Marcello Cherchi

VERBAL TMESES IN GEORGIAN*

Verbal tmesis in Old Georgian (V to XI centuries) and Early Middle Georgian (XII and XIII centuries) is a relatively rare phenomenon. Although most grammars mention it and offer a handful of examples (Deeters (1930:12, §17), Fähnrich (1994:206-207), Shani- dze (1976:73, §127), Zorell (1930:89, §18.5; 124-125, §32.1), Zwolanek and Assfal (1976:67)), tmesis has not, to my knowledge, received much attention in the literature (with the notable exceptions of Chincharauli (1969), Schmidt (1969) and Boeder (1994)). In this paper we hope to make an initial, tentative contribution to understanding verbal tmesis by examining a fairly large number of examples (236 from Old Georgian, and 61 from Early Middle Georgian) and by attempting to answer the following questions:

- What are the meanings and/or grammatical functions of the particles inserted in tmesis (which we shall hereafter refer to as ‘tmetic particles’), and in what environments do they occur? When tmesis is not employed (as is often the case in different versions of the same text), what happens instead? (Parts I and II)
- Is tmesis in Georgian governed by Wackernagel’s law of clitic placement in Indo-European, as some authors claim? (Part III)
- What does the occurrence of tmetic particles in unexpected positions suggest about Georgian verb structure? (Part IV)
- What are the differences in tmesis as employed in Old Georgian and Early Middle Georgian? What can be said about its diachronic development? (Part V)

Before proceeding to the data and analysis, let us discuss tmesis in general. What is tmesis? Here is a definition from a manual of rhetoric:

* Research for this paper was supported in part by a grant from the International Research & Exchanges Board (IREX), with funds provided by the National Endowment for the Humanities, the United States Information Agency, and the US Department of State, which administers the Russian, Eurasian, and East European Research Program (Title VIII). I am grateful to Professor Howard Aronson for his comments and suggestions at all stages in the writing of this paper.

33
Die unmittelbare Nachbarschaft des alten Platzes mit dem neuen Platz des unzustellenden Bestandteils ist durch eine innere Strukturgrenze des Ganzen aufgehoben. Für das aus drei Bestandteilen bestehende und durch engere Zuordnung der Bestandteile yz charakterisierte Ganze \( x(yz) \) liegt also in der Umgestaltung \( yx(z) \) ein Hyperbaton vor, da trotz der unmittelbaren Nachbarschaft der platztäuschenden Bestandteile \( x \) und \( y \) (wie in der Anastrophe...) zwischen \( x \) und \( y \) eine innere Strukturgrenze des Ganzen liegt. – Wird die innere Struktur eines Bestandteils selbst durchbrochen (wird also etwa im Mauerwerk ein Ziegel zweigeteilt und in den entstehenden Zwischenraum ein anderer Bestandteil des Mauerwerks zwischengeschaltet), so heißt der Vorgang \( divisio \)... Bereits die Zwischenschaltung einer die Einheit sprengenden Strukturgrenze stellt eine \( divisio \) dar... Die Sprengung der Einheit durch Zwischenschaltung materieller Bestandteile heißt man \( tnesis \). (Lausberg, Heinrich, *Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik*. Munich: Max Hueber Verlag, 1960, vol. I, p. 253.)

[The direct adjacency of the old place with the new place of the component \([Bestandteil]\) which is to be transposed is broken up by an inner structure boundary of the whole \([Ganze]\). For the whole \( x(yz) \), which consists of three components and is characterized by the direct ordering of the components \( yz \), there is thus a hyperbaton in the reorganization \( yx(z) \) because, despite the direct adjacency of \( y \) and \( x \) and the place-exchanging \( x \) (as in anastrophe...), there is an inner structure boundary between \( x \) and \( y \). – If the inner structure of a component is itself broken (as in when a brick in stonework is split, and in the existing intermediate space another element of the stonework is interposed \([zwischengeschaltet]\)), the phenomenon is called \( divisio \)... So interposing a structure boundary, which breaks the unit \([Einheit]\) has already introduced a \( divisio \). The breaking of a unit by interposing material component is called \( tnesis \).]

The crucial sentence is the last one: “The breaking of a unit by interposing material components is called \( tnesis \).” A classical\(^1\) and somewhat simpler definition is:

\( tnesis \) est unius compositi aut simplicis verbi sectio, una dictione vel pluribus interiectis. | Quae species non facile in scripturis sanctis, quae ex hebraeo vel graeco sermone translatae sunt, potest inveniri; est autem huiusmodi:

---

1. For those who do not have at their disposal the wealth of \( tnesis \) data provided in Wickernagel (1892), a few possibly more accessible examples from Greek may be found in Aristophanes’ *The Clouds*, lines 792 and 1440, and in Euripides’ *Hippolytus*, lines 342, 594, 878, 934, 1109, 1357 and 1377. See also the discussion in Euripides, *Hippolytus*, ed. by W.S. Barrett, Oxford at the Claredon Press, 1964, p. 209. I am indebted to Eric Brown for these examples.