts-ā-ḡ**
 3MS = beehive-DEF-M-ACC fell-POT-IRR

'...he will hit and break the rope and let the beehive fall.'

- (35) **dāānà k'íḡ-t = íḡi** | **yis** **ḡōncì íḡi-ḡe-ḡerì-kḡ** **ḡúy-k'à**
 beer drink-SS = 3PL DIST.M like 3PL.POSS-PLT-head-DAT grassland-IN
téé-t = íḡi | **íḡi-ʔùmtà** **íḡi = kōōḡ-ō-m**
 go-SS-3PL 3PL.POSS-food 3PL = farm-POT-IRR

'...they drank beer and like this they went to their own fields and they farmed their food.'

4. Other focusing strategies

4.1 clefting

The copula **tə** is used as a focus device. The constituent to which **tə** is suffixed is in focus. If there is a subject clitic, it encliticizes to the copula.

¹ SS instead of DS remains unexplained

- (36) **há-dàdù-s t=á ás-k'à an-t=á**
 3MS.POSS-child-PL COP=3MS 3MS-IN put-SS=3MS
há=nata-ra maad-ñ
 3MS=1SG-ACC deceive-DS
 'It's HIS CHILDREN that he put in it, deceiving me' (Context: stepmother discovers why the father has asked her to add cooked grain in the granary.)

- (37) **yeta akàrb ás t=á nata-ra mēdā**
 2SG alike 3MS COP=3MS 1SG-ACC plain(Amh)
bàtā k'ùits'ù-t=á in-k-ə
 on.LOC tie-SS=3MS go2-REAL-STI
 'It is SOMEONE LIKE YOU, who tied me on the field and left.'

- (38) **áás-t=ñ ?ēē-t=ñ hāāy gaam-tà**
 how-COP=1SG do.NV-SS=1SG water far.side-LOC
sāk-ā-o há=ge-ñ
 reach-POT-STL.ADDR 3MS=say-DS
 'he said: "HOW do I do and reach the other shore?"'

- (39) **bádìgh̃ yēē-rā kì-ñ k'oysn-be tə**
 Badìgh̃ come-NEG exist-DS other.F-mother COP
yèè-k-ə
 come.NV-REAL-STI
 'It's not BADIGN, (but) ANOTHER FEMALE came.'

- (40) **báy ?yār-s-ārā-kì-b ?yéts-?yéts-àb-is**
 woman enter-CAUS-NEG-exist-REL PLT-be.big-REL-DIST.M
yis-tə k'ùis-ā-m
 DIST.M-COP milk-POT-IRR
 'Who have not married a wife, who have become big, THOSE are who milk.'

4.2 The GETƏ-construction

gé 'say' - used to contrast lexical verb meaning/proposition

- used in adversative linking expressions ('although', 'nevertheless')
- no modification

- (41) **há-bay-ka kì-b kì-ntà há=k'ùis-?āts-ā-m**
 3MS.POSS-wife-WITH exist-REL exist-COND 3MS=milk-give-POT-IRR
ge-tə má-rá há=k'é-m-ə
 say-SS eat-NEG 3MS=quit-IRR-STI
 'If he is with wife, he will milk and give (it to her), he won't drink (himself).'

- (42) **nata íntfù-k'à kès-t-us tə = ŋ ʔyazu-kì-k-ə**
 1SG wood-IN go.out-PASS-? COP = 1SG be.able-exist-REAL-STI
ge-tə hāāy batà bòz-t'-us ʔyáz-árá ŋ = kì-k-ə
 say-SS water on stroll-PASS-? be.able-NEG 1SG = exist-REAL-STI
 'I am the one who can climb trees, I can't walk on water.'

- (43) **góóra-ka íʃi = nōŋ-ā-m ge-tə ʃókú-ka**
 Amharic-WITH 3PL = talk-POT-IRR say-SS Sheko-WITH
nōŋ-m-bàb yaab kááy
 talk-IRR-father man be.not
 'they talk in Amharic; there is nobody to speak Sheko with.'

- (44) **na-ŋ gùlbātà gət'ər-k'à há = tʃ'oru-kì-k-ə**
 1SG-DAT strenght(Amh) countryside(Amh)-IN 3MS = finish-exist-REAL-STI
ge-tə katam-k'-às-tà na-ŋ gùlbātà tʃ'ór-árá
 say-SS town-IN-PROX.M-LOC 1SG-DAT strength(Amh) finish-NEG
 'My strength is running out in the countryside, but here in the city my strength doesn't run out.'

- (45) **há = see-k-ə ge-tə tóórá kārā-kñ**
 3MS = see.NV-REAL-STI say-SS downward grave-DAT
bōw-k'à ʔyárd-ár = á-k'e-k-ə
 belly-IN enter-NEG = 3MS-quit-REAL-STI
 'Although he saw it, he didn't enter into the grave.'

5. Summary

clitic interacts

- with TAM
- with information structure (topicality, focus type)
- cleft structure can complement and combine with clitic strategy

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ↑ <i>clitization away from verb</i> | <i>strong non-verb focus</i> ↑ |
| ↑ Wh-word | inherent focus (identificational) ↑ |
| ↑ Focused non-subject NP | constituent focus (identif.) ↑ |
| ↑ Adverb of time/place | stage setting (identif?./discourse) ↑ |
| proclitic to verb stem | VP focus (topic-comment) |
| ↓ enclitization to stem - Opt | strong focus on verb ↓ |
| ↓ enclitization to stem - Real | polarity ↓ |
| ↓ <i>clitization on the verb</i> | <i>strongest predicate focus</i> ↓ |

Clitic attraction in main clauses correlated with focus (adapted from Cysouw 2003).

medial verbs vs. final verbs

- **thetic sentences:** no clitic in medial clause; clitic follows stem in final (main) clause. Reduction of number-gender marking in 3rd person?
- **topic-comment:** proclitic is absent or is first element in medial clause; proclitic attaches to verb stem in final (main) clause

medial verbs

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|------------------|
| > no clitic | > no subject NP | > VP focus |
| | > full subject NP | >thetic |
| > proclitic | | > VP focus |
| > enclitic | > to const | > argument focus |
| | > to SS | >? VP focus |

final verbs

- | | | |
|-------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| > no clitic | | >> imperative |
| | > full subject NP | >thetic/ S focus |
| > proclitic | | > VP focus |
| > enclitic | > to const | > argument focus |
| | > to Vstem | >> Optative |
| | | > Realis: polarity |
| | > full subject NP, 3ms | >thetic |

6. Other languages

| | | |
|----------|--|--------------------------|
| Omotic: | Diizi (Majoid) | Beachy 2005 |
| | Benchnon (Gimira (Gimojan)) | Rapold 2006 |
| | Koorete, Zayse, Zargulla (East Ometo) | Binyam 2007, Azeb 2007 |
| | | Hayward 1990 |
| | Aari (South Omotic) | Bender 1991 citing Tully |
| Cushitic | Somali (Somali, East Cushitic) | Saeed 2000 |
| | Konso (Oromoid, East Cushitic) | Ongaye 2009 |
| | Iraqw (South Cushitic) “selectors”? | Mous 1993 ao |
| Khoisan | Sandawe | Eaton 2002 ao |
| Iran | Talysh | Schulze 2000 |
| | Jewish dialects (Hamadan, Ishfahan, Gaz) | Stilo 2003, 2007 |

Konso

- (46) a. **ḡoyra ʔim = mur-t-i** b. **ḡoyr = im mur-t-i**
 tree 2sg = cut-2-PF tree = 2sg cut-2-PF
 ‘You CUT a tree.’ ‘You cut A TREE.’
- c. **ʔiḡ = ḡoyra mur-t-i** d. **kee ḡoyra mur-e**
 2sg = tree cut-2-PF you tree cut-PF
 ‘You CUT A TREE’ ‘YOU cut a/the tree’

Micro-variation: even closely related languages differ

| Sheko | Guraferda | Diizin |
|---|--|---|
| há = bāz-ā-m-ə 3MS = work-POT-IRR-STI 'he will work' | há = baɜ-an-(ki)-ɟ-ə 3MS = work-put-exist-DECL-STI 'he will work' | te-i-go go-FUT-3MS 'he will go' |
| há = bàzù-k-ə 3MS = work-REAL-STI 'he worked' | há = baɜu-ɟ-ə 3MS = work-DCL-STI 'he worked' | te-go go-3MS 'he went' |
| bàɜ = á-k-ə work = 3MS-REAL-STI 'he did work' | #baɜ = a-ɟ-ə | te-ki-go (?) go-PERF-3MS 'he has worked' |
| bàɜ = á work = 3MS 'did he work?' | há = baɜu 3ms = work 'did he work?' | a = te-kɨ 3MS = go-PERF.Q 'has he worked?' |

Diizin (from Beachy 2005 appendix)

(47) ɨ-zoku mo otu dad siag-o
 1SG.POSS-bull earlier.today calf child give.birth-3MS
 'My bull gave birth to a calf'
 (Context: Lion deceives fox.)

undi yir-g ki gobi-g te-n ha-zoku otu siag-de-ni
 past what-IN exist country-IN BE-DS 3MS-bull calf give.birth-IPF-Q
 'In the past, in which country was it where a bull gives birth to a calf?'
 (Context: fox complains. 'a bull gives birth to a calf' is out of focus)

undi yir-g ki zoku te-ki otu siag-de-ni
 past what-IN exist bull BE-PERF calf give.birth-IPF-CQ
 'In whose country does a bull give birth to a calf?'
 (Context: monkey judges lion. Subject focus)

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- Map: adapted from Hayward, Richard J. (1995). *The Challenge of Omotic*. Inaugural lecture. London: School of Oriental and African Studies, p. 7.

Abbreviations

| | | | |
|-------|----------------------|-------|---|
| ACC | accusative | NV | non-velar stem |
| ADDR | addressee | OPT | optative |
| ASSOC | associative plural | PASS | passive |
| CAUS | causative | PAST | a past tense |
| COND | conditional | PF | perfective |
| CONT | continued (topic) | PL | plural |
| COP | copula | PLT | plurative |
| DAT | dative | POSS | possessor |
| DEF | definiteness | POT | potential |
| DEM | demonstrative | PROX | proximal demonstrative |
| DIST | distal demonstrative | Q | interrogative marking |
| DS | different subject | REAL | realis |
| F | feminine | REL | relative |
| IN | inessive | SG, S | singular |
| IPF | imperfective | SS | same subject |
| IRR | irrealis | STD | stance marker, direct |
| LOC | locative | STI | stance marker, indirect |
| M | masculine | WITH | instrument, comitative |
| NEG | negation marker | WHILE | background clause marking (REL-PROX.M-LOC) |
| NOM | nominative | | |