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Department of Linguistics and Philology**

**The Grammaticalization of Copula Markers in the  
Ometo Subgroup**

**Henok Wondimu**

**October 2010  
Addis Ababa**

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**By  
Henok Wondimu**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts in Linguistics, Faculty of  
Humanities, Department of Linguistics and Philology,  
Addis Ababa University**

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## **Abstract**

This study is about the grammaticalization of the affirmative copula forms *-tte* and *-kko* within a single genetic unit, the Ometo languages. The main objective was to identify, describe, and explain the grammaticalization processes and paths taken by the morphemes. The data on the morphemes were collected from grammars, dictionaries, and texts of the respective languages. The collected data were then analyzed within the framework of the theory of grammaticalization. The result of the analysis shows that the morphemes have developed from existential verbs and have further evolved into focus markers in some languages of the sub-group. The developmental path taken by the forms is:

Existential + Agr → locative copula → Copula → focus

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Unless there is someone who can help you, being a student is full of hardship. You need a leader who shows you the way to go through, you need a pastor who can nurture you with the required skill and knowledge, and you need guidance that can help to make you a better person. If you are lucky, you will come to know a wonderful person who has these qualities.

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## List of Abbreviations

2sg.	Second person singular
Acc.	Accusative
Afoc	Assertive focus
Aff.	Affirmative
Agr.	Agreement
Attr.	Attributive non-verbal sentence
Cfoc	Contrastive focus
Cop.	Copula
Dat.	Dative
Decl.	Declarative
Def.	Definite
Emp.	Emphatic
Eph.	Epenthetic
Exbe.	Existential be
F.	Feminine
Foc.	Focus
Fut.	Future
Fpm	Final predicative marker
Gen.	Genitive
Ident.	Identificational non-verbal sentence
Impf.	Imperfective
Loc.	Locative case or locational verb

M.	Masculine
Msg.	Masculine singular
Neg.	Negative
Nmz.	Nominalizer
Nom.	Nominative
O.	Object
Pai	Past 1
Pf.	Perfective
Pl.	Plural
Pm	Person marker
Pol.	Polite
Pred.	Predicative marker
Pro.	Pronominal
Prog.	Progressive
PstPr.	Past present
Px.	Proximal
Q.	Question
Rel.	Relative
Subj.	Subject
T.	Tense
Temp.	Temporal
X.	Complex marker on verbs

# Chapter One

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. The Omoto Subgroup

The classification history of Omotic can be divided into pre-Fleming versus post-Fleming. Before Fleming (1976) “Omotic” did not exist; it was considered as a subgroup of Cushitic under the name of Southwest Cushitic. Scholars like Greenberg (1963) and Zaborski (1984) were some proponents of the classification. However, in 1976 Fleming published a study on both lexical and grammatical properties of Omotic languages in comparison to Cushitic languages and argued that Omotic is fundamentally different from Cushitic. In his research he pointed out 8 grammatical differences that Omotic languages show from Cushitic languages; based on these he suggested that Omotic should be treated as an independent family of Afroasiatic, rather than as a subfamily of Cushitic. Since then, Omotic has generally been considered as an independent family of Afroasiatic.

Although Fleming's classification has won wide acceptance, there are still some adherents of the former classification (Zaborski 1984, Lamberti 1991, 1993 and Alemayehu Haile 1981). These scholars argue that Omotic should be reclassified under Cushitic. They note the presence of similar suffix forms for tense and aspect in both families as a piece of evidence for the reclassification. However, for the time being, Omotic is considered as an independent family of Afroasiatic and it will continue to be so considered until another concrete research brings a change in its classification.

The subject of this research work, Omoto, is one of the subfamilies of Omotic which form Macro-Omotic jointly with C'ara (Bender, 2000:2). Regarding its internal classification, more or less similar classifications, with slight differences, are suggested by Fleming (1976) and Bender (2000:2). Fleming (1976) classifies the subgroup into North, South, East and West Omoto. The Northern group includes languages which have traditionally been known as the Wolaytta dialect cluster, notably Wolaytta, Gamo, Gofa, Dawuro and Dorze, and the Eastern group includes Zaysse, Zargulla, Haro, Koorete and Kanchama. The Western group comprises the languages Basketto, Doko, Dollo, and Chara. The final group, South Omoto, includes only one language, Maale. Bender's classification is somewhat different. Bender classified Omoto into two main groups: Northwestern and Southeastern Omoto. The Northwestern group includes all

the languages that are classified under North and West Ometo by Fleming. The Southeastern group includes all the languages which are classified under South and East Ometo by Fleming. In spite of this minor grouping difference, the two classifications are similar. The classification proposed by Fleming is the one that is adopted in this thesis.

Regarding the exact number of the languages the subgroup contains and the number of their speakers, there is no clearly agreed-upon figure. Hirut (2001:2) said that the number of the languages might be around twenty. Azeb (2001:4) reduces the number to sixteen; other scholars reduce it to as low as eleven. The disagreement arises both from the absence of any clearly set definition for the concepts of language and dialect, as well as from lack of descriptive studies of the subgroup languages. As mentioned by Heine and Nurse (2000: 2), the fuzzy boundary and ambiguous definitions that have been given to language and dialect evoke arguments among scholars regarding the status of a given language, whether it is an independent language or a dialect of another. Thus the number of languages in a given subgroup, throughout the world, rises and falls depending on the concept scholars have about the terms. Relevant factors are mutual intelligibility between languages and their political role. This is what is happening as regards Ometo. Fleming (1976) observes that the mutual intelligibility of neighboring languages in Ometo has made the classification of the subgroup difficult and unclear.

Although the number of speakers of some individual languages has been given by different scholars, no one has tried to come up with a collective figure for the group as a whole. According to the census of the Joshua Project (2010), the number of speakers for the individual languages is given as follows: Basketto 70,000, Dawuro 347,000, Dorze 45,000, Gamo 1,025,000, Gofa 344,000, Haro 6000, Koorete 151,000, Male 64,000, Melo 31,000, Oyda 22,000, Wolaytta 1,808,000, Zaysse and Zargulla (together) 17,000. The sum total of these figures could reasonably be considered as an upper limit for the total number of speakers of the subgroup languages.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

There are works dealing with the synchronic status of copula elements in Ometo, but few works have dealt in any detail with the diachronic evolution of the markers at the subfamily level (notably, Hayward 1989, Binyam 2008, 2010, and Hirut 2004, discussed in section 1.7 below). This is what I have undertaken in this study. The present study investigates the nature

and history of each the two copulas, *-tte* and *-kko*, together with other copulas, and their encoding system in the subfamily from the point of view of describing the grammaticalization pattern of the elements.

### **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

The primary aim of this work is identifying the grammaticalization patterns of copula markers in the Ometo subgroup. More particularly, it has the following objectives:

1. Identifying copula encoding strategies of Ometo.
2. Analyzing the distribution of the strategies in the languages.
3. Identifying the sources of the copula elements and their grammaticalization pattern(s).

### **1.4. Significance of the Study**

This work has the following significance:

1. It will help us to see the diachronic changes of the markers.
2. It will provide a historical analysis for the synchronic variation these copula elements show, both in terms of function and distribution, across the languages of the subfamily.
3. Finally, it will add new knowledge about Ometo and even Omotic as a whole.

### **1.5. Scope of the Study**

This research work deals only with copula markers of the subgroup languages. For the most part among the member languages, again, only those languages for which there is documented data are studied. This was supplemented by fieldwork on several languages, notably Dorze, Gamo, Shara (a dialect of Gamo), and Ganta. As a base for the study, every copula construction of the subgroup is presented in the thesis. However, only the development and grammaticalization of the affirmative declarative copula elements (and not negative and interrogative copulas) are discussed in depth.

### **1.6. Methodology**

Data from existing literature and from native informants was gathered, described, and analyzed in light of the mechanisms involved in grammaticalization. Special attention is given to those

grammaticalization pathways suggested by Heine and Kuteva (2002: 2). Introspection was also used as a means of data gathering for Gamo.

### 1.7. Review of Related Literature

Omotic is one of the more poorly studied and documented language families of Ethiopia. However, in recent years there has been much progress both in quantity and depth of research that has been conducted, both on specific languages and at the group level. Here I will present the relevant literature in two groups. The first includes those works that have a direct relation with the present study but were conducted at the subgroup level; the second group includes research works on individual Omoto languages. Every study that has a direct relation with the current work will be dealt with in some detail.

Of the works conducted at the subgroup level, Azeb Amha's (1994) "Verb derivation in Omoto" is notable. In this paper she examined the internal relationship among the languages of the group. She took four languages, Basketto, Maale, Koorete and Kullo (= Dawuro), one from each Omoto subgroup, and focused on their bound morphemes to demonstrate how these languages are related genetically. In "Aspects of the verb in Omoto", again by Azeb Amha (1996), she searched for evidence for the claims that have been forwarded by Fleming and Bender regarding the inflectional properties of the languages. She also compared the classifications proposed by Fleming (1976) and Bender (1971), concluding that the classification proposed by Fleming is more acceptable than Bender's.

An important work to mention is Bender's pioneering study *Comparative Morphology of the Omotic Languages* (2000), in particular the subsections "Copula and Connectors" in his chapters 1, 2, 3 on Omoto. Here Bender presents copula markers and connectors of the Omoto group with the goal of reconstructing the copulas in proto-Omoto. In the book he identified the markers and defined their distribution and function within each language. After thoroughly surveying the subgroup, he identified *de ʔ*, *-k(k)o*, *bawa*, and *gid-* as the most common copulas across the subgroup; these are used as existential, identity, negative and change-of-state copula respectively (pp. 87-88). However, he said nothing about their diachronic history and grammaticalization paths - the focus of the present study.

Zaborski (1984), "Remarks on the verb in Omoto", attempts to uncover some details of the relative chronology of the verb systems which may be useful, for instance, for reconstruction of

Proto-Omotic and for an assessment of the relevance of Ometo to this reconstruction. He examines the verbal systems of the subgroup and concludes that Wolaytta, Gofa, Konta, Zala and [Kullo] represent the most archaic subgroup in Ometo regarding their verbal inflectional system, while Basketto is less archaic than the others. Kanchama is found to be more closely related to Wolaytta than to Zaysse or Koorete.

“The notion of default gender: A key to interpreting the evolution of certain verb paradigms in east Ometo and its implications for Omotic”, by R. J. Hayward (1989), deals with the different realizations of copula elements in the East Ometo languages Zaysse and Koorete. Zaysse uses *-tte* and Koorete uses *-kko* as their copula elements. The paper tries to see if there is any historical reason why these languages use these two different copula elements. Hayward claims that there were originally two gender-sensitive copulas in the proto-Ometo language: the copula *-tte* was used with feminine subjects whereas the copula *-kko* was used with masculine subjects. As the languages split up, each language determined the gender that it would use as default, together with selecting which copula element they would take over from proto-Ometo. Those languages that use feminine as their default gender chose *-tte* as their copula marker, whereas those that use the masculine gender picked *-kko*. So the difference that we encounter between the two languages regarding their copula element has its root in the gender they use as default.

The dissertation of Hirut (2003), “The grammar of Haro with a comparative morphology of Ometo languages”, reflects a similar position to that of Hayward (1989). Hirut expanded Hayward's argument to North Ometo languages like Dawuro and Gamo to see whether it works. She found the two copula markers, *-tte* and *-kko*, in Dawuro and Gamo respectively. The argument proposed by Hayward works for Gamo, since the default gender in the language is masculine. However, the argument fails for Dawuro: the default gender in Dawuro is masculine but its copula element is *-tte*. Hirut claims that the default gender of the language used to be feminine but through time it was replaced by masculine, which is why the copula *-tte* is encountered in the language.

Other papers might be included in the above group; however, since they do not have a direct relationship with the main target of the present work they are left out. We now proceed to the second group of related literature.

Azeb Amha (2007a), in “Non-verbal predication in Wolaytta”, observes that in Wolaytta non-verbal predicate clauses do not take copulas with the exception of predicate nominals in locational and interrogative constructions. In locational constructions the predicate nominal is marked by an invariable particle *-a* and in interrogative clauses the nominal predicate is marked either by *-éé* or *-íí* depending on the gender of the predicate nominal. In constructions where the language does not use a copula it is the word order (subject-predicate order) and the case system that play a predominant role in relating the constituents. Azeb briefly analyzed the case marking in non-verbal predicate constructions and discussed the case of *-tte(nne)* in Wolaytta with regard to its role as a copula.

Azeb Amha (2010), in “From gender identification to assertion: On the use of *-tte* and *-tta* in Zargulla, an endangered Omotic language”, presented the elements *-tte* and *-tta* as gender-sensitive copula markers in Zargulla. As time went by the two copula elements developed new functions. As mentioned in her paper, for example, *-tta* has further grammaticalized to indicate an additional pragmatic meaning: speakers attach the copula *-tta* in answering questions when they are annoyed with the question they are being asked. Thus the form is used to encode disappointment, warning, discomfort with the question, etc. The copula *-tte*, on the other hand has developed to mark assertive focus.

Azeb Amha (2008), “Gender distinction and affirmative copula clause in Zargulla”, discussed the gender-marking strategies and constructions in which gender is expressed. Zargulla morphologically marks gender on verbal subject agreement, definite markers, third person singular pronouns, and in copula clauses: *-tte* for masculine and *-tta* for feminine. However, this role is currently diminishing and the two forms are grammaticalizing to focus markers.

Azeb Amha (2009), “The morphosyntax of negation in Zargulla”, dealt with clausal negation in Zargulla. There are seven different morphemes that are used to mark negation in different moods and tenses in main and dependent clauses. Two are used in dependent clauses, and these are closely examined in the paper. In this language there is partial morphological similarity between the independent negative verb “to not-be” and the affixes that are used as negative markers on verbs. While dealing with negative markers, she also identified the form *-wa* as an interrogative copula and *b-* as a carrier of negation. These are the major findings of Azeb’s paper that have a direct relation with the present work.

Baye Yimam (1995), “Aspects of Zargulla syntax”, describes the lexical and syntactic categories of Zargulla. Verbs, nominals, adjectives, adverbials and prepositions are the major syntactic categories. Under the verbal category, a past tense copulative element of the language is identified as *yess*. According to Baye, the language does not use an overt copular element in the present tense. The common proto-Ometo copula *-tte* is also mentioned in the work but is treated as a focus marker

Baye Yimam (1984), “Some aspects of Zargulla morphology”, analyzed both the inflectional and the derivational morphology of Zargulla. Nominal inflectional categories are number, gender, definiteness and case. Nouns in this language are either singular or plural/paucal and singular is the unmarked form. Gender is morphologically marked only on third person singular pronouns and demonstratives. In definite constructions gender is marked on the definite articles, *-za* for masculine and *-tto* for feminine. Gender is also marked by agreement markers on the verb. There are three cases in Zargulla: nominative, accusative, and genitive. All of them are morphologically realized in pronouns. Adjectives agree with the noun they modify in number. In a second part of the paper, the derivational morphology of nouns, adjectives and verbs is presented. Nominals can be derived from verbs and adjectives; adjectives can be derived from verbs. Verbs can only be derived from verbs. Passivization and causativization are among the derived stems of verbs.

Baye Yimam (1990), “The structure of Zaysse Nps”, considers specifiers and complements of nominal phrases in Zaysse. In his discussion he examined two types of genitive NPs that constitute the complement structures of simple nouns. According to Baye, verbs inflect in the language for focus, person and aspect.

Binyam Sisay (2002), “The structure of NP in Koorete”, discussed the properties of noun phrases in the language. He also mentioned the copula element *-kko* and treated it as a focus marker rather than a copula element.

Binyam Sisay (2008), “Aspects of Koorete Verb Morphology”, considered the categories of verbal inflection in the language. In addition he discussed the focus system of the language and showed why Hayward (1989) considered *-ko* as a copula rather than as a focus marker. Binyam instead analyzed the morpheme as a focus marker and presented an argument for why he did so. He also built a reasonable bridge between Hayward’s claim as a copula and his own analysis as

a focus marker, arguing that the focus marker developed from the copula through a process of grammaticalization. His analysis of the grammaticalization of the focus marker is similar to the position I have taken in chapter four. The difference between his work and mine is that his work focuses only on a single language, Koorete, whereas my work deals with Ometo as a whole.

Binyam Sisay (2010), “Copula and/or focus: the morpheme *-k(k)o* in two eastern Ometo languages”, revisited the function of the element *-k(k)o* in Koorete and Haro, arguing that the morpheme is not a copula but functions as a focus marker. Since this morpheme is among the most basic and common copulas of Ometo, everything related to it will be dealt with in much greater detail in later chapters of this thesis.

Beletu Redda (2003), “The Morphology of Koorete”, considered both the inflectional and the derivational patterns of the language. In dealing with the inflection of nouns she identified seven cases: nominative, genitive, dative, ablative, instrumental, locative and comitative. Nouns can be derived from nouns, adjectives and verbs. From verbs agentive, gerundive and manner nominals can be derived. Verbs in Koorete inflect for aspect (perfective and imperfective), tense and mood (imperative, jussive and negative). The derivation of verbs differs from the derivation of nouns and adjectives in that verbs can only be derived from verbs. The passive, causative, reciprocal and frequentative forms are derived verb forms. In her discussion, Beletu identified the copulas used in the language. According to her, *-kko* and *-sso* are used in present affirmative sentences and *maak'* is used in negative and “becoming” constructions.

Teshome Yimer (1989), “The syntax of simple declarative clauses in Zaysse”, mentions (among other topics) the syntactic role of the element *-tte* in the language. He argues against Hayward (1989) for treating the morpheme as a copula. Teshome believes it is more of a focus marker than a copula, and he presents diagnostics to determine whether it is a copula or a focus marker.

Hirut Woldemariam (2007), “Some aspects of the phonology and morphology of Dawuro”, presents the basic phonological and morphological facts of Dawuro. The paper has four parts. The first part deals with the people, the second with the phonology of the language, the third with the morphology of Dawuro, and the fourth with syntax. Regarding morphology, Dawuro is an agglutinating language that has a rich inventory of morphemes. The major word classes of the language are nouns, pronouns, demonstratives, verbs and adjectives. It has no adverbs.

Nouns inflect for definiteness, gender, number and case (nominative, accusative, dative, instrumental, comitative, ablative, genitive and vocative). Abstract nouns are derived from nouns and adjectives, while nouns derived from verbs are agentive, gerundive and result and process nouns. Verbs inflect for person, number and gender, mood (imperative, jussive and negative) and tense. Derived verb stems like causative, passive, reciprocal, intensive/frequentative are formed through word-formation processes. Adjectives also can be derived from nouns by adding various morphemes.

Wakasa Motomichi (2002), “A note on the *-ett-* derivative in Wolaytta”, describes the uses of the *-ett-* morpheme to express passive, reciprocal, and various other meanings. Regarding the semantic range of this derivative, the following two tendencies can be observed: (a) the referent of the subject is an affected participant; (b) the cause of the affectedness on this participant is an action which does not originate in the subject itself.

## Chapter Two

### 2. Conceptual Framework

#### 2.1. The Concept of Grammaticalization

The term grammaticalization has two meanings. The first has to do with a research framework within which a certain kind of language change is accounted for, and the second is the phenomenon itself (Hopper and Traugott 1993:1). Based these meanings the term grammaticalization is defined in different ways. In its first sense grammaticalization is a framework in which the development of lexical units to grammatical elements is studied, i.e. how lexical items and constructions come in certain linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions or how grammatical items develop new and more abstract grammatical functions, what the basic parameters of grammaticalization are, and what are the factors that lie behind the process of grammaticalization. It is also concerned with characterizing the subsets of cross-linguistically recurring correlations across time among semantic-pragmatic, morphosyntactic and (sometimes) phonological changes.

As a term referring to an actual phenomenon of language change, grammaticalization refers to the steps whereby particular items become more grammatical through time. It is a part of the wider linguistic phenomenon of structuration, through which combinations of forms may in time come to be fixed in certain functions (Hopper and Traugott 1993:3).

According to Hopper and Traugott (1993:3), grammaticalization as language change can be studied from two perspectives, diachronic and synchronic. As a diachronic phenomenon it focuses on answering questions regarding how grammatical forms and constructions arise, how they are used and what are the most probable paths for the development of the forms. From the synchronic point of view it is seen as a “primarily syntactic, discourse pragmatic phenomenon, to be studied from the point of view of fluid patterns of language” (Hopper and Traugott 1993:2).

The term grammaticalization was first coined by the French Indo-Europeanist Antoine Meillet with the sense of “the attribution of grammatical character to a formerly independent word”

(Campbell 2004: 292). Since Meillet, grammaticalization has increasingly attracted the attention of historical linguists, language typologists and Indo-Europeanists. Since then the term has been defined differently in various ways. One commonly mentioned definition is that of Kuryłowicz: “Grammaticalisation consists in the increase of the range of a morpheme advancing from a lexical to a grammatical or from a less grammatical to a more grammatical status” (Kuryłowicz 1965: 52).

Grammaticalization is a process than an instant. As is well known, linguistic change does not happen overnight, but rather starts somewhere among a small group of people in a few words or constructions; then it can gradually diffuse across communities and words over time. The same is true of grammaticalization. It requires time to emerge and to establish itself as a linguistic change. This has two advantages for linguists studying this kind of change. The first is that it gives the chance to see the processes live and helps to catch the real source of the grammaticalizing element. This in turn enables us to see the basic driving factors behind the grammaticalization. The second advantage is that it provides a good way to analyze synchronic variation in the language system that is caused by a given process of grammaticalization.

Prototypically, grammaticalization is concerned with the development of an autonomous lexical unit into a grammatical unit. In fact, it is not only about the development of free lexical morphemes, but also includes the development of less grammatical morphemes into more grammatical units and the development of certain constructions to express more pragmatic conditions. One point that should be emphasized is that the change “is supposed” to go only in one direction, from less grammatical to more grammatical – unidirectionality, as most scholars calls it.

Unidirectionality of grammaticalization processes is widely attested. It refers to the nature of the change (allegedly) going always in one direction from a less grammatical to a more grammatical form. However, from the very beginning of the period when grammaticalization emerged as a research field, this claim about unidirectionality has been criticized by scholars, primarily because of the existence of counterexamples (Wischer 2006: 134; see also Norde 2009).

## 2.2. Mechanisms in Grammaticalization

Grammaticalization as a process is characterized by concomitant “weakening” of meaning and phonological form of the words involved (Campbell 2004: 292). Heine and Kuteva (2002: 2) identify four major mechanisms that are involved in grammaticalization: Desemanticization, Decategorialization, Erosion and Extension. Of these four mechanisms three involve a loss of properties, while the remaining one involves the gain of a property. The three mechanisms are semantic bleaching (Desemanticization), “demorphologization” (Decategorialization), and loss of phonological substance (Erosion). These concurrent losses enable the fourth property above, namely extension, i.e. the gain of a new function in a given context. Context plays a predominant role both in the loss and gain of properties (Heine and Kuteva 2000: 2). Each of these mechanisms will be discussed below.

The first mechanism, desemanticization, also called semantic bleaching, refers to a loss in semantic content of a word. In most cases of grammaticalization words are not used in their primary meaning, but come to be used in certain contexts with a special function in a new way. The extension may be metaphorical or involve context-dependent reanalysis. Such kinds of uses pave the way for the words to gain new meanings. The old meaning may continue to coexist with the new one but can also vanish. If it has vanished, the meaning of that word will be restricted only to those contexts in which the recent reanalysis has occurred.

The present-day English future tense marker was once a lexical verb meaning ‘want’. The German cognate has retained the original meaning.

ich will gehen “I want to go”.

The English *will* has grammaticalized into a future marker as shown below.

I will go. (< I want that I go)

The meaning of the above sentence was once similar to that of German, but today *will* has lost its original lexical meaning and become a future tense marker, a prototypical case of semantic bleaching.

For most scholars, semantic bleaching is the essential and the first step in grammaticalization. If it is assumed to be in operation the other mechanisms or characteristics of grammaticalization will immediately come to life. That is why scholars like Campbell (2004: 293) claim that semantic bleaching leads to phonetic reduction (and not the reverse).

The second mechanism, decategorialization, refers to the loss of morphosyntactic properties that the word had previously. The mechanism simply says that words, when grammaticalized, can lose some or all of the inflectional properties that they had as a lexical form. Hopper (1991: 22) claims that decategorialization refers to the functional semantic shift that grammaticalized forms undergo. For instance, verbs in most languages inflect for typical verbal categories like tense, aspect, mood, agreement, etc. However, when verbs get grammaticalized they may lose their inflectional properties and no longer inflect for tense, aspect, mood and the like in their grammaticalized use.

The above example, *will*, was inflected for tense and number in previous times; now it inflects only for tense (*will* vs. *would*).

Phonetic erosion, the third mechanism, refers to the loss of the phonological substance of the word. A consequence of unidirectionality is that a lexical morpheme can lose autonomy: it may develop to a clitic, then to an affix and finally, if the process continues, it may end up as zero. Typically this process involves loss of phonetic substance. But erosion can occur even without this progression. The basic factors for reduction in phonological form are the principle of least effort and economy, which always have the potential to apply anywhere.

The above English word *will* has come to be shorter and shorter in constructions like “I’ll go” (I will go), “I won’t come” (I will not come). This is a good example of erosion.

The fourth mechanism, extension, is concerned with context generalization; it is about what happens once the word is contextually reanalyzed. After a word has taken on a new context-dependent use, it can start to enter the language system as a change and extend its horizon as a functional word.

For instance, the grammaticalization of the above future marker might have first happened in certain particular contexts. One can imagine (hypothetically) that it might have been first grammaticalized in first-person constructions, but once it was reanalyzed it would have spread to other contexts like second and third person. This would be extension, the expansion of the horizon in which the form appears.

These four mechanisms involved in grammaticalization, suggested by Heine and Kuteva (2002: 2), have been discussed above in some detail. However, there are some other mechanisms that are mentioned by Hopper.

Hopper (1991: 22) suggested five mechanisms: layering, divergence, specialization, persistence, and decategorialization. Four of these are discussed below (decategorialization has already been dealt with above). Layering refers to the fact “within a broad functional domain new layers are continually emerging. As this happens, the older layers are not necessarily discarded, but remain to co-exist with and interact with the newer layers” (Hopper 1991: 22).

The second principle, divergence, refers to the fact that once a lexical item has undergone grammaticalization, the original form (the source) may live on as an independent element in the language and autonomously take part in general linguistic developments, such as the regular sound changes affecting any lexical item (Hopper 1991: 24). This principle may result in polysemous forms in the language.

His third principle, specialization, indicates the loss of choice that occurs when grammaticalization takes place (Hopper 1991: 25-26). At a certain stage of language change, a variety of forms may exist, with slightly different semantics. When grammaticalization takes place this semantic range may be narrowed, so that the morpheme assumes a clearly defined, well-profiled grammatical meaning.

The fourth principle, persistence, relates the grammaticalized item to its former lexical meaning: traces of the original lexical meaning may continue to adhere to the grammaticalized item (Hopper 1991: 28).

Thus far I have discussed the mechanisms that are involved in grammaticalization. However, there is a debate regarding whether these mechanisms are unique to grammaticalization. As Campbell (2004: 296) notes, they are arguably part of language change processes in general. That is why he claims that “semantic bleaching (also called fading, weakening) should perhaps not be seen as a special attribute of grammaticalization [but] as just regular semantic change in action” (2004: 296).

A similar point can be made regarding the status of phonological reduction. Here it is better to present a direct quotation from Campbell (2004: 297): “The phonological reduction which many associate with grammaticalization is also best not seen as unique to grammaticalization, but as normal phonological change. Phonological reduction processes apply to items of the appropriate phonological character generally in a language, not just to certain items which happen to be involved in processes of grammaticalization”.

Thus grammaticalization processes involve phonological reduction and semantic bleaching. But not every case of phonological reduction and semantic bleaching is a result of grammaticalization.

In this thesis I will basically follow Heine and Kuteva (2000:2), according to whom (as mentioned) there are four processes that the word undergoes while moving towards a grammaticalized morpheme. But these four processes cannot be considered either as unique or as necessary to grammaticalization. In particular, a word can be grammaticalized without undergoing reduction in phonological substance.

### **2.3. The Theoretical Status of Grammaticalization**

From the beginning of the current boom up in grammaticalization studies, there has been skepticism regarding the status of grammaticalization. Scholars in the field note that this is primarily because grammaticalization is a change that relies definitionally on semantic bleaching, phonological reduction, and reanalysis. These changes, however, all have their own independent status. Semantic bleaching is a common kind of diachronic change, as is phonological reduction. Reanalysis is a major process underlying most morphological changes. None of these is unique to grammaticalization. Thus grammaticalization is a kind of “basket”

that contains these and other changes typically happening in a chained manner, with semantic bleaching coming first.

It is useful to conclude the discussion of section 2.1 with a quote from Heine and Kuteva: “Grammaticalization is defined as the development from lexical to grammatical forms and from grammatical to even more grammatical forms. Since the development of grammatical forms is not independent of the constructions to which they belong, the study of grammaticalization is also concerned with constructions and with even larger discourse segments. In accordance with the definition, grammaticalization theory is concerned with the genesis and development of grammatical forms. Its primary goal is to describe how grammatical forms and constructions arise and develop through space and time, and to explain why they are structured the way they are” (Heine and Kuteva 2002: 2).

#### **2.4. Copulas and their Encoding Strategy**

Of the major classes of words that arise through grammaticalization in languages, the copula stands out as a notable example.

In many languages the copula is a special kind of verb that plays the role of connecting the subject of the sentence with some sort of non-verbal predicate, mostly in intransitive predicate constructions (Jedi 1996). Copulas often also have the role of carrying verbal inflectional categories to denote tense, aspect, number and person. But verbal status is not mandatory for copulas (Stassen 1997: 62).

From a typological point of view there are two major kinds of copula encoding strategies in the world: zero copula and full copula. According to Stassen (1997: 62) and Regina (2003), zero copula refers to an encoding strategy in which the relation between a non-verbal predicate and its subject is expressed only through the juxtaposition of its constituents. The term suggests that, in languages with zero copula encoding of non-verbal predicate sentences, there is some phonologically null copula present in the syntax of these sentences, or, alternatively, that there is something corresponding to a copula in the conceptual/semantic structure underlying predicate nominal sentences in these languages. In the other strategy, the full copula encoding strategy, an overt lexical item expresses the relation between the two constituents, subject and predicate. From a typological point of view the zero copula encoding strategy is widely applied

in nominal sentences especially in the present tense and with third person subject. In other cases a full copula is used in many languages.

In languages with a full copula encoding strategy the copulas can be of various types: some copulas show the behavior of verbs, but others not (Stassen 1997: 76). Payne (1997: 114) distinguishes four types of non-zero copular elements: verbal copula, pronoun copula, particle copula and derivational operational morphemes that are used as a copula.

Verbal copulas are copulas that have the properties of verbs. They inflect for agreement as lexical verb forms do. The other three types – pronominal copula (also called pro-copula), particle copula and derivational operational morphemes – do not show any syntactic or morphological similarity with verbs and hence are known as non-verbal copulas. Such copulas widely arise through grammaticalization from other elements (like focus) that exist in the language.

Pronominal copulas are mostly grammaticalized from personal and demonstrative pronouns in a construction of “X this/him Y” (Stassen 1999: 77). Particle copulas, on the other hand, do not usually have one defined specific source; rather, they are ultimately rooted in various discourse-oriented categories having to do with the information structure of the sentence, such as topicalization, backgrounding, contrastive focus, or foregrounding (Stassen 1999: 77). The simplest way to characterize them is simply to observe that they are not derived from pronouns. Derivational copulas are copulas that have grammaticalized from derivational morphemes. They are not our concern here and thus will be left aside.

Having said the above, one point still needs mentioning. Depending on the degree these non-verbal elements are grammaticalized, identifying their source can be easier or harder. At the early stages of grammaticalization their source can be easily seen. But as time goes on, they will start to lose their previous properties and take on the properties of verbs. In some cases they may assume the morphosyntactic properties of verbs to such a degree that no one could ever guess what their ultimate source was.

In this thesis the different copula types and their grammaticalization patterns in Ometo languages will be discussed in detail. The languages differ significantly from each other in their copula encoding strategies: some of them use a full copula whereas others prefer a zero copula. Examples 1a and b illustrate a full copula (*-tte*, *-kko*), whereas example 2 illustrates zero copula.

1a. **Dawuro**

ʔa ʔuruuto - **tte**

she:Nom Hirut -Cop

She is Hirut.

b. **Gamo**

ʔiza ʔuruto- **kko**

she:Nom Hirut -Cop

She is Hirut.

2. **Wolaytta**

ʔiza Hiruut

she:Nom Hirut

She is Hirut.

(Hiruts 2003: 240)

## Chapter Three

### 3. Copula Constructions in Ometo

#### 3.1. General Considerations

In this chapter the copula system of the Ometo subgroup is discussed. Every predicate structure of non-verbal sentences in each of the languages is demonstrated with the exception of Ochollo, since it is a dialect of Gamo, and Oyda from North Ometo (cf. Hirut 2004), Basketto from West Ometo, Kanchama from East Ometo, and Gofa from North Ometo, due to shortage of data. However, before jumping directly to non-verbal constructions in Ometo, there are basic concepts and terms that must first be dealt with.

The domain of predication concerns two semantic subtypes. First, there are predicates that express events (an action, state or process). Such predicates are prototypically encoded by verbs; thus event predication is typically verbal predication. The second type refers to a property, a class or a location. Such predications are often verbless and are referred to as non-verbal predicates.

These non-verbal clauses express such relations as proper inclusion or identification, attribution, equation, location, existence, and possession. Any such construction where the predicate is a nominal (not an adverb or an adpositional phrase) can be called a nominal predicate. Attributive predicates are called adjectival; those related to location are locational; and those related to existence are called existential. Similarly, non-verbal possessive predicates are called possession clauses.

Nominal clauses are clauses in which nominals play the predication role. As mentioned above, there are different types of nominal predicates, of which equative or identificational clauses are notable.

Equative non-verbal predicates are clauses where two entities are equated with each other. In English equatives are expressed using the copular verb “to be”.

Example: Susan is our president.

The above example equates the two nominals, here Susan and president. These clauses are also called identification sentences, since they serve to identify or pick out the subject referentially from among other candidate elements.

According to Payne (1997: 114), proper inclusion or identification is a nominal construction that specifies an entity as being among the class of items specified by the nominal predicate.

Example: He is a teacher.

In predicate adjective clauses the main semantic content is expressed by an adjective. Such sentences are called attributive clauses.

Example: The book is blue.

John is black.

Existential predicate clauses are predicates that express the existence of an entity somewhere. These constructions typically require a locational or temporal adjunct.

Example: There is a book on the table.

Locational predicate clauses are constructions involving a predicate of location. This type of construction serves to identify or express the location of a certain entity.

Example: The book is on the table.

In this chapter I discuss the non-verbal predicate constructions in the subfamilies of Ometo.

## 3.2. Northern Ometo

### 3.2.1. Wolaytta

According to Azeb Amha (2007a:100), a non-verbal predicate in Wolaytta can be a noun, an adjective, a pronoun or a demonstrative. But with the exception of locational and interrogative sentences (see below), non-verbal sentences do not take a copula at all; rather, they indicate the relation purely by subject-predicate word order and inflectional properties like the case of the copula's subject and predicate. This is illustrated in example (3).

3a. mehe        miišša  
cattle:Nom money:Acc  
Cattle is money. ( i.e. it is valuable)

b. ʔa            gade            gita  
3Msg:Gen farm/land:Nom big:Acc  
His farm is big.

c. man-i        ʔa  
Mana-M:Nom 3Msg:Acc  
He is Mana.                    (Mana is a proper noun)

d. kaiso-y            haga  
 thief-M:Nom this:Acc  
 This is the thief. (lit. 'the thief is this') (Azeb 2007a: 101)

e. ha bitann-ey adussa  
 that man-Nom tall  
 That man is tall. (Lamberti and Sottile 1997: 225)

The subject-predicate order in non-verbal sentences is quite strict. Any change in the word order brings a change in case marking and the predicational relation (Azeb 2007a: 101).

The surface structure of non-verbal nominal constructions is superficially similar to that of possessive and compound nouns. It is the case marking that distinguishes non-verbal clauses from these other constructions. According to Azeb (2007a: 101), a noun which is the subject of a nominal sentence appears in nominative case, while a predicative nominal appears in accusative form. This difference can be seen from the following examples.

#### **Possessive construction**

4. geleššyó      wozaná-y  
 baboon:Acc heart:Nom  
 baboon's heart (Azeb 2007a:102)

#### **Compound nouns**

5. haittä            tukké            č'amó  
 ear/leaves:Acc coffee:Nom bitter:Acc  
 Coffee made from coffee leaves is bitter. (Azeb 2007a:102)

#### **Non-verbal predicate constructions**

6. hagee            zalʔ - anč - aa  
 this:M:Nom trade-Nmz-M:Acc  
 This (M) is the trader.

7. hanna            zalʔ-anč -iyo  
 this:F:Nom trade-Nmz-F:Acc  
 This (F) is the trader. (Azeb 2007a:101)

As the above examples show, there is generally no overt copular element to relate the two nominals that appear as subject and predicate. Rather, the two constituents are related only

through the case marking and the subject-predicate word order. However, there are two exceptions: adverbial predicates, and the predicate nominal in interrogative sentences. With adverbial predicates the predicate is marked by the copular particle *-a*.

8. naʔá-y            soó - n - a  
 child-M:Nom house:Acc-Loc-Cop  
 The boy is in the house. (Azeb 2007a:110)

9. haga            maná-ss-a  
 this:M:Nom Mana-Dat-Cop  
 This is for Mana. (Azeb 2007a:108)

In interrogative constructions the nominal predicate is marked with one of the two interrogative copular morphemes *-éé* or *-íí* (these morphemes do not appear with interrogative *verbs*, which have their own special inflectional paradigms; see Lamberti and Sottile 1997:181ff.). According to Azeb (2007a: 108), *-éé* can always be used irrespective of definiteness and number, whereas *-íí* is used as an alternative for feminine gender in definite constructions.

- 10a. hageé            ne    ʔíš-éé?  
 this:M:Nom 2sg brother-Cop  
 Is this your brother?

- b. hageé            zalʔ-ánč-éé ?  
 this:M:Nom trade-Nmz-Q  
 Is this one (M) a trader?

- c. hanná            ne    mičč-ii?  
 this:F:Nom 2sg sister-F:Cop  
 Is this one (F) your sister? (Azeb 2007a:101)

The present or past tense of non-verbal clauses is expressed only through temporal adverbs: *haʔʔi* ‘now’ and *kase* ‘in the past’ as shown in the examples below.

- 11a. hagee            kase zalʔ-ančaa  
 this:M: Nom Past trade-Nmz:M:Acc  
 This (M) was the trader.

b. hanna haʔʔi zalʔ- anč - iyo  
this:F:Nom now trade-Nmz-F:Acc

This (F) is the trader.

(Azeb 2007a: 101)

Existential predicates are formed using the existential verb form *deʔ*- “exist”.

12. ʔ- i deʔ- é- e- s

he-Nom exist-Agr-Impf-Agr:Decl

He exists.

(personal knowledge)

According to Aklilu, locative constructions (as in example (13)) use the locative marker *-n* and the above existential verb (though cf. example (8) without any verb, as given by Azeb).

13. ʔ-i soo- n deʔ- é - e - s

he-Nom home-Loc exist-Agr-Impf-Agr:Decl

He is at home.

(Aklilu 2010: 43)

Possessive constructions are made using the dative case marker and the above existential verb.

14. kuto - y ta - w deʔ - é - e - s

chicken-Nom I-Dat exist-Agr-Impf-Agr:Decl

I have a chicken. (lit. chicken to-me exists)

(Aklilu 2010: 44)

The negative construction of the above nominal sentences is formed either by attaching the negative markers *-kk-* or *-nn-*, depending on the person of the subject, or by a zero morpheme in the existential verb form or by using the negative existential verb *baa*.

15a. ʔ- i soo- n deʔ- é - ø - nn - a

he-Nom home-Loc exist-Agr-Impf-Neg-Agr:Decl

He is not at home.

b. ʔ- i soo- n baa

he-Nom home-Loc not.exist:Decl

He is not at home.

16a. kuto-y ta - w deʔ - é - ø - nn - a

chicken-Nom I-Dat exist-Agr-Impf-Neg-Agr:Decl

I do not have a chicken.

b. kuto-y            ta-w    baa  
 chicken-Nom I-Dat not.exist:Decl

I do not have a chicken.

(Aklilu 2010:44)

### 3.2.2. Gamo

In Gamo a non-verbal predicate can be a noun, adjective or preposition (Hirut 1999: 122). The copula verb in identificational or adjectival clauses has zero form; the sentence contains only the subject and its complement, in fixed subject-predicate order. As is true for Wolaytta, here also the case marking of the predicate implies the direction of the predicational relation. (Examples a, b, c and d are from Hirut (1999), whereas example e is my own.)

17a. izi    astemare  
 he    teacher:Nom  
 He is a teacher.

b. taani mino  
 I:Nom strong  
 I am strong.

c. izi daro loʔo  
 he    very    good  
 He is very good.

d. abebe kayso  
 abebe thief  
 Abebe is a thief.

(Hirut 1999: 122-123)

e. haysi ta k'antsa  
 this my stomach  
 This is my stomach.

(Example (e) is my own)

However, previous research works on the language indicate that there is an overt copula element, *-kko*, which is used in such positions (Hompó Éva 1990: 390). According to Éva, Gamo uses *-kko* in present tense affirmative sentences, attaching it to a noun or an adjective in the object case. In interrogative and past affirmative sentences it is optional.

18. zallʔančai        gene        asi-ko  
 merchant:Nom cunning    man-be  
 Merchants are cunning people.

(Éva 1990:390)

But Hirut (1999: 124) claims that the primary function of *-kko* is not what Éva proposes. Rather, the form appears only when the speaker wants to emphasize the predicate form; otherwise the construction is formed without a copula (see Hirut 1999: 123).

As mentioned above, in identificational non-verbal sentences the language has no overt copula; but in adjectival predicates, one of the dialects of Gamo — Ochollo, spoken near Lake Abaya

north of Arba Minch between the River Kulfo and Meraab Abaya Woreda — consistently applies the morpheme *-k*, which is the shortened form of *-kko*, as a copula.

19. mac'a-y-a            ʔeʔ- i- r-a            k'an-tsa- **k**

woman-Def-Nom stand-3F-Past-Rel short-Pf-is

The woman who is standing is short.

(Binyam Tibebu 2003:30)

The same is true in Dorze, which is also probably a dialect of Gamo. In this language nominal predicate sentences are formed without an overt copula element; but when a sentence takes an adjective as its predicate it necessarily applies *-k* as its copula.

20a. ade-za    kansa-**k**

man-Def short-is

The man is short.

b. naa-y    loʔo-**k**

boy-Nom good-is

The boy is good.

(my own field notes)

The present tense identification clause in Gamo and its two dialects, Ochollo and Dorze, has a zero copula, while in other forms these languages use a full copula – notably in past forms of declarative sentences, in interrogatives and in locational non-verbal sentences. In the past, declarative nominal clauses are marked with the morpheme *-šin*, with a form that (according to Hirut) has a meaning equivalent to “was/were...but...” (Hirut 1999:124). In order to produce an acceptable construction the speaker is expected to attach the present state of the entity he is talking about in relation to its past state.

21. iza astemare - šin haʔi wotader

he teacher - was now soldier

He was a teacher but now he is a soldier.

Gamo optionally encodes locational predicates using a zero copula, as shown in the following example.

22. izi ketsa gido-n

he house inside-with-Cop

He is inside the house.

(Hirut 1999:125)

In existential clauses, as well as other constructions (locational and possessive) that are expressed with an existential, Gamo optionally uses the existential verb *deʔ* as a copula. This existential verb inflects for verbal categories like number and person. According to Hirut (1999: 125), the complement of this verb is a postpositional phrase, here involving the compound postposition *gido-n* “with inside”, and the existential verb is used as copula.

23. izi ketsa gido-n deʔ-es  
 he house inside-with exist-pro

He is inside the house. (Hirut 1999:125)

Locational constructions can either be constructed using the emphatic element *-kko*, or can be formed without the existential or emphatic copula morpheme, as shown in examples (23) and (24a and b) below.

24a. iz- a ketsa-n kko  
 she-Nom house-in be  
 She is in the house.

b. izet-i ketsa gido-n  
 they-Nom house inside-with  
 They are in the house. (Hirut 1999:125)

Here again one point should be clear to the reader. The element *-kko* (in 24a) is used to mark constituents that are emphasized in the sentence. But at the same time it also has the role of relating the subject and the copula complement in the language. For instance, in the sentence given above there is no other verb in the construction. The place of the verb is taken by the emphatic element *-kko*, which is playing the role of the copular verb.

According to Binyam Sisay (2010: 4), the element *-kko* serves as an assertive focus marker in the two eastern Ometo languages Haro and Koorete. In these languages the element co-occurs with past and future non-verbal copular elements, which shows that the form in the two eastern Ometo languages has grammaticalized fully into a focus marker. In Gamo and its dialects, Ochollo and Dorze, *-kko* may similarly co-occur (optionally) with the past copula *šin*.

25a. ta kase ʔastemare šin  
 I before teacher was  
 I was a teacher before.

b. ta kase ʔastemare-**kko** šin

I before teacher-Cop was

I was a teacher before.

But the case is different in the ‘becoming’ construction. Here the emphatic element *-kko* of Gamo never occurs (at least in the sentences I have seen). In Gamo, for ‘becoming’ sentences, the verb *gid-* is used, which literally means ‘become’. It inflects for person and tense. The complement used with this verb can be a noun or an adjective (Hirut 1999:127).

26. darot-i      kayso    gid-i-d-es

darota-Nom thief    become-Pro-Past-Pro

Darota became a thief.

In *Wh-* Interrogative non-verbal sentences (both identificational and locational) either *-nee* or *-no* is used as a copula as noted by Hirut (1999: 136).

27a. iza awa-nee

she where-is

Which one is she?

b. iza awa-no

she where-is

Which one is she? (Both forms are possible.)

The negative non-verbal clause is formed by suffixing negative verb markers *-nn-* and *-kk-* to the verb stems *d-* and *gid-*. The negative marker *-nn-* is usually used with third person singular forms, whereas *-kk-* is used elsewhere.

28a. izi gabare de-nna

he farmer be-Neg

He is not a farmer.

b. ta ʔastemare gid-ikke

I teacher    become-Neg

I am/will not be a teacher.

(my own examples)

### 3.2.3. Dawuro

According to Allan (1976:338), in Dawuro present–tense adjectival and nominal constructions are made without an overt lexical copula, as shown below.

29a. tan-i gabare  
I-Nom farmer  
I am a farmer.

b. tan-i loʔo  
I-Nom nice  
I am nice.

(Allan 1976:338)

Irrespective of the type of the sentence, a zero copula is used only in affirmative present-tense forms. In the past and future, *šin* and *gid-* are used respectively.

30a. ta gabare šin  
I farmer was  
I was a farmer.

b. ta gabare gid- ana  
I farmer become-Fut.  
I will be a farmer.

(Allan 1976: 339)

c. hini naʔa - y loʔo  
that boy:M-Nom good  
That boy is good.

(Hirut 2006/07: 87)

Existential constructions are formed using the existential verb *deʔ*.

31. a soo-n deʔ-eau  
she house-Loc exist-Agr  
She is in the house.

(Hirut 2006/07: 87)

The negative form of non-verbal sentences is formed by suffixing the negation markers of the language *-kke* and *-nna* to the verbs *gid-* and *deʔ* depending on the person of the subject. Usually the negative marker *-nna* is used with third person singular forms.

32. ta-ni gabare gid-ike  
I-Nom farmer become-Neg.  
I will not be a farmer.

(Allan 1976: 339)

### 3.2.4. Maalo

According to Maheder Tesfu (2003: 87), Maalo does not have an overt lexical item in affirmative present tense non-verbal sentences.

33a. ta wotadare  
I soldier  
I am a soldier.

b. iza yegelsa  
she charm  
She is charming.

As with other northern Ometo languages, here also the relation between the subject and complement is expressed through the subject-predicate word order and case suffixes. In past affirmative sentences a morpheme *zin* is used:

34. e manko zin  
he poor Past  
He was poor.

(Maheder Tesfu 2003: 88)

Negative non-verbal sentences are formed by using the negative verb *baa*.

35. ta wotadare baa  
I soldier Neg:exist  
I am not a soldier.

In perfective (past) sentences the same verb *baa* is used.

36. e doktore baa zin  
he doctor Neg:exist Past.  
He was not a doctor.

In interrogative non-verbal sentences it is intonation that serves as the means of expressing the interrogative relation between the subject and its complement. In this language there is no overt lexical item that plays the role of interrogative copula.

37. ta wotadare  
I soldier  
Am I a soldier?

In the interrogative non-verbal construction, the subject-predicate order of the constituents in the affirmative declarative sentence is not changed. It is only the intonation pattern in which the sentence is uttered, a change from level to rising intonation, which marks the question. The

negative interrogative construction is formed simply by suffixing the negative morpheme *baa* in the same position as in negative declarative sentences.

A final point in the construction for possession ('have'), which is formed using the existential verb *yese*- "exist" (Maheder Tesfu 2003: 85).

### 3.3. Eastern Ometo

#### 3.3.1. Zaysse

In Zaysse non-verbal sentences can be nominal or adjectival. According to Hayward (1990: 280), the affirmative copula in Zaysse is *-tte*, which is an enclitic element that sometimes appears in a shortened form *-te*.

38a. so[j] modo-tte

that beer-Cop

That is beer.

b. ʔi solloi loʔo-tte

her bread good-Cop

Her bread is good.

(Hayward 1990: 280)

There seems to be no special form for negative constructions. The negative locative existential verb *baʔe* / *baʔa* is used in negative declarative sentences.

39a. ne[j] wootas' baʔe

you farmer not

you are not a farmer.

b. só[j] ʔogé baʔé

that road not

That is not a road.

(Hayward 1990: 282)

In the past tense *-šin* is suffixed to *-tte* or *baʔa*.

40a. ʔesi loʔo ʔasu-tte-šin

he good man-Cop-Past

He was a good man.

b. ʔisi ʔiita biššo baʔa- šin

she bad girl not-Past

She was not a bad girl.

(Hayward 1990:282)

In interrogative constructions the language uses *wa-* as its copula.

41. só[j] garm- wa

that lion-Cop

Is that a lion?

Existential and locational non-verbal clauses are formed using the existential verb form *yes-a* followed by a copula (Bender 2002: 71).

42. ats-i kara yes-atte

person-Nom house exist-Cop

There is a person in the house. (lit. person house exist)

In locational clauses the affirmative copula is attached to the postpositional phrase serving as complement.

43. ʔota ʔoommo-tte-s-en

water.pot:Gen underpart-Cop-3M-Fpm

It is under the water pot that it is.

Possessive constructions are formed using the existential verb *yes-*, again followed by a copula:

44a. taa-ro yes-ate

I-Dat exist-Cop

I have. (lit. I-to exist)

b. ne-ro wiillo yes-atte

you-Dat horse exist-Cop

You have a horse.

(Bender 2002: 71)

### 3.3.2. Zargulla

According to Azeb Amha (2006, 2007b and 2008), the above enclitic copula of Zaysse also exists in Zargulla. Zargulla has the same form *-tte*, together with the variant *-tta*; *-tte* is masculine, *-tta* is feminine (Azeb 2009: 14). Thus:

45a. hai ta maats-u-tta

this 1sg:Gen thing-Eph-Cop

This is mine.

b. paranj-ede      ʔumma-y boots-u-tta  
 westerner-man hair-Nom white-Eph-Cop  
 The hair of westerners is white.

c. ʔesi            tulle-tte  
 3Ms:Nom deaf –Cop

He is deaf. (Azeb Amha 2010: 6-7)

The gender difference can be easily seen in the following examples:

46a. ha    ʔiso-y    s'eena-ade-tta                    ʔaala-so-is    hakime-so yeede  
 this 3F-Nom health-father.Acc-Cop why-Loc-F    doctor-Loc    come:Past  
 This one (f) is healthy. Why did she come to the clinic? (Feminine)

b. ha    ʔis-i      s'eena-ade-tte                    ʔaala-so-s    hakime-so yeede  
 this 3M-Nom health-father.Acc-Cop why-Loc-M doctor-Loc come:Past  
 This one (m) is healthy. Why did he come to the clinic? (Masculine)

According to Azeb (2008:43), it is only in non-past affirmative sentences that the two variants are used. In the past *yess* is used.

47a. ʔeerss yess-inna      baye ta    ham-ess-i            alamu-so  
 small be:past-Temp Neg. I    go-Pf-Rel.Nom Alemu-place  
 Wasn't it when I was small that I went to Alemu's house?

b. kete      keetsi            gid-i-s-i                    malo-i      yesa  
 earlier    house:Acc    happen-Pf-Rel-Nom    stone-Nom    exist  
 Earlier there was a stone as big as a house. (Azeb 2008: 43)

In interrogative constructions the same element *-wa* is used as in Zaysse (Azeb Amha 2007b, 2008):

48. ta manko-wa  
 I poor-Cop  
 Am I poor?

In non-verbal negative sentences the same form *baa ʔa* as in Zaysse.

49. tai mank' baaʔa

I poor Neg:be

I am not poor.

(Azeb Amha 2007b: 209).

### 3.3.3. Koorete

In Koorete non-verbal sentences with both nominal and adjectival predicates are marked by the element *-kko*.

50a. doro atsho-i modhe-kko

sheep meat-Nom good-Cop

'Sheep's meat (mutton) is good.'

(Binyam 2008:51)

b. se naʔ-i nundo naʔu-kko

that boy-Nom our mother.boy-Cop

That boy is my brother.

(Beletu Reda 2003: 51)

According to Beletu (2003: 50), there is another morpheme which has a similar distribution to the affirmative copula *-kko*. This morpheme, *-sso*, appears in 1sg, 3ms, 2<sup>nd</sup> person polite forms and in 3<sup>rd</sup> person plural, while *-kko* occurs with the other persons, so that the two morphemes are in complementary distribution. The only examples I found involve a compound verb tense that includes the copula:

51a. han - d - ø - nna - kko

go-Pf-Past-2sg-Cop

You went.

b. han - d- o - ø- sso

go-Pf -Past-1sg-Cop

I went.

As noted in Bender (2000: 70), the shortened variant of the copula *-kko*, which is *-ko*, occurs with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> singular and 2<sup>nd</sup> plural pronoun forms. Otherwise the full form of the copula appears.

52a. tamm-kko

we-Cop

We are.

b. nent-ko  
you-Cop  
You are.

In interrogative constructions the copular morpheme *-na* is used.

53. ʔoo-na  
who-Cop  
Who is it? (Bender 2000:70)

Negative non-verbal constructions use the verb of becoming *mmak'*-, which literally means 'become, happen', to attach the negative marker.

54. neni hata maak'- wana-kko  
you short become- 2sg:Neg.Impf-Cop  
You are not short. (Bender 2000: 70)

“There is another irregular locative existential verb *yes-* which behaves as a ... verb” (Bender 2000: 70).

55. hareg-y suutše-ka yese  
disease-Nom blood-Loc exist  
There is a disease in the blood.

The language has a suppletive negative verb *ba-*, which may inflect or may be used in the invariant form *ba-ssō*. Also there is a non-clitic copula *ewwa* 'I am, it is' etc., used to affirm statements made by another speaker in a dialogue (Bender 2000: 70).

### 3.3.4. Haro

Non-verbal declarative sentences are adjectival and nominal. In Haro such constructions do not have a copular verb (Hirut 2004: 185).

56a. ʔes-i kaati  
he -Nom chief/king  
He is a chief/king.  
b. deyssa - z - i moode  
goat-Def- nom fat  
The goat is fat. (Hirut 2004: 185)

When the predicative element occurs in contrastive focus the element *-kko* is added.

57. ʔes-i kaati-kko

he-Nom **chief/king**-Foc

He is a **chief/king**.

(Hirut 2004: 185)

Copular constructions in past and future are expressed via a verbal construction using *maak'* 'become' as a main verb carrying tense-aspect marking (Hirut 2004: 186).

58a. ʔis-i boza-kko ʔi-maak'-iss-e

she-Nom lazy-Foc 3Fs-become-Prog-Aff:Decl

She is becoming lazy.

b. ʔes - i kaati-kko ʔe-maak'-in-e

he -Nom chief/king-foc 3ms-become-Past-Aff:Decl

He was a chief/king. (lit. he became a king.)

c. ʔes-i kaati-kko ʔe-maak'-or- e

he -Nom chief/king-Foc 3ms-become-Fut-Aff:Decl

He will be a chief/king.

(Hirut 2004: 186)

The non-verbal *Wh*-question construction involves a question word that refers to the one whose identity is interrogated (Hirut 2004: 197).

59a. nen-i ʔoon-i

you-Nom who-Nom

Who are you?

b. ʔasa - i ʔoon-i

man-M.Def:Nom who-Nom

Who is the man?

The answer given to such a question adds the focus marker *-kko*.

60. tan-a-kko

I-Abs-Foc

It is me.

According to Hirut (2004: 198), in Haro the verb is the only element that can carry the negation marker. Thus, a negative sentence necessarily requires the presence of a verb. The language

uses the negative existential verb *b-* for the purpose of attaching the negative marker. In existential constructions the negative marker is *-á-*, which also occurs with other verbs.

61. ta ʔadda-si mišši b-á-wwa

1sg father-Dat cattle:Abs Cop:Neg-Neg-Neg:Decl

My father has/had no cattle.

(Hirut 2004:202)

The negation of 'being/becoming' is expressed by using the verb *maak'*, to which the negative marker *-á-* is attached (Hirut 2004: 202).

62. ʔis-i boza maak'-á-wwa

she-Nom lazy become-Neg.-Neg:Decl

She is not lazy/ she is not becoming lazy.

According to Hirut (2004: 202), in affirmative constructions (unlike negatives), being and becoming are expressed in different ways. Only in the state of becoming is the verb *maak'*; the state of being is expressed non-verbally, purely by syntactic order of the subject and predicate.

### 3.4. Southern Ometo (Maale)

In Maale, the single southern Ometo language, non-verbal affirmative sentences are marked by the element *-ke* (Azeb 2001: 117), as in the following constructions with adjectival and nominal predicates:

63a. hátsi was-a šimme-ke

now water-Nom cold:Abs-Be:Dcl

The water is cold now.

(Azeb 2001: 153)

b. hayi ta nayi- ke

this:Nom 1sg:Gen child:Abs-be:Dcl

This is my child.

(Azeb 2001: 153)

This marker would appear to be a straightforward copula, and in this thesis I will treat it as such. However, Azeb analyzes this element as a sentence-type marker (declarative affirmative) rather than as a copula, for three reasons: first, the form does not occur with non-declarative, non-positive sentences; second, it never appears in dependent clauses; and third, those constructions with *-ke* always express simple assertion (2001:153). The problem with this approach is that it sets up a false opposition: *either -ke* is a copula, *or* it is a sentence-type marker. But one can

easily see this as a copula which simultaneously has the function of indicating sentence-type (a kind of portmanteau). Just as many languages have an “interrogative copula” or a “negative copula”, so here we have an “affirmative declarative copula”. Support for this view comes from the fact that *-ke* only occurs in non-verbal sentences, and that in such sentences there is no other co-occurring marker which might be analyzed as being the “copula”, and that in negative non-verbal sentences the negative copula *t-* (see below) occurs instead of *-ke*. Indeed, Azeb’s own glossing reflects inconsistency over this point; *-ke* is glossed as “BE:A:DCL”, which must be “be. affirmative declarative”. (Hirut also treats Maale *-ke* as a copula in her dissertation (2004: 240).)

In Maale the negative copula constructions are strictly verbal: they require the existence of a full-fledged verb to which the negative marker will be attached. This is the predicative verb *t-* (Azeb’s term) as shown in the example below.

64a. kani-ke

dog - be:A:Dcl

It is/was a dog.

b. kani t - uwa - se

dog be-Ipf:Neg-N:Dcl

It is/was not a dog.

(Azeb 2001: 226)

Positive existential constructions are formed using the existential verb (*ʔá*, which means ‘to exist, be present’, whereas in negative existential sentences the verb is *ba-* (Azeb 2001: 227).

65a. miišše ʔa-a-ne

money:Nom exist-Impf-A:Dcl

There is /was money.

b. miišše ba-se

money:Nom Neg:exist-N:Dcl

There is/was no money.

(Azeb 2001: 227)

In nominal interrogative constructions the copular form *d-* occurs, in free variation with *z-* (Azeb 2001: 118, 121).

66a. ʔona d-a-y

who:Abs be-Impf-Q

Who is it?

(Azeb 2001: 221)

b. hayi ʔarsa d-a/z-a

this:Nom bed:Abs be-Impf:Q

Is this a bed?

(Azeb 2001: 221)

### 3.5. General Review of Copula Structure

So far, the non-verbal clauses of most of the Ometo languages have been presented descriptively. In this section the similarities and differences in copula encoding strategies will be discussed from a typological point of view.

From the above discussion, almost all of the northern languages and some of the eastern languages (for example Haro) use a zero copula encoding strategy in present tense affirmative non-verbal sentences, unless there is a focused element in the copula construction.

According to Stassen (1997: 75), many of the world's languages use a zero copula encoding strategy in present tense third-person predicative nominal sentences. In fact, in Ometo languages, the zero copula encoding strategy is used for all persons and for adjectival predicates too.

In present tense equative sentences the above languages use a zero copula. But this does not mean that these languages did not originally have a full copula in such constructions. There are traces in some languages that show there once was a copula in the present tense construction. (This can be seen, for instance, in the Dorze and Ochollo dialects of Gamo.)

Unlike the northern group, the eastern Ometo languages Zaysse, Zargulla and Koorete require the presence of a copula element in their present-tense affirmative non-verbal constructions. The same is arguably true of Maale, as discussed in section 3.3 above.

In past tense non-verbal constructions the eastern group usually prefers to use the past tense copula element *šin*, and they use the verb of becoming *maak'* for their future copula constructions. The northern Ometo languages use the forms *šin* and *gid-* (not *maak'*) for past and future respectively. In the eastern group the verb *maak'* has a more general function: it is

used to attach the negative markers in the languages regardless of tense. By contrast, the northern group prefers to use the equivalent *gid-/da-* to attach their negative markers. Regarding interrogative copula forms, eastern Ometo languages (except Koorete) use *-wa* as copula, while Gamo and Koorete use the form *-no/-nee* (Gamo) and *-na/-ne* (Koorete) as their interrogative copula. Wolaytta has the interrogative copulas *éé* and *ú*; Dawuro apparently has no special interrogative copula; in Maale *d-* and *z-* are used.

Across the group, negative non-verbal constructions are built using the existential verb *b-* as a carrier of the negative marker except in Maale, where negative constructions use a different form *t-*.

Zaysse, Zargulla, Maalo and Koorete have their own unique copulas; for example, Zaysse uses the existential verbs *yese* and *yene* (which is a present–future variant of *yese*) as copula in past and present tense respectively. Other Ometo languages do not have these forms. In addition Koorete has *-sso*, a special copula that is not attested in any of the other languages. The language uses it for 1st and 3<sup>rd</sup> masculine singular and 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural polite forms.

The Ometo copulas are summarized in the following table. A dashed line in the table indicates that I do not know or I am not sure about the form.

Function	Gamo(N)	Dawuro (N)	Wol. (N)	Malo(N)	Zaysse (E)	Zargulla(E)	Koorete (E)	Haro (E)	Maale (S)
Iden/Attr.	-kko	∅	∅	∅	-tte	-tte/-tta	-kko ~ -sso	∅, -kko	-ke
Existential	deʔ-	deʔ-	deʔ-	yese	yes-	yes-	yes-, yec-	---	ʔa-
Negative	bawa	bawa	bawa	baʔa	baʔa	baʔa	baʔa ?	baʔa	t-
Interrog.	-no, -nee	---	éé/íí	∅	-wa	-wa	-na, -ne ?	---	d-, z-
Past	šin	šin	---	zin	šin	yess	maak'- (carrier)	maak'- (carrier)	∅

Table 1: Copula Morphemes in Ometo

### 3.6. Focus Construction in Ometo

I conclude this data-oriented chapter with a general discussion of the focus structure of Ometo languages. The focus markers in the sub-group have a similar form, often an extension of the

copula. In this discussion I will examine only five languages: Gamo, Haro, Zaysse, Koorete, and Maale. The rest are not discussed here because of shortage of data.

Hyman and Watters (1984: 237) define focus as “that information in an utterance which the speaker believes, assumes, or knows that the hearer does not share with him/her.”

Languages can mark focus phonologically using stress and intonation, morphologically using different bound morphemes or free lexemes, and syntactically using clefts, pseudo-clefts, and changes in word order.

In most stress-accent languages, the focus is marked by moving the location of the main stress (Hyman and Watters 1984: 238) as shown in the examples given below.

Example: John ate his DINNER.

JOHN ate his dinner.

John ATE his dinner.

In languages where focus is marked morphologically, an affix or other morpheme is used for focus purposes. Morphological focus marking is a very common technique for focus marking in African languages and in languages where phonological focus marking is not sufficient. The focus marker can be attached to verbs or to other word classes, depending on the language. Thus in Aghem (West Africa):

m mɔ zi kibɛ no nɛ

I P<sub>1</sub> ate fufu FOC today

I ate FUFU today.

(Hyman and Watters 1984: 238)

It is common in languages to mark focus syntactically, notably via cleft, pseudo-cleft, and focus fronting. In addition to these some languages have a special position in the sentence for the focused element; in some languages this position is post-verbal, in others pre-verbal.

Cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions are constructions that remove the focused word from its basic position and move it either to the beginning or the end of the sentence.

Cleft: It was a CAR [that I bought \_\_\_\_ ].

Pseudo-cleft: [What I bought \_\_\_\_ ] was a CAR.

Ometo languages also use the above techniques to mark focus. I will discuss the focus system of some of the languages below.

### 3.6.1. Gamo

According to Wondimu Gaga (2010: 172), focus marking is treated in Gamo under the category of the verb because morphologically it is a part of the verb.

The language uses three distinct strategies to mark focus: word order, focus fronting, and a distinctive focus marker *-kko*. The language applies one of the above strategies or a combination of them to mark focus.

Based on the properties of the morphological focus marker, the dialects of Gamo are classified into two groups: Dittatstso, D'aac'etstso, Dookkotstso and K'uč'atto in one group, and Baltatstso and Garbansatstso in the other. In the first group the focus marker is optional, appears both in declarative affirmative and in negative clauses, and is attached at the end of the verb after all other functional categories. In the second group the focus marker is obligatory, appears only in affirmative declarative clauses, and is attached directly after the basic verb stem (so that it is followed by the other functional categories).

When we consider closely these differences between the Gamo dialects, we clearly see that the first group patterns like the Northern Omoto languages (Hirut 1999, Eva 1990) while the second group resembles Eastern Omoto (Hayward 1990, Baye 1994, Hirut 2004).

- 67a. iz-i      b-ee-s-(**kko**)  
he-Nom go-3Ms:Prog-Decl:Aff-Foc  
He is GOING. (Dittatstso)
- b. naa-z-d-ee-nn-a -(**kko**)  
child-Def:M-Nom:M exist-3Ms-Neg-3Ms-Foc  
The boy IS NOT HERE. (Dittatstso)
- c. es-i      ham-**kko**-si-n-e  
he-Nom go-Foc-3Ms-Prog-Decl:Aff  
He is GOING. (Garbansatstso)  
(Wondimu 2010: 174-175)

### 3.6.2. Haro

According to Hirut (2004: 212), in Haro, just like some of the Cushitic languages such as Somali, Dabarre, Rendile, and Afar, focus plays a crucial role in determining the syntactic shape



As is common in eastern Ometo (Zaysse, Zargulla, Koorete, etc.) there is always a focused constituent in a categorical statement of Haro (Hirut 2004: 218). When occurring independently out of context, the phrase that will occur in the focus domain is predictable from the structure of the sentence. This means that the focus system interacts with the syntax and what appears in the focus domain is determined by the sentence structure. Hence, a sentence in Haro has a default focus structure.

### 3.6.3. Zaysse

Zaysse marks the focused element with the copular morpheme *-tte*. In Hayward's analysis, the focused element is typically fronted, as in (72 a and b), so that the sentence often has the general appearance of a cleft.

- 72a. wóotaşu-tte yewe  
 farmer-Cop comes  
 It is a farmer who comes.
- b. wóotaşu-tte-t dem-in  
 farmer-Cop-1sg saw-Fpm  
 It was a farmer whom I saw.
- c. wóotaş demá-tte-t - in  
 farmer saw-Cop-1sg-Fpm  
 I SAW a farmer.

In Teshome Yimer's (1998: 38) presentation, by contrast, the focused element can optionally remain in-situ, still marked by *-tte*. Thus:

- 73a. astamo-tte [<sub>s</sub> garma wod-e- ssi]  
 astamo-Foc lion kill-Pf-Agr  
 It is **Astamo** who killed the lion.
- b. astamo-y torra-na i-mura-ga garma wod-attes-in  
 astamo-Nom spear-with the-forest-in lion kill- Foc:3Fs-Pf  
 Astamo **killed** a lion with a spear in the forest.
- c. astamo-y torra-na i-mura-ga garma-tt-es wod-in  
 astamo-Nom spear-with the-forest-in lion-Foc-3Ms kill-Pf  
 Astamo killed a **lion** with a spear.

d. astamo-y      torra-na      i-mura-ga-tt-es      garma wod-in  
 astamo-Nom spear-with the-forest-in-Foc-3Ms lion kill-Pf  
 Astamo killed a lion with a spear in **the forest**.

e. astamo-y      torra-na-tte-s      i-mura-ga      garma wod-in  
 astamo-Nom spear-with-Foc-3ms the-forest-in lion kill-Pf  
 Astamo killed a lion **with a spear** in the forest.

Based on such data, Teshome disputes Hayward's analysis.

### 3.6.4. Koorete

In Koorete focus is morphologically marked and interacts with aspect/tense and sentence type (Binyam 2008:164). There are two morphologically marked focus types in the language: assertive focus (AFoc) and contrastive focus (CFoc). The first is marked by *-ko* in declarative sentences and by *-a* in interrogative sentences, while contrastive focus uses *-ma* but only in declarative constructions. Examples for assertive focus are given below.

74. a. adure -i      lukko-ko      muu-d-o  
 cat - Nom    hen-AFoc:Decl    eat-Pf-PAi  
 A cat ate a **HEN**.

b. adure-i      lukku - w - a      muu - d - o  
 cat-Nom    hen - Epn - AFoc:Decl    eat - Pf - PAi  
 Did a cat eat a **HEN**?

(Binyam 2008:178)

In the language assertive focus is grammatically and pragmatically controlled (see Binyam 2008 for detail discussion).

Regarding contrastive focus in the language, it is marked using the morpheme *-ma* and unlike assertive focus, it is always pragmatically controlled. However, the morpheme only occurs in declarative constructions. Examples of contrastive focus are given below.

75a. garma - i      tolko-ma      good-d-o  
 lion-Nom    hyena-CFoc    chase-PF-PAi  
 A lion chased **A HYENA**.

b. garma-ma      tolko      good-d-a  
 lion - CFoc    hyena    chase-Pf-Rel  
**A LION** chased a hyena.

(Binyam 2008:185)

### 3.6.5. Maale

My source on Maale only discusses the realization of focus marker using word order. In Maale, when a subject or any other element is focused, it is moved to immediately pre-verbal position (Azeb 2001: 248).

76a. ʔííní      laal-éll-ó-m      **deeša**      ʔing-é-ne  
3Ms:Nom woman-F-Abs-Dat    medicine:Abs    give -Pf-A:Decl

ʔála      ʔing-íbá-se

beer:Abs    give-Pf: Neg-N:Decl

He gave MEDICINE to the woman. He did not give her beer.

b. ʔííní      deeša      **laal-éll-ó-m**      ʔing-é-ne

3Ms:Nom medicine:Abs woman-F-Abs-Dat    give-Pf-A: Decl

taa-m    ʔing-íbá-se

1sg-Dat    give-Pf:Neg-N:Decl

He gave medicine to the WOMAN. (lit. He did not give it to me.)

Clefting is also a commonly used strategy in Maale (Azeb 2001: 249).

77a. ʔíza-ke      néná      ʔeell-e-tsi  
3Ms:Abs-be 2sg:Abs    call-Pf-Nmz

It is he who called you.

b. néná-ke      ʔízi      ʔeell-e-tsi

2sg:Abs-be 3Ms: Nom    call-Pf-Nmz

It is you who he called.

c. ʔízi      muk-e-tsi      ziginó      t-uwá-se

3Ms:Nom come-Pf:Rel-Nmz yesterday    be-Impf:Neg-N:Decl

It is not yesterday that he came. (lit. When he came is not yesterday.)

## Chapter Four

### 4. The Grammaticalization of Copula Markers

In this chapter a proposal will be presented for the history of the affirmative copula markers *-tte* and *-kko* of eastern and northern Ometo. There has been a debate among scholars regarding the status and source of these morphemes. Azeb Amha (2007a:108) proposed that these morphemes might be borrowed from the neighboring Highland East Cushitic languages. This is due to the presence of similar morphemes in Highland East Cushitic languages; for example, Gedeo [Darasa] has copula suffixes *-ke-n* (M), *-te-n* (F) (Hudson 1976:274). But the argument is weak, since we have a clear source for the morphemes in Omotic as discussed in this chapter. It is simpler to use a family-internal explanation (if available) than to assume the borrowing of grammatical morphemes, which tends to be difficult and unusual. In addition, the resemblance between Ometo and Highland East Cushitic copulas might be a result of independent parallel development or contact-induced parallel development; or perhaps Highland East Cushitic borrowed the morphemes from Ometo?

In other work Richard Hayward (1989) has analyzed the two forms as gender-sensitive copulas in proto-Ometo, *-tte* serving as a feminine and *-kko* as a masculine copula. According to his argument, the two languages Zaysse and Koorete have different default genders, and have chosen *-tte* or *-kko* as their (unique) copula accordingly. First of all his argument fails to account for the Meto dialect of Dawuro where the default gender is masculine but the copula is *-tte*. According to his argument, the form the language should have had as its copula is *-kko*. Secondly, when we closely consider the distribution of the two copula elements we see that in languages where *-tte* still serves as a copula there is no *-kko* in any function, but in languages whose copula is *-kko* there is a remnant of *-tte* either serving as a discourse marker or emphatic element. Based on this distributional difference I can propose that the forms have developed at different times under different conditions. For the moment I will concentrate on a late stage of proto-Ometo, where the copulas already existed as copulas; later in this chapter I will examine the earlier grammaticalization of these copulas from existentials. In this late stage, then, both the forms existed having the role of a copula: *-tte* (with its variant *-tta*) for singular masculine and feminine subjects respectively and *-kko* for plural subjects. In later developments, when the proto-language split up, they still existed in the same function. After the split-up, the singular morpheme *-tte* started to show a new functional evolution by developing to become a focus

marker (and then to an emphatic or discourse marker as we see today in Gamo, Wolaytta, etc.) and thereby abandoning its role as a copula. This functional evolution left the languages without a singular copula, creating a gap. In order to fill this gap the languages generalized the plural copula element *-kko* to take the place of *-tte* as a copula in all constructions. *-tte* also continued to survive in its new function as a focus and /or an emphatic and discourse marker. By contrast, in other Ometo languages, *-kko* was lost completely in all functions, and *-tte* was generalized. That is why today we see *-tte* in languages where *-kko* is used as a copula but we do not see *-kko* in languages where *-tte* is used as a copula.

Having said this, let me proceed to my analysis and in particular to the early prehistory of the copulas. In this section only the affirmative copula morphemes will be presented; I will examine their development to clarify gray areas in their history, and the grammaticalization path(s) they underwent.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part is concerned with the historical development of the copula elements themselves, and the second with the grammaticalization patterns seen in this historical development.

#### **4.1 The Development of *-tte* and *-kko***

##### **4.1.1. The Ometo copula *-tte***

The copula *-tte* is attested in the languages Zaysse and Zargulla, in eastern Ometo, as a copula, whereas in some Ometo languages like Wolaytta, Gamo and Dawuro it is a focus and discourse element. In Zaysse it is an equative affirmative copula used in nominal and adjectival predicate sentences, as shown in the examples.

78a. so[j] modo - tte

that beer-Cop

That is beer.

b. ʔi solloi loʔo-tte

her bread good-Cop

Her bread is good.

(Hayward 1990:320)

The element also exists in Zargulla alongside a variant form *-tta*.

79.    ʔis - tta                            ʔes - tte

It is her.

It is him.

(Azeb 2008: 42)

As mentioned earlier, the two copula elements are gender-sensitive in Zargulla. *-tte* is used with masculine subjects and *-tta* with feminine subjects, as can be seen from the following example:

80a. ha    ʔiso-y        s'eena-ade-tta            ʔaala-so-is hakime-so yeede

this 3Fs-Nom health-father.Acc-Cop why-Loc-F doctor-Loc come:past

This one (f) is healthy. Why did she come to the clinic? (Feminine)

b. ha    ʔis-i        s'eena - ade-tte            ʔaala- so- s hakime-so yeede

this 3Ms-Nom health-father.Acc-Cop why-Loc-M doctor-Loc come:past

This one (m) is healthy. Why did he come to the clinic? (Masculine)

The gender distinction is seen most clearly in identificational non-verbal clauses when the subject is third person and the nucleus of the construction is a pronoun. Here the copula element marking gender seems much more conservative than elsewhere. In other constructions the two forms can interchange freely without causing a perceptible difference in semantics. However, in the above example (80), *-tte* and *-tta* cannot be freely interchanged. Usually a 3<sup>rd</sup>-person masculine subject requires *-tte* and 3<sup>rd</sup>-person feminine subject requires *-tta*, although the rule is not totally strict (Azeb 2008: 42).

As Azeb has shown in her work, the part of the copula that shows gender variation is the terminal vowel. This vowel interchanges between *-e* and *-a* depending on the gender of the subject. They can thus be considered as gender suffixes on the copula.

This point is further supported by the presence of these gender-sensitive forms in Dawuro. Dawuro belongs to the northern Ometo group, and has considerable similarity to the major languages of the sub-group, Wolaytta and Gamo. In this language forms that have *-a* are generally feminine forms (Hirut 2006/07:87).

81. a    soo - n        deʔeau

she house-LOC exist

She is in the house.

The above point also can be seen easily from the genitive pronominal forms in the language:

- 82a. ta - we 'mine' (the masculine one)  
 ne - we 'yours' (the masculine one)  
 aa - we 'his/hers' (the masculine one)  
 b. taa - nna 'mine' (the feminine one)  
 nee - nna 'yours' (the feminine one)  
 aa - nna 'his/hers' (the feminine one) (Hirut 2006/07 : 93-94)

The contrast here involves the two morphemes *-we* and *-nna*. These are genitive markers; *-we* is used for possessed entities which are masculine, whereas *-nna* is used for feminine possessed entities. These genitive markers contain two gender-specific vowels *-e* and *-a* as their terminal vowel. Other constructions also exist containing these vowels in the same gender function. The first example below is from Dawuro and the second from Gamo.

**Dawuro:**

- 83a. b - au She goes.  
 b - ee He goes.

- b. otts - a de? - aw  
 work-3Fsg exist-3Fsg  
 She is working.

- c. otts - i de? - ee  
 work-Nom exist-3Msg  
 He is working.

(Hirut 2006/07:97)

**Gamo:**

- 84a. otts - a - še d - aaysu  
 work-Pro-Prog exist-Pro  
 She is working.

- b. otts - a - še d - ees  
 work-Pro-Prog exist-Pro  
 He is working.

(Hirut 1999:60)

The function of the two vowels is clearly seen in the agreement morphemes of the above examples: they distinguish between masculine and feminine subjects. (Hayward (1998) established an opposition between *-i-* and *-a-* as gender agreement markers in his article “The



Gender is also marked through distinct subject and object pronouns for third person singular forms.

89. ʔesi	he	ʔisi	she
ʔesa	him	ʔiso	her

Similarly in demonstratives:

90. Masculine nominal	Feminine nominal
sei that	senno that
hai this	henno this

Finally, gender is marked in copular clauses by suffixing *-tte* and *-tta* for masculine and feminine respectively. Usually the copula suffixes are added to third person subject and object pronouns in which gender is also marked lexically; even though the form is already lexically marked for gender, the copula element still marks gender for a second time.

91. ʔis - tta	ʔes - tte	
It is her.	It is him.	(Azeb 2008: 42)

The existence of a copula as a suffix on the pronominal form in essence changes the structure of the above construction from verbless to verbal, so that the construction can be divided into an independent third person pronoun and a copular verb. In this analysis, the copula *-tte* is granted the status of a verb. This conforms to what Payne (1997:114) says regarding verbal copulas: “Verbal copulas usually inflect for agreement.”

At first glance, based on the above analysis, one can simply claim that the two vowels are gender markers and nothing more. They do mark gender in Zargulla; but is this the only function they have? To help answer this question the non-verbal construction of Basketto, an Ometo language of the western group, will be presented for purposes of comparison.

In Basketto there are three gender-sensitive elements ‘to be’ that are used in copular clauses. These are *-e*, *-a* and *-o*. Discussion of the copula element *-o* (indicating plural) will be postponed until the next section. In this section only the two gender-sensitive elements *-e* and *-a* are treated.

In Basketto the copula *-e* is used with third person masculine and *-a* with third person feminine subjects. Since the default gender in the language is masculine, inanimate subjects use the

masculine gender copula *-e*. The forms are used only in present affirmative clauses with both nominal and adjectival predicates (Azeb 1993:28-31), as the following constructions illustrate. The first two examples (90a and b) involve masculine forms, while the third one (example 92c) is feminine.

92a. ha kets - a - d - i      yint - ay - e  
 this house-M-Def.-Nom 2pl-Pod- be  
 This house is my house.

b. ha - d - i      int kets - e  
 this-Def-Nom your house- be  
 This is your house.

c. ah - nn - a      ta mis - a  
 this-Fem-Nom my sister -be  
 This is my sister.

(Azeb 1993: 28-31)

The fact that these two forms are gender-sensitive and are used only for affirmative present tense constructions makes them similar to the eastern Ometo copula inflectional suffixes, which show the same behavior. The terminal vowels in Zargulla *-tte* and *-tta* are identical to the Basketto vowels *-e* and *-a*. If so, then in Basketto *-e* and *-a* are portmanteau morphemes that mark both the gender and the nexus relationship between subject and predicate in non-verbal clauses. They might have been agreement markers in Proto-Ometo, but today their role in Basketto is both to relate the subject with its predicate and to mark gender. This does not hold for Zargulla: here *-e*, *-a* are purely gender markers attached to a base *-tt-*.

What function, then, does *-tt-* play in these morphemes? In at least two Omotic languages — Maale (Ometo) and Dizi (non-Ometo) — *-tt-* is a kind of existential verb. In Maale, according to Azeb (2001: 117), there are three existential verbs that are used in different constructions: *d-*, *n-* and *t-*. Of these existential verbs *t-* is used to express negative forms of identity, present conditionals and temporal clauses.

93. taani tamaare      t -uwa - se  
 I student:Abs Be-Ipf:Neg-N:Dcl  
 I am/was not a student.

(Azeb 2001: 117)

The second piece of evidence comes from Dizi, which is not an Ometo language. According to Beachy (2005:100), there are two existential verb forms *ti-* and *ki-* that are also used in equative

constructions in Dizi. It seems that *ti-* is used with singular subjects and *ki-* with plural. The presence of these verbs in non-verbal constructions implies present tense of the construction jointly with their role as a copula.

94a. i: k'al - da tamu **ki** - Ø - niso  
house be:new-Rel ten Ex.be-Pstpr-3p  
There are ten new houses.

b. gian - a dzEj - z **ti** - Ø - go  
coffee-Px be:good-M be-PstPr-3Ms  
This coffee is good.

In both Maale and Dizi, the element *-tt-* has the role both of an existential verb and a copular verb 'to be'. Thus this element can be said to be an existential verb that is used in present tense constructions. Then how did it come to be a component part of the copula?

Before jumping to the answer to this question, it is worth first considering the negative declarative constructions of the Ometo subgroup, with special focus on Haro. According to Hirut (2004:198), the negation marker in Haro appears as a verbal suffix.

95. ʔalkáso - ga déyšši b - á - wwa  
Alkaso-Loc goat Neg.Exist-Neg-Neg:Dec  
There is no goat in Alkaso.

In Haro only a verb is able to carry the negation marker. The same is true of Ometo languages quite generally. For example, in Gamo we have:

96a. ta loʔo gid - ikke  
I good become-Neg  
I am not good.

b. ʔesi loʔo gid-enna  
he good become-Neg  
He is not good

The negative markers of the northern Ometo languages are *-kk-* and *-nna*; *-nna* occurs with 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular subject while *-kk-* occur with other subject forms (Hirut 2004). (Note that at least synchronically, this negative *-kk-* is quite distinct from our copula/existential *-kko*.)

This implies that non-verbal negative sentences are impossible in these languages; there must be a full-fledged verb that can carry the negation marker and other verbal inflectional categories. In Haro this verb is the negative existential verb *b-*, and the negative marker is *-a*, yielding *ba*. In Gamo the carrier verb is *gid-* ‘become’ and the negative marker is *-kk-* or *-nna*.

As frequently noted in the literature, negative constructions are often more conservative than their affirmative counterparts. Negative constructions can often reveal an older form of sentence structure in languages. The negative copula construction requires a carrier verb, and in most Ometo languages a carrier verb is similarly required in order for a copula to express categories like tense, aspect, agreement, etc. Negative constructions tend to be conservative; this suggests that the carrier verb also represents a conservative phenomenon when it occurs with tense, aspect, agreement, etc. That is, in order to construct an acceptable copular construction expressing verbal inflectional categories like tense, aspect, etc. in early Ometo, the presence of a full-fledged verb was required. In Zaysse and Zargulla, for example, there are certain kinds of verbal inflectional categories that can only be attached to verbs — for instance, in Zargulla, person and aspect (Baye 2000:423).

97. wod’- atte - ti - de  
 kill-Focus-person-Pf  
 We have killed.

The above inflectional categories cannot be attached to the subject or the complement of a non-verbal sentence. Indeed, every non-verbal sentence in Ometo requires the support of a verb to carry these verbal inflectional categories. In this respect every non-verbal construction selects some relatively “empty” verbal element that does not change the semantics of the non-verbal sentence. A good example for this is the case of the above negative existential verb *b-* in Haro (and other Ometo languages). In Ometo negative constructions the negative marker is *-ʔaa*, in Zargulla and Zaysse, *-á-* in Haro and *-kk-* and *-nna* in north Ometo languages (these forms are attached to the negative existential verb *b-* or to other existential verbs *de ʔ* and *gid-*). This argues that the function of the negative existential verb *b-* is to carry markers of negation and of tense, aspect, etc. Plausibly, the same can be said about *-tt-* in *-tte*. It is a verb ‘to be’, an existential verb, that is used to carry the gender-sensitive copula markers *-e* and *-a* in Zargulla

and Zaysse as it does today in Maale (recall the negative non-verbal construction of Maale in example (91) above).

One point that must be mentioned is the selection of the particular existential verb in forming the copula elements *-tt-* and *-kk-*. Why *-tt-* and not *-kk-*? The selection seems to be based on the semantics of the nominal sentence. The existential *-k-* seen in Dizi is plural. The gender elements *-e*, *-a*, appear in Ometo only in the singular. If we assume that Dizi plural *-kk-* continues an earlier Omotic plural *-kk-*, then the attachment of *-e*, *-a* to *-kk-* would represent a semantic mismatch (singular vs. plural). No such problem arises with *-tt-*.

The same history, I suggest, has happened to the eastern Ometo copula *-tte* and *-tta*. The element *-tt-* was originally present in order to carry the terminal vowels, which were originally gender markers. In a later stage of development the existential verb *-tt-* took on a copular use and fused together with the gender markers *-e* or *-a* to become a copular form *-tte* and *-tta*, which inherited the property of gender selectivity. The two forms grammaticalized to take on the role of a general copula element linking subjects and copula complements. Today this element can occur with all constructions and units without any distributional restrictions.

#### 4.1.2. The Ometo Copula *-kko*

The other copula element that must be dealt with is the copula *-kko*, found especially in North Ometo. There is much debate surrounding its status as a focus versus copula marker. Scholars like Hompó Éva (1990) and Binyam (2002) assume that it is a copula marker, whereas other scholars like Hirut (1999, 2004) and Binyam (2010) claim that it is a focus marker. Since remnants of its use as a copula are found even in languages where its primary function seems to be as a focus marker, it will be considered as a copula in this study.

As a copula and/or focus marker this morpheme appears in Gamo (N), Dawuro (N), Gofa (N), Koorete (E), Haro (E) and Maale (S). In the northern Ometo group the copula construction does not attach *-kko* unless the speaker wishes to put focus on some part of the predicate. However, although the morpheme generally plays the role of marking focus, a good argument can be made that it was once a copula. First, when used as a focus marker *-kko* appears in a cleft construction; here it can equally well be described as a focus marker or a copula. Secondly, in Gamo and its dialects *-kko* regularly appears on adjectival predicates, as seen in example (95), taken from the Ochollo dialect of Gamo.

- 98a. ade-za kansa-k  
 man-Def short-Cop  
 The man is short.
- b. hays-i ta kansa  
 this-Nom my stomach  
 This is my stomach.
- c. abebe ?astemare  
 abebe teacher.  
 Abebe is a teacher.

In Ochollo nominal (equative) predicates do not take *-k* (the Ochollo variant of *-kko*), but adjectival predicates do. The same is true for the Dorze dialect of Gamo: according to my informant non-verbal adjectival predicates in Dorze add the same morpheme as Ochollo does. This makes one point clear: in dialects of Gamo, zero copula in present tense nominal predicates alternates with full copula in adjectival predicates. This pattern is common in the world's languages, as Stassen (1997:68) mentions. The use of *-kko* (or *-k*) with an adjective predicate might perhaps be considered an instance of (obligatory) focus; but it seems much more straightforward to consider it as being simply a copula.

The developmental history of the copula element *-kko* will now be discussed briefly. My analysis is divided into two parts: the first deals with the development from a non-copula to a copula marker, and the second deals with its further development to a focus marker. The first part will be presented here and the latter is postponed to the next major section.

As already noted, *-kko* is one of two copulas that are used in affirmative present tense constructions in Ometo languages. The developmental history of the eastern counterpart *-tte*, with its origin in an existential verb, has been discussed. Here I will make a similar point about *-kko*.

A first argument, which does not directly concern *-kko* itself, comes from interrogative pronouns. In most northern Ometo and some eastern Ometo languages, the interrogative pronouns have a bipartite form. In Koorete, there are various interrogative pronouns (Beletu 2003: 45):

99. ʔa-y	where	ʔa-me	why
ʔa-ba	what	wa-yse	how
ʔoo-ne	who	ʔay-de	when

These interrogative pronouns are built on the base forms *ʔa-*, *ʔoo-*, *ay-* and *wa-* by suffixing different morphemes such as *-me*, *-yse*, *-ba*, etc.

The same is true for Gamo and Wolaytta (north Ometo). The interrogative pronouns of Gamo are given below.

100. ʔaw-an	where	ʔawa-nee	which
ʔaw-de	when	ʔay	what
ʔawa	who	ʔay-bee	what is it
ʔo-ne	who	ʔawu-ge	which

Here in Gamo also the interrogative pronouns break into two morphemes, which are quite similar to their counterparts in Koorete. The Koorete base forms *ʔa-*, *ʔoo-*, *wa-* closely resembles Gamo *ʔaw-*, *ʔo-*, *ʔay*. And in both languages, the suffix *-ba/-be* marks ‘what’, *-ne* marks ‘who’, and *-de* marks ‘when’.

The story is the same in Wolaytta, as shown by the following interrogative forms:

101. ʔoo-ne	who	awu-de	when
ay-be/ba	what	ay-bis	why
awu-ge	which	waa-ti(di)	how

Almost the same base morphemes *ʔa-*, *ay-*, *aw-* and *waa-* are used for the formation of these Wolaytta pronouns, and the suffixes too are almost the same.

One point emerges clearly from the above examples. Evidently, it is the suffix which gives the interrogative pronoun its particular meaning.

In the above paragraphs the general structure of interrogative pronouns in Ometo was described. The reason for this discussion is the existence in Ometo of interrogative pronouns formed by attaching the element *-kko*, which conveys the nuance ‘any’, ‘whatever may exist’. These pronouns exist in eastern, northern and southern Ometo languages. The interrogative forms as found in Gamo and Wolaytta are given in the following example:

102. ʔay-kko	nothing
ʔa-kko	something
ʔay-kko-ka	whatever

For instance, they can be used in the following constructions:

103. ʔaykko bawe	Is there nothing? (lit. Is there nothing (that) exists?)
ʔakko yessawa	Is there something?

The general structure of these forms in *-kko* is the same as for the interrogative pronouns discussed above: base + suffix. And again, it is the suffix (here *-kko*) that determines the pronoun’s exact meaning.

As just mentioned, the suffix *-kko* means roughly ‘any at all’. This meaning is very closely related to the existence of something somewhere. This leads me to posit that the original meaning of *-kko* was an existential, and that its appearance in the above pronoun forms represent grammaticalization.

Further support for this argument comes from the structure of demonstratives in the northern group. In Gamo and its dialects there are various demonstratives, among them the special deictic *hekko* ‘there it is’. This deictic is formed from *he-* and *-kko*, which evidently involves the same existential element *-kko* as occurs with interrogatives. Example 104 shows *he* + *kko* both as a fused form and as two separated morphemes.

104a. he - kko	Abebe	
	there-Cop	Abebe
	There is	Abebe. (lit. There Abebe exists)



108. isi ketsi gidon-kko  
he house in-exist  
He is in the house.

The element *-kko* also appears as a directional locative case marker, as in Wolaytta:

109a. taa - kko  
I-to (loc) (direction)  
Towards me.  
b. wolaytta-kko bana  
wolaytta-loc go  
I will go to Wolaytta. (my own field notes)

Similarly in Koorete with locative *-ka*:

110a. bušeyi zawa-ka yese  
girl house-Loc exist  
There is a girl in the house.  
b. haregyi ʔačo- ka yese  
disease meat-Loc exist  
There is disease in the meat. (Beletu 2003: 25)

The similarity between Koorete *-ka* ‘Loc’, Wolaytta *-kko* ‘direction’ (Loc) and Gamo *-kko* ‘Existential’ suggests that the forms are historically connected: the locative case marker once used to have the meaning of an existential verb, and grammaticalized along the path:

Existential → Be.at.Location → Locative.

This point can be supported further by evidence from the non-Ometo language from Dizi. As mentioned before, there is an existential *-ki* in Dizi which is also used as a copula for the purpose of carrying verbal agreements in non-verbal sentences (see example (94a and b) above). The form is used in present tense affirmative copular sentences with plural subjects. This is similar to the copular function of existential *-kko* in northern and eastern Ometo, where however there is no restriction to plural subjects.

Thus far I have discussed why I think *-kko* has its root in an existential verb. But one may ask about the internal structure of this *-kko* and particularly about its terminal vowel *-o*. Here it is useful to recall the discussion of the vowels on the Eastern copula *-tte/-tta*. Similar

considerations apply to *-kko*. Arguably, the terminal vowel *-o* in *-kko* is the same morpheme as Basketto *-o*, which serves in Basketto as a copula used in present tense affirmative constructions with plural subjects, as shown in the example below.

111. ha - ant - i    an-o  
       this-Pl-Nom who-Cop  
       Who are these? (Azeb 1993: 31)

That is, *-kk-* serves as a carrier of the element *-o*, which in some Ometo languages is one of the gender-number markers. Over time the two adjacent morphemes fused together in some languages and became a unitary copula marker.

An important point that should be raised regarding the two existential verbs *-kkV*, *-ttV* concerns their distribution. As shown in Dizi, the form with *-ttV* is usually used in present tense **singular** subject constructions, while *-kkV* occurs with **plural** subjects. This makes the principle governing the attachment of the terminal vowels clear. The choice of vowel and of existential base-forms depends on the number and gender of the copula subject, as shown in the following table:

Inflectional categories	Base form	Suffix
Msg	<b>-tt-</b>	<b>-e</b>
Fsg	<b>-tt-</b>	<b>-a</b>
Pl	<b>-kk-</b>	<b>-o</b>

Table 2: Composition of *-ttV* and *-kkV*

Recall that in Basketto, *-e* and *-a* are gender-sensitive copulas which are used with masculine and feminine singular subjects, whereas *-o*, the other copula element that is attached to *-kk-*, is used with plural subjects.

For both of the two copula items, *-kko* and *-tte/-tta*, in both North and East Ometo, I have presented a parallel argument that the two forms developed from lexical existential verbs. When they came to be used in constructions as a copula, they were originally used as locative copulas

as the example from Gamo shows. From synchronic point of view *-kko* and/or *-tte* are now commonly used to form attributive constructions as the example from Dorze, a dialect of Gamo, show.

112. naʔz-i            maaloʔo-k

boy:Def-Nom good- be

The boy is good.

(my Dorze sample)

The point has been illustrated here with *-kko*; the same point can be made about the eastern copula *-tte/-tta*.

The development from a locative existential to an equative ‘be’ is quite common among the world languages (Heine and Kuteva 2007:99).

#### 4.2.1. The Grammaticalization of *-ttV* and *-kkV*

The above development history of the two morphemes in Ometo can be seen as a good example of grammaticalization. In this section the development history of these morphemes is revisited in terms of the four parameters that are involved in grammaticalization: *semantic bleaching, decategorialization, extension and erosion*.

As to the parameter of semantic bleaching, both of the existential verbs *-ttV* and *-kkV* have lost their primary meaning ‘to exist’, ‘to be somewhere’. As illustrated in the above section, the element *-tt-* still serves as an existential verb in Maale with the meaning ‘be at’.

However, in Zaysse and Zargulla, where it has fully grammaticalized to a copula, it has lost its meaning as an existential verb. The same is true of the verb *-kk-* in North Ometo. It was originally an existential verb ‘exist’, but has lost its existential meaning and become an equative copula, as this example from Gamo (Dorze dialect) shows.

113. naʔz-i            maaloʔo-k

boy:Def-Nom good- be

The boy is good.

Significantly, in limited contexts in Gamo, it still serves as an existential.

114. isi    ketsi    gidon-kko

he    house    in-Exist

He is in the house.

Regarding the parameter of decategorialization, the two forms have lost the inflectional marking they used to have as an existential verb. In Maale the existential verb *t-* inflects for negation, types of sentence, and aspect. The same inflectional property of the existential form in Dizi also can be seen from examples (94) above; in all constructions the form inflects for various verbal inflectional categories like tense, number, gender, person, etc. However, today in Eastern Ometo, except Zargulla (recall the case of *-tte* vs. *-tta*), it does not inflect for any of this, not even for gender.

With regard to the third parameter, extension, the *-ttV* forms were originally used with singular forms, as in Dizi. However, today in most of Ometo they have come to be used with all persons, numbers and genders. Except in Zargulla, where the forms are gender-sensitive, the eastern copula is used in all non-verbal affirmative constructions regardless of person and gender. The same is true of *-kko*. In Northern Ometo, it was used with plural copula subjects, but now it has come to be used with any gender, number and person.

As to the fourth parameter, erosion, it cannot be said that the forms have lost phonetic substance. But this parameter is optional: it is not necessary for a grammaticalized form to undergo phonetic reduction. A form can be grammaticalized without any loss in phonological substance.

The grammaticalization of these morphemes has proceeded from an existential to a locative copula to an equative copula to a focus marker. Regarding the starting point as an existential verb, recall that forms in *-kko* are attested in this function in several languages.

### Sheko

115a.	dəwā	<b>ki-n</b>	dəwā	tə/ti	<b>ki-n</b>
	deer	exist-Ds	deer	cop:3Fs	exist-Ds
	“There was a deer...”		“It was a deer that was there”		

(Hellenthal 2009: 2-3)

### Gamo

b.	isi	ketsi	gidon	<b>-kko</b>
	he	house	in-exist	
	He is in the house.			

(Hirut 1999: 126)

## Dizi

c. i: k'al-da tamu **ki-Ø**-niso  
house be:new-Rel ten Ex.be-pstpr-3p

There are ten new houses.

(Beachy 2005: 100)

But the distribution of these morphemes as verbs or semi-verbs 'to be' is not the whole story. According to Azeb (2007:14), the copula form **-tte** is used as a focus marker in Zargulla. Teshome Yimer (1998: 38) also argues that **-tte** in Zaysse is a focus marker rather than a copula. Also according to Hirut (1999, 2004 and 2006) and Binyam (2010), the northern Ometo copula is synchronically a focus marker in most languages of the group. This recent development to focus marking represents another, more recent stage in the functional evolution of the morphemes **-tte** and **-kko**.

Looking first specifically at **-tte** (**-kko** will be discussed below), in all the constructions below, both verbal and non-verbal, this morpheme **-tte** occurs as a focus marker in several languages as demonstrated in the following examples:

### Zaysse

116a. ʔec'ere-i hangi-**tt**-is ratsʔa'ts-a kait-inne  
rat-Nom go-Foc-3Fs grain-Acc steal-Past

A rat **went** and stole somebody's grain.

b. šuuro-i hiʔo pride-**tte** ʔing-inne  
cat-Nom death verdict-Foc give-Past

The cat gave a **death sentence** (to the rat).

c. šuuro-**tte** hiʔo pride ʔing-inne  
cat-Foc death verdict give-Past

It is the **cat** that gave a death sentence (to the rat).

(Azeb 2007:115)

d. astamo-y tora-nna i-mura-ga garma wod-**attes**-in  
astamo-Nom spear-with the-forest-in lion kill- Foc:3Fs-Pf

Astamo **killed** a lion with a spear in the forest. (Teshome 1998: 38)

Contrast its use in Zaysse as a plain copula:

- 117a. hai ta mats-u-tte  
This 1sg:Gen thing-Eph-Cop  
This is mine.
- b. ?i solloi lo?o-tte  
her bread good-Cop  
Her bread is good.

### Gamo

- e. abebe koyso gid-di-des gab-**ettenne**  
Abebe thief become-Past-Impf say-Foc:Q  
It is **said** that Abebe is a thief, right? (my own field notes)

### Wolaytta

- f. addolla – **ttene** timirte ketta - n deesi anjajjo addolla  
addolla - Emp:2sg school house-loc exist- 3M:Imp anjajjo addolla  
g-iyo-ge ?a  
say-Rel:Impr-M:Nmz 3ms-Obj  
“It is Addolla! He is at your school. The one that is called Anjajjo’s  
Addolla is him!”
- g. anjajjo addolla zer-a<sup>̄</sup>isi-**ttenne**  
anjajjo addolla know-1sg:Impr-Emp  
‘Sure I **know** Anjajjo’s Addolla!’ (Azeb 2007: 121)

Wolaytta examples (f, g) involve the form **-tte** in exclamatory emphatic constructions. In Wolaytta the form can also be used as a focus marker in affirmative declaratives, although it is not the most common construction.

118. ta m-aas-tenne ‘It is I that is eating’.  
na m-ida-tenne ‘It is you (F) that is eating’.  
ne m-aadasa-tenne ‘It is you (M) that is eating’.  
?ente m-iidetta-tenne ‘It is you (Pl) that is eating’.

ʔa m-aasu-tenne ‘It is she that is eating’.

ʔi m-iisi-tenne ‘It is he that is eating’.

The examples given above clearly show that *-tte* can function as focus marker. Arguably, the copular use evolved into a focus function (see Heine and Kuteva 2002:331). How did this happen?

We have already seen examples of *-tte* in Zaysse functioning as a copula and as a “pure” focus marker. The link between these two uses can be seen in examples like 117, where the copula appears in a cleft construction.

119a. wootas’u-tte dem-in  
farmer-Cop:1sg saw-Fpm  
It was a farmer whom I saw.

b. zicine-tte-t bahe šam-in  
yesterday-Cop-1sg grain bought-Fpm  
It was yesterday that I bought grain. (Hayward 1990: 321)

c. šapaa-tt-en ham-aan  
river(Loc)-Cop-2sg go-Fpm  
It is to the river that you are going. (Hayward 1990: 327)

Clefts are a common source of focus markers. “One important function of cleft constructions is to mark focused constituents in identification sentences. New information is generally located at the predicative center of the clause. Thus, the constituent suffixed by the copula represents the item newly introduced into discourse” (Rafael Suter 2007: 2004). This is pretty clearly what happened to *-tte* in Zaysse and elsewhere. Then, in its later stages of development, it expanded its range of occurrence (still as a focus marker) to other non-cleft construction types, as we have already seen in example 116.

The copula element *-kko* appears to have a similar history. As mentioned above, the element can be used as a copula in non-verbal constructions in dialects of Gamo, Ochollo and Dorze (see 120). However, many scholars have analyzed the element as a focus marker in languages like Gamo, Dawuro, Haro, Koorete, etc.

120a. iza uruto-**kko**

she hirut-Emphatic

She is **Hirut**.

(Hirut 1999: 123)

b. ʔassa-z-z                      molo-**kko**                      ʔe -wong - in - e

Man-M:Dff-Nmz    fish:Abs-Foc    3Ms-buy- Past:Dff-Decl

The man bought **fish**.

(Hirut 2004: 214)

“In Haro, a sentential component which appears in focus is marked by the element **-kko**” (Hirut 2004: 212). Similarly in Koorete Binyam (2010: 2) analyzes the form **-kko** in constructions like (121) as a focus marker.

121. kaan-i                      keemo-**ko**

dog-Nom    animal-Foc:Dec

The dog is an animal.

What can be seen from the above discussion is that the history of **-tte** and **-kko** appears to show little difference. According to Azeb Amha (2008) the eastern Ometo copula **-tte** functions as a focus marker only in verbal constructions, whereas in non-verbal constructions it is a copula. However, regarding the element **-kko** it has already developed to become a focus marker. It appears in both verbal and non-verbal constructions only as a focus marker.

Both in Gamo and Haro **-kko** is suffixed to the pronoun as a reply to the question ‘who is it?’:

### **Haro**

122a. nen - i                      ʔoo - i

you-Nom    who-Nom

Who is it? (lit. you who?)

b. tana-kko

I - Cop

“It is me. ”

(Hirut 2004: 212)

### **Gamo**

c. hagi ʔoon-ee

this who-Cop

Who is it?

d. tana-kko

me-Cop

It is me.

(my own field notes)

Here also it seems clear that a copula is being used to introduce new (focal) information. In the following examples from Maale, the copula *-ke* introduces new information in a cleft construction:

123a. ʔiza -ke                    nena            ʔeell-e-tsi  
3ms:Abs-be:Decl 2<sup>nd</sup> sg.Abs call-Pf-Nmz  
It is he who called you.

b. nena-ke                    ʔiz - i            ʔeell-e-tsi  
2sg: Abs-be:A:Decl 3M-Nom call-Pf-Nmz  
It is you whom he called.

(Azeb 2001: 249)

Ochollo and Dorze have *-kko* copulas with the same focusing function as Haro, Gamo, and Maale. The following example, given as the reply to a question ‘who is the thief?’, is just like (122) above.

124. kaysoʔ abebe-**k**  
thief Abebe-Cop  
The thief is Abebe.

Heine and Kuteva (2002) mention that it is common for locative existential copulas to develop into equative copula forms. They also note that it is possible and common for copula markers to further develop into focus markers. The chain of development seen in Ometo regarding the two affirmative copulas represents a similar development to what Heine and Kuteva have suggested. According to the above discussion, the forms have developed along the following path:

Existential + Agr → locative copula → Copula → focus

## Chapter Five

### Conclusion

The main objective of this study has been to identify the copula encoding strategies in Ometo, analyze the distribution of the copular elements and describe the paths taken by the morphemes in grammaticalizing to the function(s) they have today. At the outset, previous studies both of Ometo as a whole and of individual Ometo language were reviewed. In the chapter on the theoretical framework, the four mechanisms of grammaticalization — desemanticization, decategorialization, erosion, and extension — were briefly discussed with examples. These mechanisms are provided a conceptual foundation for analyzing the grammaticalization patterns of the copular morphemes.

Data was gathered from different sources and was analyzed in terms of the mechanisms mentioned above.

The results of the analysis show that the two copular elements *-te* and *-kko* passed through very similar developmental paths. At the beginning the consonants *t* and *k* in the copular elements served as a carrier for agreement markers. Then the two adjacent morphemes fused together in some languages and become copula elements. In a still later development, they evolved further to become a focus marker. This development is clearer in eastern Ometo languages than in northern Ometo and southern Ometo. The assumed evolution of the copular elements can be presented as follows:

Existential + Agr → locative copula → Copula → focus

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