

Towards a Comparative Syntax of the Kartvelian Languages¹

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When a classicist moves outside his field, it is a comfort to find unrelated languages behaving in a way with which he is familiar. At the same time, it is exciting to be faced with the challenge resulting from encounters with different structures. When the move takes the scholar to the Caucasus, the differences often seem to outweigh the similarities. Both the dedicatee of this volume and the author of this contribution have made this journey, and so it seemed appropriate to make available in a work designed for both Indo-Europeanists and caucasologists some unpublished materials gathered some years ago which present both types of data. This offering could be viewed as a modest expansion of, or supplement to, the wealth of information in Nia Abesadze's 1960 and 1963 papers on subordination in the Kartvelian languages (especially Svan), though her main concerns there were the subordinating elements themselves rather than the overall nature of the hypotactic constructions.

In 1981 I published a study of relative clause formation in Mingrelian, the most widely spoken of the Kartvelian languages after Georgian, subsequently investigating parallel structures in Georgian in at least three publications (viz. 1985; 1987; 1996). The data to be adduced from Svan will help complete the picture for Kartvelian and at the same provide a partial test for Karl Horst Schmidt's 1991 dictum that, apart from speech-reporting², 'The syntactic structure of Svan corresponds to that of Georgian' (p.536).

Among the indigenous Caucasian languages only in the Kartvelian family does one encounter a full complement of subordinate clauses (which is to say sequences containing a finite verb introduced by a conjunction, conjunctive expression, or relative pronoun³). Modern Georgian has the relative pronouns: /vintʰs/, 'who' /rɑ.tʰs/ 'which' and /rɑ(ɔ).mɛ.litʰs/ 'who/which'. Old Georgian was in the process of developing a distinction between interrogatives and indefinites, on the one hand, and interrogatives and relatives, on the other; the simple base-form (today's interrogative) had both indefinite (especially but not exclusively in a negated clause) and relative functions, the context determining which role it was playing. Relative function came to be marked either by the suffixation (in its citation-, or Nominative, form) of one of the

¹I gratefully acknowledge the time and effort devoted to answering my questions by my various informants, mostly of years gone by: the Svans Chato Gudzhedzhiani (Upper Bal) and Aleksandre Oniani (Lashkh), and for Mingrelian the late Neli T'orchua, P'ant'e Basilaia, Ek'a Basilaia, Manana Gunia and, latterly, K'akha Gabunia; extra material was provided by my wife, Zaira Khiba.

²For this see Hewitt (1982) and Boeder (2001).

³Bats, a Nakh language, and Udi, a Lezgian language, have developed relative pronouns along with full relative clauses under the influence of neighbouring languages (respectively Georgian and Georgian and/or Armenian).

head (with perhaps a preference for the former order). So that the above-examples can also be expressed as:

sk'am.zi jɛr sɡur.ɔ, ɛdʒ zurɑl.s χ.[χ].ɔ.sgd.i/χ.[χ].ɔ.sgd.i ɛdʒ zurɑl.s [Svan]
 sk'am.zɛ rɔ(m) zɪ.s, i(.)m kɑl.s v.ɔ.χsɔd.ɔv/v.ɔ.χsɔd.ɔv i(.)m kɑl.s [Georgian]
 sk'am(i).s χ.ɔ.ɔ.ni, ti ɔsur.s v.ɔ.ɔ.rts'q's.k [Mingrelian]

In Mingrelian relatives formed in such a way, even with no specific head, often have /pɛr.i/, which equates to Georgian /i(.)s(.)ɛt.i/ 'such a', in place of the demonstrative, e.g.

kɛ.jɛ.ɔ.χvɔd.ɔs s lak'v.i mɛ.ɔ.ʔun.si.ni, pɛr.ki
 Aff.Prev.X.meet.Y.Pl(-Aor) pup.Nom Prev.X.take.Y(-Pres).Sub such.Erg
 'They came across someone who is taking a pup' [Mingrelian — Khuba.1937]

which in Georgian would be:

jɛ.ɔ.χvɔd.ɔt kɛ'v.i rɔ(m) mi.h.q'ɔv.s i(.)s(.)ɛt.i⁴

Returning to Svan, we note an additional feature when such a subordinate clause is placed after its head — consider:

χ.ɔ.ɔ.sgd.i ɛdʒ zurɑl.s ɛ, sk'am.zi jɛr sɡur.ɔ

The long-awaited Svan-Georgian dictionary (Topuria & Kaldani 2000) contains two entries under /ɛ:/ (p.200) that might be relevant to an understanding of the extra element here: the first gives this vowel as a reduced form of the complementiser /ɛr(ɛ)/ 'that'; the second has this vowel serving as a reduced form of /ɛ:dʒ/ 'that'. The problem is that in both cases these reductions are cited exclusively for the Lower Bal and Lent'ekh dialects. In the multitude of examples that I elicited from Miss Gudzhedzhiani in Mest'ia the item is present every time that the head-noun precedes the adjective clause (regardless of whether the clause contains a full relative pronoun, and regardless of the position in the clause of this pronoun, initial or internal) but never when the order is reversed. There are two exceptions: the example with which we started, and a structure where the head is not itself accompanied by a demonstrative adjective but is taken up after the clause by an appositional demonstrative pronoun, viz.

tʃɪ m.i.tr.ɔ zurɑl al mɑrɑd jɛr
 Aff-Prev me.OV.be-known.Stat-Pres-X woman(-Nom) this man.Erg Sub
 ɔ.ɔ.pɑj wd.ɔ ɛdʒɑ
 Prev.X.praise.Y(-Aor) that-one(-Nom)

⁴The example is actually quoted from Kadzhaia (2002:94) who gives the Georgian verb as /jɛχvɔdɛn/ plus Nominative for the person met, an impossible coupling in Georgian, for the object with this verb-form must be Dative. I have kept the Nominative, which corresponds here to the Mingrelian Ergative, and have amended the verb accordingly. Georgian /jɛχvɔdɛn/ can, of course, equate to Mingrelian /kɛjɛχvɔdɛs/, but the person met must then, as in Georgian, stand in the Dative, viz. /pɛr.s/.

'I do indeed know the woman whom this man praised' [Svan]
 = (kə)⁵ v.ø.i.ts.n.əb kəl.s, ə(.)m k'əts.mə rə(m) ø.ə.k.ə,
 Aff I.X.know.TS(-Pres) woman.Dat this man.Erg Sub X.NV.praise.Y(-
 Aor)

i(.)m.ə.s
 that-one.Dat [Georgian]
 = ø.i.p.tʃin.ə.n.k əsur.s, əts k'ətʃ.k ø.ə.tsk.u.ni,
 X.SV.I.know.TS.I(-Pres) woman.Dat this man.Erg X.NV.praise.Y(-Aor).Sub
 ti.s
 that-one.Dat⁶ [Mingrelian]

It remains to determine if the item in question is optional and what exactly it means. In all but two examples the head-noun is encircled, as above, by the two elements, this complex immediately preceding the qualifying clause; the exceptions are: (a) the head-noun is fronted with its preceding demonstrative, leaving the extra vocalic item stranded immediately before the relative clause, or (b) there is no head-noun as such, for the antecedent is simply the demonstrative pronoun, viz.

edə mərə.s xw.ə.əts'd ə, xəd(.)wəj.s/ʃər(.)wəj.s əl zuraəl
 that man.Dat I.X.IOV.see(-Aor) ? who.Rel.Dat this woman(-Nom)
 x.ə.sisq.ə
 X.LV.hate.Y(-Pres)
 or edə mərə.s xw.ə.əts'd ə, əl zuraəl xəd(.)wəj.s/ʃər(.)wəj.s
 that man.Dat I.X.IOV.see(-Aor) ? this woman(-Nom) who.Rel.Dat
 /ʃər x.ə.sisq.ə
 that X.LV.hate.Y(-Pres)

'It is the man who/that hates this woman that I saw' [Svan]

[Note the possibility of the full relative pronoun occupying the same clause-internal slot normally taken by the General Subordinator]

sgaj tʃu dʒ.i.xəl.ə edə ə, ɪm.wə(ə)j.ə
 you(-Dat) Aff you.OV.be-known.X(-Pres) that(-Nom) ? because-of-which
 mi ələ øtʃ-v-əmn
 I(-Erg) this(-Nom) it.do-I-do(-Aor)

'You know that because of which (= why) I did this' [Svan]

This suggests that what we have here is an Upper Bal usage that combines reduced complementiser at the end of the main clause, even if it precedes an immediately following full relative pronoun. This perhaps surprising interpretation would seem to

⁵This item, cognate to the Svan affirmative-Preverb, is found in the West Georgian dialect of Imeretia.

⁶Cf. the following with the full relative pronoun in Mingrelian:

dzəb.i nə(.)mu i.bir.d.ψ'ə(ni), tino b.ə.dzir.i
 girl.Nom who(.Nom) SV.sing.Ext.she(-Imperf).Sub her(.Nom) I.X.see.Aor
 'I saw the girl who was singing'

[Georgian]

But, if the variant with head replaced by demonstrative pronoun and coreferential noun retained within the relative clause is employed here, we end up with an ambiguity in both Svan and its Georgian parallel:

da.fdw jar [a.]ø.a.dgar.ø macre.d, et(a.s xw.ø.ets'd/ edza m.i.ts'w.o
 that.Dat that(-Nom) I.OV.see.Perf-?
 [Svan]

= k'ats.ma ro(m) datv.i mo.ø.k'l.a, i(.)s v.ø.nox s/m.i.nox.av.s
 man.Erg Sub bear.Nom Prev.Y.kill.X that(-Nom) I.?.see.Aor/I.OV.see.
 TS.?

[Georgian]

= k'otf.k tunt.i (do.)ø?vil.u.ni, tina b.ø.dzir.i/m.i.dzir.u [Mingrelian]

'I saw/have seen (a) the bear which the man killed, (b) the man who killed the bear, (c) that the man killed the bear'

The result is, naturally, that this option is avoided where the context does not disambiguate. But there is a way to avoid ambiguity whilst still retaining the coreferential noun within the relative clause, and that is to associate with it in Mingrelian /na(.)mu/ as a relative adjective, as in:

na(.)mu dzxab.i i.bir.d.ψ'ə.ni ti(.)na b.ø.dzir.i
 which girl.Nom SV.sing.Ext.X(-Imperf).Sub that(-Nom) I.X.see.Aor
 'I saw the girl who was singing' [Mingrelian]

kotom.i na(.)mu osur.kə (do.)ø?vil.u.ni ti.s
 chicken.Nom which woman.Erg Prev.Y.kill.X(-Aor).Sub X.Dat
 ø.i.p.tjinən.k
 X.SV.I.know.TS.I(-Pres)

'I know the woman who killed the chicken' [Mingrelian]

osur.k na(.)mu kotom.i (do.)ø?vil.u.ni ts(.)na r.s.ø
 woman.Erg which chicken.Nom Prev.Y.kill.X(-Aor).Sub this(-Nom) be.
 Intrans.X(-Pres)

'This is the woman who killed the chicken' [Mingrelian]

ts'ign.i na(.)mu boj(.)i.s mep.ø.ø.tj.ini so r.s.ø
 book.Nom which boy.Dat Prev.I.Z.Y.give.Aor.Sub where be.Intrans.X(-
 Pres)

'Where is the boy to whom I gave the book?' [Mingrelian]

tj'k'id.i na(.)mu osur.i(.)fo b.ø.tj'v.i.ni ti(.)na
 maize-loaf.Nom which woman.Ben I.Y.bake.Aor.Sub that(-Nom)
 amar(.)i r.s.ø
 here be.Intrans.X(-Pres)

'The woman for whom I baked the maize-loaf is here' [Mingrelian]
 gəə na(.)nu bəj(.i.ts'kəno mə.ə.rti..n(i) ti(.)na
 yesterday which boy.with Prev.you.come.Aor.Sub that(-Nom)
 b.ə.dzir.i

I.X.see.Aor

'I saw the boy with whom you came yesterday' [Mingrelian]
 ti.k na(.)nu xam.it lom.i (də.ə.ʔvil.u.ni (ti xam.i)
 X.Erg which knife.Inst lion.Nom Prev.Y.kill.X(-Aor).Sub that knife.Nom
 tə(.)na r.ə.ə

this(-Nom) be.Intrans.Y(-Pres)

'This is the knife with which X killed the lion' [Mingrelian]

In this last example, we see the option of deleting neither the head-noun nor the coreferential noun within the relative clause, and when in Georgian /rə(.)mɛli/ is used in like manner along with the retained coreferential noun (plus or minus relative suffix), the head-noun is usually present as well, this variant-construction being typically found where emphasis is required. The Georgian equivalent to the last example above would thus be:

man rə(.)mɛli dan.it(a.ts) lom.i də.ə.k'l.a, i(.)s
 X(-Erg) which.Agr knife.Inst.Rel lion.Nom Prev.Y.kill.X(-Aor) that
 dano ə(.)s a.r.i.s
 knife.Nom this(-Nom) NV.be.Pres.Y [Georgian]

For a Svan example, compare:

wəbif l.ə.sw ədʒ ladəw ə, xəd.wəj/məj ladəw
 Friday(-Nom) X.NV.be(-Past) that day(-Nom) ? which day
 (= fəm.wəj) zuraɪ kalək.xən(.)ka a.tʃəd.ə
 when woman(-Nom) town.out-of Prev.go.Y(-Aor)
 'Friday was the day when the woman left the town'⁸ [Svan]

There is one further particularity to consider with reference to Kartvelian relative clauses, and this is the use within the clause of a resumptive pronoun. This possibility comes into play when the clause is formed by means of the General Subordinator. In Georgian the pronoun is not found when the deleted coreferential NP within the clause functions as subject or direct object, but it is optional when relativisation is on an indirect object and likely to be required when the relativised element functions obliquely, though if the reference is clear without it, it can be omitted. I have no examples of such usage for Mingrelian, but what is the situation in Svan? Svan seems

⁸Of course, the General Subordinator alone, as in Georgian, can convey the sense of 'when' to give as another equivalent: wəbif l.ə.sw ədʒ ladəw ə, zuraɪ kalək.xən(.)ka a.tʃəd.ə (the Subordinator may alternatively stand immediately after the subject).

not to allow a resumptive pronoun when an indirect object is relativised but otherwise marches in parallel with Georgian as far as oblique usage is concerned, e.g.

maɾe.d jɛr lair la.χ.ø.wɛm.ø, edɛ zurɔl tʃɫ
 man.Erg Sub book(-Nom) Prev.Z.Y.give.X(-Aor) that woman(-Nom) Aff
 m.i.tr.ɔ
 me.OV.be-known.Z(-Stat-Pres) [Svan]

= k'ɔts.ma rɔ(m) ((i.)ma.s) ts'ign.i mi.s.ø.ts.ɔ, i(m)
 man.Erg Sub that.X.Dat book.Nom Prev.Z.Y.give.X(-Aor) that
 kal.s v.ø.i.ts.n.ɔb
 woman.Dat I.X.SV.know.TS(-Pres) [Georgian]

'I know that woman to whom the man gave the book'

χw.ø.ts'ts'd gatʃ.s, maɾe.d jɛr edɛ.n.ɔʃ katal
 I.X.IOV.see(-Aor) knife.Dat man.Erg Sub that.Obl.Inst chicken(-Nom)
 ø.a.dzih.ø, edɛ.s⁹
 Z.NV.kill.Y(-Aor) that.Dat [Svan]

= v.ø.nɔχ.s dana, k'ɔts.ma rɔ(m) (i.)m.it da.ø.k'l.ɔ,
 I.X.see.Aor knife(-Nom) man.Erg Sub that.X.Inst Prev.Z.kill.Y(-Aor)
 i(.)sa
 that(-Nom) [Georgian]

'I saw the knife with which the man killed the chicken'

χ.ɛ.ts'ed.øχ edɛ maɾɔ.s ɛ, zurab.d ɛtʃ(i).itsɔχɛn ts'intstʃɫ
 W.IOV.see.X.Pl that man.Dat ? Zurab.Erg that(-Gen).with chick(-Nom)
 əd.ø.kwit.ø (<= əd.ø.i.kwit.ø)
 Prev.Y.SV.steal.Z(-Aor) [Svan]

= ø.nɔχ.ɛs i(.)s k'ɔts.i, zurab.ma rɔ(m) (i.)ma.s.tan ɛrt(.)ad
 X.see.they(-Aor) that man.Nom Zurab.Erg Sub that.X.Dat.with together
 ts'itsʃɫo mɔ.ø.i.p'ar.ɔ
 chick(-Nom) Prev.Z.SV.steal.Y(-Aor) [Georgian]

'They saw the man with whom Zurab stole the chick'

anɛr.i edɛ maɾɔ.s (<= maɾɔ ɛ), al zurɔl
 Prev.come.X(-Pres) that man(-Nom) ? this woman(-Nom)
 jɛr (? ɛtʃ(i).f.ʒi¹⁰) ø.g.w.i.m.bə.w.da.ø
 Sub that.Dat.about Z.us.OV.talk.Imperf.Y [Svan]
 = mɔ.di.s i(.)s k'ɔts.i, ɛ(.)s kal.i rɔ(m)

⁹This was judged to be preferable to either of the following variants: 1. χw.ø.ts'ts'd gatʃ.s, maɾe.d jɛr edɛ.n.ɔʃ katal ø.a.dzih.ø; 2. χw.ø.ts'ts'd gatʃ.s, maɾe.d jɛr katal ø.a.dzih.ø, edɛ.s.

¹⁰Presumably the voiceless palato-alveolar fricative in this basically superfluous resumptive pronoun derives from the alveolar fricative that marks the Dative ending by assimilation with the following first element of the postposition.

I have translated in this way to capture the future force (with durative aspect) of the Present Subjunctive, which in Old Georgian shared with the Aorist Subjunctive (for momentary aspect) the functions of the as yet undeveloped Future Indicative; interestingly, the Greek text here employs just the Present Indicative (eij skandalivzei).

borot'i tu rajmɛ v.ɔtku, ɔts'am.s
 evil.Agr if anything.Nom.Indef I.X.say(-Aor) you.be-witness.Aor(-Imper)
 borot'iso m.is.twis
 evil.Gen the.Agr.for [Old Georgian]
 'If I have spoken anything evil, be witness to the evil!' (J.18.23, ms.C)
 tu.mtsa da.i.ts'er.s̄b.ɔd.s̄s¹⁶ tito(.)sul(.)ad artsa.wa
 if.Irr Prev.Pass.write.TS.Ext.they(-Imperf) individually not.even.indeed
 v.h.ɔgon.s̄b. vi(.)t(.)ar.mtsa s̄pəl.man a(.)man da.ɔ.it'(.).i.ɔ
 I.?X.think.TS(-Pres) that.Irr world.Erg this.Agr Prev.Z.SV.hold.Y(-Aor)
 da(.)ts'er(.).il.i ts'ign.s̄b.i
 written.Agr book.Pl.Nom [Old Georgian]
 '[..which] if they were to be written, I do not indeed even imagine that this world
 would be capacious enough to accommodate the books written' (J.21.25, mss.DE)

The Greek text here has ejaŸn gravfhtai, which, according to classical norms, produces a vivid future condition; a classical vague future protasis would have taken the form eij gravfoito, with Present Optative replacing the Present Subjunctive + a[n.

v.i.q'v.en.it tu.mtsa tʃwɛn dɛs.to mat mamato
 I.SV.be.Pl.Aor.Pl if.Irr we(-Nom) day.Pl(-Dat) the.Agr father.Pl(-Gen)
 tʃwɛn.ta.sa aramtsa ziar v.i.q'v.en.it...¹⁷
 our.Agr.Dat not.Irr sharing I.SV.be.Pl.Aor.Pl [Old Georgian]
 'If we had lived in the days of our (fore)fathers, we would not have taken part...'
 (Mt.23.30, ms.C; mss.DE have uk'wɛ.tumtsa v.i.q'v.en.it)

The irrealis marker is no longer attested (apart from in such relic expressions as /ts'q'z̄.ul.i.mts̄ i.q'ɔ.s/ 'May X be damned!') in standard Modern Georgian, though the word /tu.mtsa/ survives as the conjunction of concession. The reformed system for protasis-formation today has /tu/ + Indicative continuing to mark vivid protases, whilst the post-Old Georgian General Subordinator, which may be omitted, marks vague conditions with Present Subjunctive for present reference, Future Subjunctive

¹⁶Whilst formally identical to Modern Georgian's passive Future Subjunctive with 3rd person singular subject, no such screeve existed in the old language; the passive Present Subjunctive (+ preverb) with 3rd person singular subject in Old Georgian would have been /da.i.ts'er.s̄b.ɔd.i.s̄/.

¹⁷This construction with /tu.mtsa/ + Aorist Indicative, here equating to Greek eij + Imperfect Indicative of the copula (usually Aorist Indicative), could also form a vague future protasis (equivalent to Greek eij + Present or Aorist Optative).

for future reference¹⁸, and the Pluperfect Indicative [sic] for past reference; the Pluperfect is related to the Aorist Indicative, and so this last construction simply continues the last illustration for Old Georgian with loss of the irrealis marker, e.g.

tu ts^hvim.s, mindar.i svəl.d.əb.a
 if rain.X(-Pres) meadow.Nom wet.Pass.TS.Y(-Pres)
 'If it is raining, the meadow is getting wet' [Georgian]

tu i.ts^hvim.əb.s/i.ts^hvim.a, mindar.i da.svəl.d.əb.a
 if SV.rain.TS.X(-Fut)/SV.rain.X(-Aor) meadow.Nom Prev.wet.Pass.TS.Y(-
 Fut)

'If it rains, the meadow will get wet' [Georgian]

gɑ(.)k^hvet(.)il.s (rom) a/sɣla ø.ø.sts^howl.əb.d.ə, k^harg.i
 lesson.Dat Sub now you.X.learn.TS.Ext.Subj(-Pres-Subj) good.Agr
 bit^h?i ø.i.knəb.ədi

boy.Nom you.Pass.be.TS.Ext.Indic(-Condit)

'If you were now learning the lesson, you'd be a good lad' [Georgian]

reb.a.s (rom) mə.ø.m.tsem.də.s, saxl.s
 permission.Dat Sub Prev.Y.me.give.TS.Ext.Subj.X(-Fut-Subj) house.Dat
 mə.v.ø.a.brən.əb.d.i

Prev.I.Z.NV.turn.TS.Ext.Indic(-Condit)

'If X were to give me permission, I would turn the house round' [Georgian]

k^hvertsx.i (rom) ø.stfven.əb.in.ət, dʒimʃer.i mə.k^hvd.əb.əd.ə
 egg.Nom if X.IOV.shew.TS.Plup.Y.Pl Dzhimsher.Nom Prev.die.TS.Ext.Z(-
 Condit)

'If they had shewn [him] an egg, Dzhimsher would have died' [Georgian]

A peculiarity is that /tu/ is combinable with the Aorist Subjunctive for future reference with perhaps again a nuance that is capturable by translating 'if it transpires that..', e.g.

tu ʃəni ʃv(.)il.i ø.ø.itsn.ə, ts^ha.ø.ø.i.q^hvəns
 if your.Agr child.Nom you.X.SV.recognise.Subj(-Aor-Subj) Prev.you.X.SV.
 take.Aor(-Imper)

'If it transpires that you recognise your child, take her!¹⁹ [Georgian]

Mingrelian seems to have borrowed the Georgian conjunction /dɑ/ 'and' for the distinct purpose of marking its real protases (see Hewitt 1991); 'and' in Mingrelian =

¹⁸Alternatively, /tu/ + Conditional (Future in the Past/Past in the Future) (cf. one rendition of Job 6.2 as /tu a.i.ts^hən.əb.əd.ə/ 'if [my grief] were to be weighed') OR /rom/ + Pluperfect Indicative can convey this sense, so that the Modern Georgian Bible translation has for the last example /rom v.q^h.əp.ili.q^həw.i.t...ar v.i.kn.əb.əd.i.t/.

¹⁹From a fairy-tale, where the parent is removed from the child for a year and is then tasked with recognising her. A few lines later the parent relates the challenge by switching to the Aorist Indicative to give /tu v.ø.i.tsən/ 'if I recognise her'.

/dʒ/ — it is impossible to reconstruct for Proto-Kartvelian a single conditional conjunction. As with Georgian, vague conditions are produced by means of the (optionally omissible) General Subordinator, so that the Mingrelian equivalents to the above-examples read as follows (with the past vague equivalent left for discussion till last):

tʃʷən.s.də, mindər(.i) i.ʃəl.u.ø
rain.X(-Pres).if meadow.Nom Pass.wet.TS.Y(-Pres)
'If it rains, the meadow gets wet' [Mingrelian]

də.tʃʷən.s.də/də.tʃʷəm(.u/ə).də, mindər(.i) d.i.ʃəl.u.ø
Prev.rain.X(-Fut).if/Prev.rain.X(-Aor).if meadow.Nom Prev.Pass.wet.TS.Y(-Fut)
'If it rains, the meadow will get wet' [Mingrelian]

asə (kə.)ø.ø.gurəp(u)lən.də(ri) gə(.)kʷət(.)il.s
now Aff.you.X.study.TS.Ext.Subj(-Pres-Subj).Sub lesson.Dat
dʒgir.i bəʃ.i ø.i.ʔ.i.d.i
good.Agr lad.Nom you.SV.be.TS.Ext.Indic(-Condit)
'If you were now studying the lesson, you would be a good lad' [Mingrelian]

rəb.as kə.mutʃ.ən.d.a.sə.ni (< kə.mə.ø.m.tʃ.ən.d.a.s(ə.ni)),
permission.Dat Aff.Prev.Y.me.give.TS.Ext.Subj.X(-Fut-Subj).Sub
ʔudə.s gə.m.kʷ.u.ə.r.t.in.u.ən.k (< gə.mi.kʷ.v.ø.r.t.in.u.ən.k)
house.Dat Prev.Prev.Prev.I.Z.NV.turn.Caus.TS.TS.I(-Fut)
'If X were to give me permission, I would turn the house round'²⁰ [Mingrelian]

skə.ni skuə k.i.tʃin.a.də (< kə.ø.ø.i.tʃin.a.də)
your.Agr child(-Nom) Aff.you.X.SV.recognise.Subj(-Aor-Subj).if
mi.d.s.ʔən.i (< mi(.)də.ø.ø.i.ʔən.i)
Prev.you.X.SV.take.Indic(-Imper)
'If it transpires that you recognise your child, take her!' [Mingrelian]

vs ə(.)kʷ(.)ə mə(.)l.s.ʔən.s (< mə(.)lə.v.ø.i.ʔən.s),
must Prev.I.X.SV.bring.Subj(-Aor-Subj)
k.i.p.tʃin.i.də (< kə.v.ø.i.tʃin.i.də)
Aff.I.X.SV.recognise.Indic(-Aor).if
'I must fetch her away, if I recognise her'²¹ [Mingrelian]

²⁰The source is Khubua (1937.26-7).

²¹The source is Q'ipshidze [Kipshidze] (1914.24-5), reprinted with Georgian translation in Danelia & Tsanava (1991.280-1).

This leaves the formation of past unreal conditions in Mingrelian. Mingrelian has (?developed) its own irrealis formant /-kʰɔ:(.n(i))²²/ (see Hewitt 2001 for comments on a possible origin in Abkhaz). This item can be suffixed to the Imperfect Indicative, the Conditional, the Aorist Indicative and the Pluperfect Indicative, and all of them are found, possibly with varying aspectual force, in vague past protases (as well as purpose-clauses), so that in this respect Mingrelian stands close to Old Georgian. In the following example (Q'ipshidze [Kipshidze] 1914.74; Danelia & Tsanava 1991.50-1) the Aorist Indicative is the base:

kʰvertɕi k.o.dzirɔs.kʰoni (<= k.o.ɔ.ɔ.dzir.es.kʰo.ni)²³,
 egg.Nom Aff.X.Y.LV.see.they(-Aor).Irr.Sub
 dzimʃɛr.i dɔ.ɛur.u.d.t
 Dzhimsher.Nom Prev.die.TS.Ext.Z(-Condit)

'If they had shewn him an egg, Dzhimsher would have died' [Mingrelian]

With the Pluperfect as base consider the following, which anticipates a later Svan example and illustrates the peculiarity of inversion, a feature typical of transitive (and Medial) verbs in Series III, though Mingrelian (with, to some extent, Laz and Svan) has it for certain intransitives such as this:

kum[ɔ].ɔ.u.r.t.um.u.d.(u/ə).kʰo.(n(i)), k.o.b.ɔ.dzir.un.di
 Aff.Prev.X.OV.come.TS.TS.Ext.?Y.Irr.Sub Aff.I.X.see.TS.Ext.Indic(-Condit)
 'If X had come, I'd have seen X' [Mingrelian]

It remains to take a look at Svan. Abesadze (1960.132) gives three variants for the General Subordinator: /ɛrɛ/, /ɛr/ and /ɛ/, and we have already met /ɛr/. She also gives (138-141) /ɔɣ/ as equivalent to Georgian /rɔm/ 'that' or /tu/ 'if', illustrating variants: /ɔɣɛ/ and /ɔɣ/. Additionally, she offers /(h)ɛ(ɔ)/ (with variant /hɔ/) as equivalent solely to Georgian /tu/. We end by quoting a series of vivid vs vague conditions that were translated from Georgian by my Lashkh informant; it will be seen that /ɛ/ appears consistently in the vivid protases, whilst /ɛr/ is associated with the vague.

ɔ (dɔm) a.ɛɔlwɔ.ɔ, i.rɣɛn.ɔɔ.t /dɔm i.rɣɛn.ɔɔ
 if not ?NV.lighten.Pres.X SV.thunder.Med.Y-too not
 'If it is (not) lightning, it also thunders/is not thundering' [Lashkh]

Note the coördinating clitic attached to the verb, another feature Svan shares with Old Georgian.

²²Whether the optional /-ni/ is part of the formant or the General Subordinator is a question yet to be decided, for some informants allow /-kʰɔ.ni.ni/, whilst others find the second occurrence of /-ni/ awkward.

²³The final vowel (or nasal-vowel combination) may be omitted, and, at least for some speakers, an extra such combination may be added.

s (dæm) an.qd.en.i.ø, mi ka χw.ø.sts'd.en.i
 if not Prev.come.Intrans.Fut.X I(-Nom) Aff²⁴ I.X.IOV.see.Intrans.Fut
 /dæm χw.ø.sts'd.en.i

not

'If X comes (does not come), I'll (not) see X' [Lashkh]

cf. s dɔj an.qd.en.i.ø, dɔj χw.ø.sts'd.en.i
 not-Pot not-Pot

'If X can't come, I won't be able to see X' [Lashkh]

sɔr (mɔɔd/dɔj) an.q.ə.s,²⁵ ka χw.ø.sts'd.en.ɔl
 if not/not-Pot Prev.come.Subj.X(-Aor-Subj) Aff I.X.IOV.see.Intrans.Imperf
 (-Condit)

/(dæm/dɔj) χw.ø.sts'd.en.ɔl

not/not-Pot I.X.IOV.see.Intrans.Imperf(-Condit)

'If X were (not/not able) to come, I would (not/not be able to) see X' [Lashkh]

sɔr (mɔɔd/dɔj) s.m.qəd.səl.ø.əɾ²⁶, ka χw.ø.sts'd.en.ɔl
 if not/not-Pot Prev.Ptc.come.Ptc.X.Cop-Past(-Plup) Aff I.X.IOV.see.Intrans.
 Imperf(-Condit)

/(dæm/dɔj) χw.ø.sts'd.en.ɔl

not/not-Pot I.X.IOV.see.Intrans.Imperf(-Condit)

'If X had (not/not been able to) come, I would (not/not have been able to see) have seen X' [Lashkh]

If there turns out to be a genetic link between the two conjunctions seen in these protases, then Svan stands closer to Old Georgian, by virtue of having a common conjunctive base for the two types of conditions, than to either of its modern sisters, even though the Svan conjunctions will have followed the same developmental path as the post-Old Georgian complementiser /ræm/ and Mingrelian /-ni/. But there is a final surprise in these examples: careful consideration of the negative adverbs reveals that the vowels are different between protasis and apodosis, thus confirming an observation made by Sharadzenidze (1946:310) and taken up by Abesadze

²⁴Note how this affirmative element is absent when the verb is negated, as with the mutual exclusion of Mingrelian's affirmative /kə/ and its negator.

²⁵Svan has no Future Subjunctive and so employs here the Aorist Subjunctive.

²⁶The final morph here is something of a puzzle, for with such monovalent intransitives, one expects the past participle to be coupled with the past tense of the copula, which would produce the form /s.m.qəd.səl.ə.s/, as given indeed by Topuria (1967:207). The morph /-əɾ/ is, according to standard analyses, expected only with either transitive or bivalent intransitive pluperfects, as in: /tʰilɪs.tə s.dʒ.n.əɾ ən.q-w-əd, sɔr kartul (sɔr) s.m.tə:n.əɾn/ 'I came to Tbilisi in order to learn Georgian' (= Georgian /tʰilɪs.ʃi i.m.is.tʰis tʰɑ.mə.vəd.i, rɔm kartul.i ʃə.m.s.sts'ɑvl.ə/). Of course, since the Pluperfect of transitive verbs arose out of an earlier intransitive stative-resultative, it may well be that it is this morph's historical intransitivity which explains its presence in the patently intransitive form here illustrated. I am grateful to K'akha Gabunia for checking the correctness of this form with some other native speakers of Lashkh and to Elisa Watson for ascertaining from her Lower Bal informants that they would not allow this ending in their dialect.

(1960.144), that the back vowel characterises the subordinate clause, whilst the front vowel partners the main clause²⁷. Of course, Ancient Greek also associated *mhv* with the protasis vs *ouj* with the apodosis (unless a prohibition stood in place of the usual apodosis), but such a distinction is not found elsewhere in Kartvelian. The neighbouring North West Caucasian languages do, however, generally distinguish between negation in finite and non-finite verb-forms, the latter typically serving in this family's subordinate clause-substitutes (or pseudo-clauses), e.g.

x.k ^w a.ft.ap	vs	ɔm.a.k ^w a.ftə.r	
X.go.Fut.not(-Fin)		who.not.go.Fut(-N/F).the(-Absol)	
'X will not go'	vs	'the one who will not go'	[West Circassian]

We have, then, seen some parallels and differences between Indo-European and Kartvelian for the constructions examined here, and that, whilst there are clear commonalities across the Kartvelian languages, their structures can differ interestingly in points of detail. South Caucasian is, thus, a good introduction to the Caucasus for those with a background in the classical languages, for one does not suffer the sort of immediate shock to the system that one can experience in the northern families, as may be illustrated by taking one example of a relative phrase (clause-substitute) from Abkhaz:

jə.z.'zə.z.zə.wə.z	(pronounced [jə'zəzəzəz])	
it.whom.for.I.knead.Dyn.Non-Fin(-Imperf)		
'the one for whom I am kneading it/them'		[Abkhaz]

Abbreviations

²⁷Note also the different basic negative for the different types of condition: /dɔm/ for real protases vs /mɔd/ for unreal. Despite its plethora of negative forms, Svan is like Georgian in having a fundamental 3-way distinction between neutral (Georgian /ar/), potential (Georgian /vɛr/), and prohibitional (Georgian /mʉ/). For this last consider: /(kə) ɔ x.ɔ.s.ts'dəni, nɔmɔ ɔ.ɔ.a.dgə.r.i/ 'If you see X, don't kill X!' (with Present Indicative). Mingrelian has only the one negative /və/. This last example would thus be /ɔ.ɔ.dzir.un.k.də, və dɔ.ɔ.ɔ.ɔ.vil.ə/ (with Aorist Subjunctive) in Mingrelian and /tu ɔ.ɔ.nəx.ə, nɔ mɔ.ɔ.k'l.əw/ (with Future Indicative) or /..ə mɔ.ɔ.k'l.ə/ (with Aorist Subjunctive) in Georgian. Potentiality is expressed as a verbal characteristic in Mingrelian that involves the phenomenon of inversion; consider: /(tina) və mɔ.ur.s.də, (ti.s) və b.ɔ.dzir.un.k/ 'If X is not coming, I won't see X' vs /(ti.s) və m[ɔ].ɔ.a.rt.in.s.də, (tina) və m.a.dzir.ɔ/ 'If X can't come, I shan't be able to see X'.

Abl	Ablative	IOV	Indirect Object
Absol	Absolutive		Version
Adv	Adverbial	Irr	Irrealis
Aff	Affirmative	LV	Locative Version
Agr	Agreement	Med	Medial
Aor	Aorist	N/F	Non-Finite
Ben	Benefactive	Nom	Nominative
Caus	Causative	Obl	Oblique
Condit	Conditional	OV	Objective Version
Cop	Copula	Pass	Passive
Dat	Dative	Perf	Perfect
Erg	Ergative	Pl	Plural
Ext	Extension	Plup	Pluperfect
Fin	Finite	Pot	Potential
Fut	Future	Pres	Present
Gen	Genitive	Prev	Preverb
Imper	Imperative	Ptc	Participle
Imperf	Imperfect	Rel	Relative
Indef	Indefinite	Stat	Stative
Indic	Indicative	Sub	Subordinator
Inst	Instrumental	Subj	Subjunctive
Intrans	Intransitive	SV	Subjective Version
		TS	Thematic Suffix

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