The subordinator na in Laz

My talk is a typologically oriented description of the subordinator na in the South Caucasian language Laz. The data presented here is from the dialect of Arhavi. Na is used in relativization, complementation and adverbial subordination. It can thus be described as a multi-purpose subordination marker.

In Laz, relative clauses precede their head. The verb is finite, occurs at the end of the relative clause and is immediately preceded by na. Core syntactic roles (A, O, S) as well as obliques (ex.1) can be relativized.

(1) na bon-es tsk’ai ii al’tuni d-iv-u
    SUB wash-AOR.I3P water all gold PV-become-AOR.I3S
    ‘All the water with which they washed her became gold.’ (K’art’ 130)

Relative clauses in Laz are typologically interesting in that they use finite verb forms while preceding their head. Moreover, in free relative clauses, the plural suffix or the case indicating the function of the relative in the matrix clause directly attach to the finite verb form heading the relative clause:

(2) si na čk’om-i-pe-k va-g-o-dz’-es-na
    2S SUB eat-AOR-PL-ERG NEG-II2-TR-satisfy=AOR.I3P-if
    ‘If the ones you ate didn’t satisfy you, ... ’ (K’art’ 137)

The internal structure of complement clauses is identical to the structure of the relatives: the verb is finite, occurs at the end of the subordinate clause and is immediately preceded by the subordinator na:

(3) bič’-i-k ts’its’ila molat-epi-š o-čk’om-u-ša na y-ul-u-t’u
    boy-ERG snake young-PL-GEN PV-eat-VN-ALL SUB PV-go.up-THS-IMPFT.I3S
    k-ox-o-ts’on-u
    PV-PV-TR-understand=AOR.I3S
    ‘The boy understood that the snake was going up to eat the young ones.’ (Dum37 VIII)

When a clause is the complement of a postposition, the case suffix required by the postposition directly attaches to the verb heading the subordinate clause:

(4) id-i-a mžoa na y-ul-u-n-ši-k’ele
    go-IMP-QUOT sun SUB PV-go.up-THS-I3S-GEN-toward
    ‘Go toward the place where the sun rises.’ (K’art’ 128)

Compare with the following example, in which the postposition -k’ele is used with a noun:

(5) b-i-mt’-i-t daği-š k’ele
    I1-MP-flee-AOR-PL mountain-GEN toward
    ‘We fled toward the mountain.’ (Qip 47)

The use of na is not the only strategy to form complement clauses in Laz. The following sentence is an example of a complement clause without na whose internal structure is as that of an interrogative:

(6) dunya-s mit ko-do-m-i-skid-es-i-t var-m-i-čk-i-nan
    world-DAT someone PV-PV-II1-APPL-stay-AOR.PL-INT-too NEG-II1-APPL-know-THS-PL
    ‘We even don’t know if anybody of our acquaintances is still alive.’ (Dum37 I)

cf. mit ko-do-m-i-skid-es-i
    someone PV-PV-II1-APPL-stay-AOR.PL-INT
    ‘Does anybody of our acquaintances be still alive?’

Some adverbial clauses involve the subordinator na too. Their internal structure is identical to that of relatives and complement clauses.

(7) mgeyi-š korba-s na t’u-šeni
    wolf-GEN stomach-DAT SUB he.was-because
    ‘because he had been in the wolf’s stomach’ (Dum67 II)
Morphologically, it seems that na is an enclitic attached to the constituent which precedes the verb. In the sentence below, hyphens indicate intonation breaks and grave accents, stressed syllables.

(8) mà-na - è-k-č’op-i - kitābi  
1S-SUB PV-ill2-buy-AOR book  
‘the book I bought for you’ (elicited)

Although in most cases na is placed immediately before the verb, there are some occurrences of na following the first constituent of the subordinate clause:

(9) čku na tsk’ar var-m-a-v-e-nan var-g-i-čk-i-n-i  
1P SUB water NEG-ill1-APPL-become-THS-PL NEG-ill2-APPL-know-THS-I3S-INT  
‘Don’t you know that we don’t have water?’ (Dum37 VIII)

In some rare instances, na appears twice: after the first constituent of the subordinate clause and in its usual position before the verb:

(10) mu g-i-čk-i-t’es heg-na deve-na gola-xt-u  
what? ill2-APPL-know-THS-I3FT.PL here-SUB camel-SUB PV-pass-AOR.I3S  
‘How did you know that the camel passed through here?’ (Jğ 37)

The last point I will address concerns conditionals, which differ from the types of subordinate clauses examined above in that na is placed after the verb, at the end of the subordinate clause:

(11) zabun dido monk’a ren-na hemsat’is ar xoja-s ko-d-u-jux-um-an  
il.person very heavy he.is-if immediately one hoja-DAT PV-PV-APPL.I3-set I3-call-THS-I3P  
‘If the person is seriously ill, they call a hoja immediately.’ (Dum37 XIII)

My conclusion will draw attention to the fact that the constructions with the subordinator na cannot be explained, either as inherited from proto-Kartvelian (since they do not exist in Georgian or Svan), or as borrowed from Turkish (since they depart from the type of subordination structures attested in Turkish in some important respects).

Abbreviations

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<th>ALL</th>
<th>allative</th>
<th>SUB</th>
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References


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