

The online corpus of Ossetic can prove helpful in refining our understanding of the order of enclitics in Ossetic. As a standard reference, Abaev notes that a “strict regularity is observed” when multiple enclitics occur in a sentence. He then states that enclitic pronouns in Ossetic appear in the following order: “dative or allative case, genitive case (direct object), inessive and ablative.” (Abaev 1964:127)

In Table 3.6 on the following page, rows correspond to a clitic appearing first in a chain of two clitics. Therefore, as shown on Fragment 3.1, the 1st person singular dative clitic *mən* is attested in front of *də* in 445 sentences, in front of *jə* in 351 sentences, in front of *əj* 1063 sentences, etc.

		ACC/ABL/INESS	ACC	
		<i>də</i> 2sg	<i>jə</i> 3sg	<i>əj</i> 3sg
DAT	<i>mən</i> 1sg	445	351	1063

Fragment 3.1

Fragment 3.2 shows that columns correspond to a clitic appearing second in a chain of two clitics. Therefore the 2nd person singular dative clitic *dən* is attested after *də* in 5 sentences, after *jə* in 6 sentences, after *əj* in 12 sentences, etc.

		DAT
		<i>dən</i> 2sg
ACC/ ABL/ INESS	<i>də</i> 2sg	5
ACC	<i>jə</i> 3sg	6
	<i>əj</i> 3sg	12

Fragment 3.2

		DAT				ALL				ACC/ABL/INESS		ACC		ABL/INESS		ADESS			
		mən 1sg	dən 2sg	jən 3sg	ən 3sg	məm 1sg	dəm 2sg	jəm 3sg	əm 3sg	mə 1sg	də 2sg	jə 3sg	ɛj 3sg	dzə 3sg		məl 1sg	dəl 2sg	jəl 3sg	əl 3sg
DAT	mən 1sg	0	0	0	13	0	0	0	25	2220	445	351	1063	228		0	0	0	20
	dən 2sg	53	0	0	46	52	0	0	117	660	1325	355	1186	222		7	2	0	29
	jən 3sg	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	6	139	87	5766	894	274		0	0	0	7
	ən 3sg	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	97	64	3033	418	117		0	0	0	12
ALL	məm 1sg	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	173	128	286	133	75		0	0	0	0
	dəm 2sg	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	124	97	53	62	34		0	0	0	0
	jəm 3sg	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	104	50	721	164	87		0	0	0	0
	əm 3sg	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	80	40	497	53	42		0	0	0	0
ACC/ ABL/ INESS	mə 1sg	26	27	162	0	1	7	64	0	440	249	680	0	119		2	2	31	0
	də 2sg	3	5	4	0	0	0	0	0	655	397	215	1	45		0	2	0	0
ACC	jə 3sg	0	6	1	0	0	0	0	1	251	153	1464	0	37		0	0	0	0
	ɛj 3sg	2	12	0	1	0	0	0	1	321	208	1000	5	11		0	0	0	0
ABL/INESS	dzə 3sg	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	276	152	846	1	2		0	0	0	0
ADESS	məl 1sg	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	58	48	94	22	17		0	0	0	0
	dəl 2sg	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	55	49	52	14	8		0	0	0	0
	jəl 3sg	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	47	36	359	49	10		0	0	0	0
	əl 3sg	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	37	16	199	18	8		0	0	0	0

Table 3.6

- The 1st singular accusative pronoun *mɐ* is highlighted red and disregarded because it is homophonous with a discourse marker *mɐ*, meaning ‘and, but’, which significantly skews the data.
- The accusative enclitics are all likewise homophonous with genitive proclitics, which obscures the data for columns showing accusative enclitics coming second in the enclitic chain (the red-lighted zone on Table 3.6). Because of this homophony, much of the statistical data reflects sentences that are irrelevant to the ordering of sentential enclitics:

(3.8)	Æрхаста	йьл	йæ	зæронд	к'ухтæ
	ɐrxasta	jəl	jɐ	zɐrond	k'uxtɐ
	lower.3sg.PST	3sg.ADESS	3sg.GEN	old	hands

He lowered his old hands on him (ONC)

Sentence (3.8) is an example where two clitics are incidentally adjacent to each other, but not in a meaningful way, since genitive proclitics do not have the special syntax that causes sentential enclitics to accumulate at certain points within a sentence. All attestations of accusative enclitics therefore require additional analysis to make any meaningful statement about their patterns.

- As seen in Table 3.3, of which Fragment 3.3 is reproduced below, the enclitics *mɐ* and *dɐ* can potentially have either the accusative, ablative or inessive case. This homophony means that for 1st and 2nd person singular, the accusative, the ablative and the inessive cannot be distinguished. However, the 3rd person clitic *ɐj* (appearing as *jɐ* after vowel-final words) is representative of ACC to the exclusion of ABL/INESS, and the 3rd person clitic *dzɔ* is representative of ABL/INESS to the exclusion of ACC.

CLITICISED FORMS			
singular			
	1 st person	2 nd person	3 rd person
Accusative	mə	də	(jə) əj
Dative	mən	dən	(j ¹)ən
Allative	məm	dəm	(j)əm
Ablative / Inessive	mə	də	dzə
Adessive	məl	dəl	(j)əl

Fragment 3.3

Taking the above into account, Table 3.6 has been arranged to approximate the order of enclitic cases given by Abaev (1964): dative, allative, accusative, inessive and ablative. Separated from the rest, the four rightmost columns and bottommost rows show the adessive, which Abaev doesn't mention.

The first insight is that dative clitics can be firmly said to precede the allative ones in the clitic chain, as seen in Table 3.6, of which a fragment is shown in 3.4 below, only two sentences attest an allative clitic preceding a dative one, which statistically is amenable to noise in the data rather than systematic behaviour².

		DAT			
		mən	dən	jən	ən
ALL	məm	0	0	0	0
	dəm	0	0	0	1
	jəm	0	0	0	1
	əm	0	0	0	0

Fragment 3.4

On the other hand, the only attestations of anything preceding the allative clitics in the corpus are dative clitics, shown in Fragment 3.5 below.

¹ Parentheses indicate changed form when clitic follows a vowel-final segment

² Verifying the two attestations, one sees that both are cases of end-of-line hyphenation in the corpus text.

		ALL			
		məm	dəm	jəm	əm
DAT	mən	0	0	0	25
	dən	52	0	0	117
	йЫН	0	0	0	6
	ЫН	0	0	0	5

Fragment 3.5

The second insight provided by this corpus data is that adessive enclitics have an unmistakable pattern of attestations which place them in front of accusatives (and their ablative-inessive homophones), as seen on Fragment 3.6.

		ACC/ ABL/ INESS	ACC		ABL/ INESS
		də	jə	ɐj	dzə
ADESS	məl	48	94	22	17
	dəl	49	52	14	8
	jəl	36	359	49	10
	əl	16	199	18	8

Fragment 3.6

As discussed, the proclitic genitive homophones obscure the evidence, though examples of adessives followed by accusatives can be found nonetheless:

(3.9) Иу к'ахдзæф дæр куы ракæнæй, уæд дыл æй суадздзынæн!
iw k'axdzæf dər kwə rakənej, wəd dəl ɐj swadzdzənən
One step even if do.2sg.PRS, then 2sg.ADESS 3sg.ACC unleash.1sg.FUT

If you do even one step, I'll unleash it on you!

(ONC)

Sentence (3.9) shows the adessive enclitic preceding the accusative. However, the adessives don't appear to be rigid in their ordering in the clitic chain, because replacing them with respect to the accusative is tolerated by a native speaker:

(3.10a) ЗНОН МЫЛ æй ныффыстой
 znon məl ɐj nəffəstoj
 Yesterday 1sg.ADESS 3sg.ACC wrote.3pl.PST

Yesterday they wrote this (un)to me

(3.10b) znon məl ɐj nəffəstoj

(3.10c) ?znon ɐj məl nəffəstoj

Sentences (3.10b-c) show that repositioning the adessive enclitic after the accusative does not elicit a strong response from the native speaker that the sentence is ungrammatical, although it is described as ‘not preferable’. Moreover, the corpus shows no attestation of adessives being positioned after anything other than datives. Indeed, there is a meaningful regularity in which adessives are being preceded: In 68 corpus sentences, the 3rd person adessive *əl* follows dative clitics. Nothing can be said about the order of allative and adessive since the two are never attested in the same sentence.

Similar issues arise for the ablative-inessive enclitic *dzə*, which has a significant amount of attestations following the accusatives as well as preceding them, highlighted red on fragment 3.7 below:

		ACC/ABL/ INESS	ACC		ABL/ INESS
		dɐ	jɐ	ɐj	dzə
ACC/ ABL/INESS	dɐ	397	215	1	45
ACC	jɐ	153	1464	0	37
	ɐj	208	1000	5	11
ABL/INESS	dzə	152	846	1	2

Fragment 3.7

If many of these attestations are to be discounted due to occurrences alongside genitive proclitics, one nonetheless finds examples of ablative-inessives being preceded by accusatives, as shown by example (3.3b) from above, repeated here as (3.11):

(3.11) фидар ныфс мæ дзы бацъд,
 fidar nəfs mɛ dzə batsəd
 strong spirit 1sg.ACC it.ABL entered

a hearty spirit entered me from him (ONC)

Sentence (3.11) shows the ablative-inessive enclitic preceding the accusative. However just like with adessives, the ablative-inessives don't appear to be rigid in their ordering in the enclitic chain, as replacing them with respect to the accusative is also tolerated by a native speaker:

(3.12a) Цы йæ дзы хъуыд хæрынæн, иннæ йын сцæхджын кодтон
 tsə jɛ dzə quəd xərənən, innɛ jən stɬəxɔdʒən kodton
 what 3sg.ACC 3sg.ABL eat.INF keep.3sg.PST rest 3sg.DAT salt do.3sg.PST

That of which for her to eat - he kept, the rest - he salted (ONC)

(3.12b) tsə jɛ dzə quəd xərənən ...
 (3.12c) ?tsə dzə jɛ quəd xərənən ...

Sentences (3.12b-c) show that both orders are possible in the enclitic chain, although the ablative-inessive coming first is less preferred. Adessives and ablative-inessives not only appear to be flexible in their ordering with respect to accusatives, but between each other as well:

(3.13a) Знон мæл дзу ныффыстой
 znon məl dzə nəffəstoj
 Yesterday 1sg.ADESS 3sg.ABL wrote.3pl.PST

Yesterday they wrote (un)to me from there

(3.13b) znon məl dzə nəffəstoj
 (3.13c) ?znon dzə məl nəffəstoj

All the clitic chains that are marked possible but ‘not preferred’ have been created artificially before being tested with the native speaker. None of these chains are attested in the corpus and it may be that, just as adessive enclitics don’t have any sentences attesting them *after* accusatives, ablative-adessives don’t have any sentences attesting them in *front* of accusatives, and that all data indicating otherwise shows genitive proclitics instead of accusatives.

There is a statistically significant incidence of accusative clitics preceding datives, as seen on Fragment 3.8 below:

		DAT			
		mən	dən	jən	ən
ACC/ ABL/INESS	dɐ	3	5	4	0
	jɐ	0	6	1	0
ACC	ɐj	2	12	0	1

Fragment 3.8

However, this data does not seem to result from clitic ordering in a single clause, rather they appear on the edges of adjacent clauses, which raises the question of how a dative enclitic can be clause-initial:

(3.14a) Цæв æй дын зæгъын
 [tsɐv ɐj] [dən zɐkən]
 Hit.IMP 3sg.ACC 2sg.DAT say.1sg.PRS

Hit him I tell you!

(ONC)

(3.14b) tsɐv ɐj zɐkən dən

Sentence (3.14a) includes two clauses, *tsɐv ɐj* ‘hit him’ and *dən zɐkən* ‘I tell you’, in which the second clause has an enclitic in its left-most position. Placing the enclitic in second position as in (3.14b) yields an acceptable sentence but, as attested by a native speaker, a ‘weaker’ one.

Taking these observations into account, it is possible to elaborate on Abaev's proposed order of enclitics, repeated here: "dative or allative case, genitive case (direct object), inessive and ablative." (Abaev 1964:127)". Based on corpus data, the following order can be determined:

$$(3.15) \quad \text{DAT} \quad \frac{\text{ALL}}{\text{ADESS}} \quad \text{ACC} \quad \frac{\text{ABL}}{\text{INESS}}$$

The order in example (3.15) is based on statistical evidence of datives preceding allatives. Adessives appear in front of accusatives, although their ordering with allatives is unknown. Ablative-inessives follow the accusatives. Adessives and ablative-inessives show flexibility in terms of their ordering, but the rules behind choosing one position over the other are undetermined.