

The Verb "TO BE" in Oromo

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Abstract

The object^{of} of this paper is to analyse the verb 'to be' in Oromo. The paper has seven sections: In sections one and two identification of the problem and a brief survey of relevant literature are given. In the third section the copular form -Da with its different allomorphic shapes is treated. In the fourth section other copular expressions: Existence, Location, Attribute, Identity, and Possession in the simple declarative present tense are dealt with. In section five uses of copular verbs in the different tenses is shown. In section six the negative form of the copular expressions is given. In the concluding section, a brief comparison of morphology and syntax of copular expressions of three other SOV languages: Hindi, Amharic, and Japanese is carried out. Japanese, like Oromo, is said to be of "Rigid III" syntactic type, whereas Hindi and Amharic are supposedly transitional. In the analysis of the copula a controversial morpheme -ti, which was treated as a possessive marker by earlier writers, is identified as a copula in this paper. This is a point of special interest and still controversial. It is evident that the analysis of the complex suppletive copular system of Oromo requires further work beyond the limits of this thesis. For example, the role of auxiliaries and various transformations involving copulas need to be taken up.

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my work and that all sources of material used for this thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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1.0 Statement of the Problem and Definition of Terms Used

1.1 Statement of the Problem: This paper is an attempt to analyse the verb "to be" in Oromo.

1.2 Significance of the Problem: In May 1979, an ad-hoc committee¹ was set up to prepare teaching material for non-Oromo-speaking students of the Institute of Language Studies at Addis Ababa University. I was in charge of preparing the first draft of each lesson which the committee in its weekly meeting discussed, amended and approved. It was in such a situation that I was confronted with the problem of the complex suppletive system of the verb "to be" in Oromo. It was this very practical need that made me decide to choose this topic for my thesis.

1.3 Limitations and Scope of the Research: This research is not the result of field work. It is based on my personal knowledge of the language - "Western dialect" - and readings on the available materials on other languages, e.g., Japanese, Hindi, Armenian...etc. The analysis is based on an eclectic structural model and does not treat the theoretical aspect of the topic in any detail. Though this study is based on the dialect of southwestern Ethiopia, especially Illubabor, where I was born and lived for more than twenty years, its findings are surely applicable to other Oromo speaking areas, for according to Bender and Mulugeta (1976:131):

Oromo ⁰ "On the grounds of mutual intelligibility and basic vocabulary, it seems fair to maintain that Ethiopian ~~is~~ is one language". (underline is mine)

1.4 Definition of Terms

Oromo: is a word which is used for the people and the language interchangeably in this paper. The people call the language "Afan Oromo" (Oromo language) (mouth of the Oromo). Earlier writers sometimes

used Galla for the people and their language; this term is used here only when it is a direct quotation. Oromo is a member of the Lowland East sub-family of the Cushitic Family of the Afroasiatic phylum. No exact figure of its speakers is known. M.L. Bender (1976:195) estimates it to be eight million in Ethiopia and Gragg (1976:166) estimates ten million. Little is known about dialect boundaries and extent of its differentiation. It is spoken in north eastern Africa-mainly in Ethiopia.

The verb "to be" in Oromo: The series edited by J.W.M. Verhaar entitled The verb "Be and Its Synonyms illustrated the difficulty of finding a label for predicative constructions. Some languages have both fully conjugated verbs and invariable particles (copulas) to express various predications. Oromo is such a language. This is why this thesis is entitled as it is, avoiding the problems by essentially referring to ways of translating English "to be".

1.5 Pronunciation Key:

1.5. The Vowels: Oromo has the usual basic five vowel system / i, u, e, o, a/; to each of these there corresponds a phonemic long vowel.

1.5.2 Consonants: There are 24 consonant segmental phonemes in Oromo /P, b, t, T, d, D, k, K, g, ʔ, f, s, S, h, c, C, j, n, m, ñ, l, r, w, y/.

1.5.3 Adopted symbols:

c substitutes IPA "tS"

y " " "j"

P voiceless, bilabial, ejective stop e.g., KoPpi 'readiness'

dh
en

θ

<u>T</u>	voiceless, dental, ejective stop e.g. Tinnoo 'small'
C	voiceless palatal, ejective affricate e.g. Cubbuu 'sin'
K	voiceless, velar, ejective stop e.g. Kottuu 'farmer'
D	voiceless, dental, implosive stop e.g. Dakaa 'stone'
-	
n	voiced palatal nasal e.g. nata 'food'

1.5.4 Abbreviations:

E.C.	Ethiopian Calender
Elic.	Elicitation
F.M.	Feminine marker
P.C.	Personal contact
Pl.M.	Plural marker
Sig.	Singular
Sing.	Singulative
Subj.M.	Subject marker

1.5.5 Symbols:

{ }	* morpheme
	= phoneme
()	= indicates optional element
+	= shows syntactic relation
→	= means replaced by
~	= shows alternants.

2.0 Survey of Relevant Literature

2.1 Brief History of Oromo Studies: The study of the Oromo language goes back about a century a half. The work done on the Oromo language until 1975 is surveyed by Gragg (1976) in his "Historical Sketch of the Study of Oromo" which I will summarize briefly and to which I will add a few additional references.

2.2 Earlier Observations: Bits of linguistic information about the Oromo language began filtering back to Europe from word lists gathered by the first European travellers in northeast Africa in the 19th century, beginning with Salt in 1814. More detailed information was provided by Karl Tutschek, who compiled a dictionary and grammar from an Oromo slave informant,* but unfortunately died in 1843 before publishing it. Lorenz Tutschek published his brother's invaluable first Dictionary and Grammar in 1844 and 1845 respectively. "The publications of Tutschek's works were landmarks in the history of Oromo in that they introduced the Oromo language to the European world of Scholarship" (Richard Pankhurst, 1976:197).

2.3 Missionary Efforts: As early as 1830, the Church Missionary Society was laying a foundation for missionary activities among the Oromo. The notable pioneer was John Ludwig Krapf - who devoted great attention to Oromo. He studied Oromo in Shewa and translated the Gospel of St. John in 1839. Though banned from Ethiopia by King Sahle Sellassie in 1842, he managed to translate the New Testament

* For the details of this see Lorenz Tutschek 1844:VII - XX.; and also Richard Pankhurst 1976:174ff.

into Oromo with another notable scholar "Aleka Zänäh" himself an Oromo, in the 1870's.

Then there were other missionaries, e.g., Des Avanchers, who had 20 years experience with Oromo, and gathered Oromo lexicon which was entrusted to Prof. Ettore Viterbo for publication in 1892.

Onesimus Nesib (ca 1855-1931) - himself a western Oromo - devoted his life to translating the Bible, devising a writing system, and producing some other religious literature in Oromo. Martin Nordfeldt, a missionary and student of Onesimus, published a grammar based on a good knowledge of Wellegga.

2.4 Secular Efforts: Travellers and others continued to add more or less reliable information to the fund of knowledge about Oromo. To mention a few of them:

a) Luigi Bricchetti - Rabecchi - offers some useful textual and lexical material on Oromo of Harer region.

b) E.C. Foot (1913) - wrote an English - ~~Galla~~ Galla-English Dictionary - much shorter than Viterbo's of 1892. *Inhabitant of Harer region*

c) Enrico Cerulli (1922) - published the best and most varied collection yet of Oromo folk literature and other short texts in 1923.

d) L. Littmann (1925) - made a pioneering and as yet unchallenged attempt to distill the prosodic principles underlying oral poetry.

e) M.M. Moreno (1939) - published the best reference grammar of Oromo to date.

f) G. da Thiene (1939) - produced the best dictionary available of Oromo to date.

- g) H.W. Hodson and C.H. Walker (1922) - wrote a Galla Grammar.
Their aim was to supply a practical aid for the individual who needs to communicate in Oromo.

2.5 Post-World War II

- a) B.W. Andrzejewski (1957) - wrote on Borena dialect.
b) J. Launhardt (1973) - wrote a very detailed Oromo pedagogical grammar based on the Wellegga dialect. The whole book is taped and is available for teaching the language in one of the mission schools in Addis Abeba.
Other works which Gragg did not include but which are worth mentioning here:

- a) Undergraduate papers: Written by graduating students from Department of Ethiopian Languages and Literature of the Addis Abeba University as a partial requirement for the Bachelor of Arts degree.

Examples:

1. "Verbal system and Derivatives in Kettiña" - by Seifu Metaferia (1969/70).
t-paw oromo
2. "Ye Amarinna na Ye ~~Gallina~~ ^{t-paw oromo} dims'e lisanat" (Amharic and Gallinya Segmental Phonemes) - by Eshetu Kebbede (1963 E.C.) - present writer.
3. "Ye ~~Gallina~~ ^{t-paw oromo} teret na missale (Gallinya Proverbs)" - by Dereje Deribe (1963 E.C.).

Others:

- b) "Die Konjunktionen im Galla" (1970) - by Catherine Haacke
(A Ph.D. Thesis).
- c) "HIRMATA DUBBII AFAN OROMOO" (1979) - by Ethiopian Students'
Union in Europe.
- d) "Verbs in Oromo Sentence Patterns" (1980) - by Dejene Leta
(unpublished MA Thesis). The writer spends almost half of
his thesis in briefly reviewing books dealing with Oromo
under three headings: Oromo Grammar, Dictionaries, and
Related Sources.

I know of two M.A. Theses currently underway on Oromo:

- "Oromo Phonology" - by WaKo Tola and
- "Oromo Adjectives" - by Baye Yimam.

In conclusion the verb "to be" in Oromo is discussed in some of the above mentioned works, especially those of Nordfeldt, Hodson and Walker, and Gragg. None of the works consulted provides an adequate description. It is therefore my belief that my present work adds to that of my predecessors in the study of Oromo and takes the study of the language a step further, and also provides new data for general linguistics.

3. Base and Elicitation Forms

3.1 In Oromo, 'which is very unusual among the world's languages' (Bender and Mulugeta 1976:133), the base form of a noun, pronoun, adjective, or adverbial is the accusative (direct object) form.

Examples:

mana	'house'
anna	'I'
guddaa	'big'
kaleessa	'yesterday'

to form the nominative (subject ni--n--i is suffixed to the base form without its final vowel, depending on the phone which it follows. The present-tense copular form of Oromo which has more or less semantic equivalence to English 'is/are' or Amharic 'n.w!nacc:w' is the bound morpheme [-Da]. The copular [-Da] which is used only in the present tense, is not inflected for person, number, and gender as is its Amharic counterpart.

In reply to an elicitation question: kun(i) mali kun(i) mayini? 'what is this?'; the copular [-Da] is suffixed to the base form but in its different phonologically conditioned allomorphic shapes which will be discussed under 3.2 below.

3.2 Allomorphs of the Copular -Da : For the convenience of analysing the allomorphs of the copular [-Da] Oromo nouns, pronouns, adjectives, and adverbials are grouped into three major Form Classes:

Form Class 1: Those ending with devoiced short vowel, usually -a

dha.

a.

Form 2: Those ending in long vowel.

Form 3: Those ending in consonant.

For examples of the above, see Appendix.

It was noted that the behaviour of {-Da} depends on preceding phones of shapes -a, -VV, -C. It may also be significant as to whether these finals are preceded by single C, C₁ C₁ (geminate) or C₁ C₂ (unequal clusters).

The following examples show that this is not the case.

	<u>Form Class</u>	<u>Elic. Form("It is(a)....")</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
	<u>Base</u>		
1	a lafa	lafa - Ø	land
	b miilla	miilla -Ø	leg
	c marga	marga - Ø	grass
2	a haaduu	haaduu-Da	knife
	b harree	harree-Da	donkey
	c garbuu	garbuu-Da	barley
3	?annaan	?annaan-i	milk

For example, in reply to kun(i) mayini? kun(i) mali? we may have:

- (Kun(i)) lafa, 'This is land.'
- (Kun(i)) haaduu-Da 'This is a knife.'
- (Kun(i)) ?annaan-i- 'This is milk.'

To summarize, the Oromo copular {-Da} appears in three shapes when it is suffixed to the three Form Classes in the accusative: {-Da} after long vowel, {-Ø} after short devoiced vowel (usually -a), and {-i} after consonant. A fourth non-phonologically conditioned allomorph of {-Da} will be discussed in 3.3 below.

Final consonant, however, is a rare phenomenon in the language. The consonants found at the end of a nominal are limited to the resonants / -n, -l, -r/ and the voiceless dental stop/-t/. Of these /-n/ has the greatest frequency; the rest are mainly confined to the numerals (see Appendix). It seems that there is some historical explanation of the loss of the final vowel, perhaps the influence of other languages. The matter will not be pursued here.

Coming back to the copular expression, the examples above all are unmarked forms, i.e., singular accusative (base form). However, the conditioning is phonological and applies to the three Form Classes identically when they are marked for singulative, feminine, diminutive, etc. Examples follow:

	Form Class	Base	Masculine	Feminine/diminutive	Gloss
2	a	nama	nam-(t)icca-∅	nam-ittii-Da*	man
	b	tabba	tabb-icca-∅	tabba-ttii-Da*	uphill
	c	farda	fardi-icca-∅	farda-ttii-Da	horse
2	a	hattuu	hatt-icca-hattuu-cca-∅	hattuu-ttii-Da	thief
	b	haree	harr-icca-∅	harree-ttii-Da	donkey
2	c	wongoo	wong-icca-∅	wongoo-ttii-Da	fox
		biSan	biSaan-icca-∅	biSaan-ittii-Da*	water

As can be observed from the above examples, the singulative male marker is -(i)cca-ticca and the singulative feminine and/or diminutive marker is -(i)ttii. One thing becomes obvious. The former ends in devoiced -a and hence it takes the -∅ allomorph of copular {-Da} while the latter, ending in long -i suffixes -Da.

* Asterisks denote diminutive use, e.g., nam-ittii is a pejorative use; "womanish" etc.

The same rule also applies when the Form Classes are marked for plurality.

Examples:

	<u>Form Class</u>	<u>Elic. (They are....")</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
	<u>Base</u>	<u>Plural</u> ⁴	<u>Gloss</u>
1	a bofa	bof-oota-∅	snake
	b gurra	gurr-oota-∅	ears
	c farda	fard-oota ~ fard-oolii-Da	horse
2	a hoolaa	hool-oota-∅	sheep
	b reettii	reett-oota-∅	goat
	c sangaa	sangoota ~ sangootii-Da	ox
3	?ilkan	?ilkan-oota-∅	tooth

Since the commonest plural marker is {-oota}, which ends in a short devoiced vowel, the zero allomorph is most often used.

In conclusion, the bound morpheme {-Da} appears in its allomorphs {-Da, -i, -∅} according to preceding phone, after base form, plural, feminine etc. In short, the conditioning is purely phonological.

If an elicitation question *kun(i)mali?* ~ *kun(i)mayini?* is asked and the response involves possession, then the genitive formed by juxtaposition is used.

Examples:

(kun) mana feyyisaa-ti
(this + house + feyisa of + is)
This is Feyisa's house.

kun muCCa atomsaa-ti
(this + child + atomsa of + is)
This is Atomsa's child, etc.

It has to be noticed that *-ti* is used with Form Classes 1 and 2 while its alternant *-iti* is used only with Form Class 3 when the genitive is formed by juxtaposing the possessed and the possessor in that order as in (1) and (2) below:

(1) atomsaa-n 'ilma soreessaa-ti
(atomsaa + subj. m. + son + rich man of + is)
Atomsaa is the son of a rich man.

(2) kun K'odaa annaan-iti
(this + container + milk of + is)
This is a container of milk.

To conclude this section, {*-Da*} and {*-ti*} are copular bound morphemes having the same semantic meaning (is/are); the former is used in the accusative case while the latter one is used only in the genitive case. Both are used in simple affirmative sentences in the present tense.

4.0 Other Forms of Copular Expression

4.1 Expression of Existence and Location: Existence and location are expressed by the verb *jir-* whose infinitive form is *jiraccu*, 'to exist.' It is semantically nearly equivalent to Amharic 'alle'. Unlike Amharic *alle*, which is used with object suffixes, *jir-* is a true verb, and is conjugated for person, number, and gender as follows:

Sg. 1 c.	<i>jir-a</i>	Pl. 1 c.	<i>jir-ra</i>
2 c.	<i>jir-ta</i>	2cc.	<i>jir-tu</i>
3m.	<i>jir-a</i>	3 c.	<i>jir-u</i>
3f.	<i>jir-ti</i>		

To express the idea of 'existence', a form from any of the three Form Classes (see 3.2) is used followed by *jir-* in its correct conjugated form.

Examples:

- 1 c. *marg-i jira*
(grass + subj. m. + exist)
There is grass.
- 2 a. *haaduu-n jira*
(knife + subj. m. + exist)
There is a knife.
- 3 a. *?annaan(-ni)jira*
(milk + subj. m. + exist)
There is milk.

These examples are all of unmarked forms with the verb in 3m.sg. If the base form is marked for number or gender the verb jir- is also conjugated correspondingly.

Examples:

hattu-ttii-n jir-ti

(thief + F. m. + subj. m. + exist + F.m.)

There is the thief woman.

saroo-ni jir-u

(dogs + subj.m. + exist + pl. m.)

There are dogs.

Note that jir- is used to indicate the existence of both animate and inanimate objects. In some languages, e.g., Japanese (Makino 1968:2), different forms of verbs of 'existence' are used for animate and inanimate objects.

The same verbal form jir- is also used for locative expressions.

Examples:

hattu-n marakeessa jir-ā

(thief + subj. m. + house + inside + exists)

There is a thief in the house, or a thief is in the house.

gangee-ttii-n bakkee-rra jir-ti

(mule + F. m. + Subj. m. + field + on + exist + F. m.)

The mule (F) is on the field.

muk-ni mana bukkee jir-a

(tree + subj. m. + house + near + exists)

There is a tree near the house.

It is interesting that this same verb is used in common greeting formulas:

aTTam jir-ta?

(how + exist + you)

How are you? etc.

4.2. Attribute, Identity and Possession

4.2.1 Attribute: Attribution is expressed by the enclitic { -Da } in its various allomorphic variants.

Examples:

?annaan-(-ni) adii-Da

(milk + subj.m. + white + is)

Milk is white.

hool-icci gurracca-Ø

(sheep-the + black + Ø)

The sheep is black.

biSaan(-ni) Kabana?aa-Da

(Water + subj.m + cold + is)

Water is cold.

4.2.2 Identity: Identity, class membership, etc. is also expressed by the same { -Da }.

Examples:

nitii-n kun hattuu-Da

(woman + subj.m. + this + thief + is)

This woman is a thief.

gamadaa-n barsiissaa-Da

(gamada - subj. m. + teacher + is)

Gamada is a teacher.

lencc-i biinensa-Ø

(lion - subj. m. + wild animal + Ø)

A lion is a wild animal.

In addition, it has to be remembered that when {-Da} is used in both attributive and identity expressions it appears in its phonologically conditioned allomorphic shapes (cf. 3.2).

4.2.3 Possession: Possession is shown by a verb Kab-. No surface distinction is made between alienable and inalienable possession.

Examples:

(1) ragassaa-n horii Kaba.

(ragassa - subj. m. + money + has)

Ragassa has money.

(2) ragassaa-n harka Kaba.

(ragassa + subj. m. + hand + has)

Ragassa has a hand.

Though structurally the same, sentences (1) and (2) are interpreted differently. (1) suggests material (alienable) possession where (2) actually means 'the hand is part of the body' (inalienable possession). In the same way, when we say ?aduurree-n ?egee Kab-di 'cat has (a) tail' it means tail is an attribute of cats or 'cat is a tailed animal'.

The verb Kab- is conjugated for person, number, and gender as follows:

Sg.	1 c.	Kab-a
	2 c.	Kab-da
	3m.	Kab-a
	3f.	Kab-di
Pl.	1 c.	Kab-na
	2 c.	Kab-du
	3 c.	Kab-u

This verbal form also means 'hold' or 'grasp'. It is interesting to note the existence of this relationship also in Indo-European, where the verb 'to have' has developed from sentences in which it originally meant 'grasp' or 'hold' (in hand)" (Lyons 1968:392).

4.3 The Verb ta?-*: The Oromo verb ta?- 'become, occur' can be taken as nearly equivalent to the English verb 'to be' or Amharic 'honnē'. It is both tense-and mood-forming: e.g., when used with conjunctions *yo* and *?otu* 'if' (see Nordfeldt, 1947:147).

Examples:

Yo deema ta?-e, 'If he goes' - mere possibility

?otu deema ta?-e, 'If he goes' - desire, longing etc.

As a true verb, ta?- 'to be', is inflected for person, number, and gender in present-future as follows:

<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
1 c. ta?-a	1 c. taa-na
2 c. taa-ta	2 c. taa-tu
3m. taa-ta	3 c. ta?-u

The above conjugation, though in its present/future form is more used with future meaning.

Examples:

an-i barsiisaa-n ta?-a

(I-subj. + teacher + be + subj.)

I will be a teacher.

* CVC is the canonical verb form so we interpret /t/ as part of the root.

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iSee-n narsi taa-ti

(she - subj. + nurse + be-subj.)

She will be a nurse.

The verb ta?-, is more often used in the past however:

e.g.,

atomsaa-n Dukubsatta ta?-e

(atomsaa-subj. + sick person + be -sub.)

Atomsa became a sick person.

Caltuu-n barsiis-tuu taa-te

(Caltu-subj. + teacher - F.m. + be - F.m.)

Chaltu became a teacher.

4.4 The verb tur- : This is a verbal form of 'be' that is used only in the past. It is equivalent to Amharic 'nebbər(ə)' or English 'was'.

tur- has the original meaning of 'wait/stay'. With this meaning it is used also in the present/future tense with conjugated form follows:

<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
1 c. nan-tur-a	1 c. (h) in-tur-ra
2 c. (h) in-tur-ta	2 c. (h) in-tur-tu
3m. (h) in-tur-a	3 c. (h) in-tur-u

When used in the past it can be differentiated in most cases.

e.g.,

iani hattature

(he + thief + was)

He was a thief.

bof-icci gudda tur-e

(snake - sing. + big + be-subj.)

The snake was big., etc.

However, there are ambiguous cases in which tur- can be interpreted as copula or verb.

Caltuu-n as tur-te

(Caltuu - subj. + here + was/stayed)

Chaltu was/stayed here.

nam-ceni marakeessa tur-an(i)

(men - pl. + house + in + were/stayed)

Men were/stayed in the house., etc.

These illustrate how tur- may have evolved from purely verbal use to copular and then to auxiliary use.⁷

e.g.

atomsaa-n as Cisaa tur-e

(atomsaa - subj. + here + sleep + be)

Atomsaa was sleeping here, etc.

5.0 Copular Expression in Different Tenses*

5.1 A brief reference to the tenses of Oromo has to be made here before going into the description of copular use in these tenses. Oromo verbs have a three-tense system from which other compound tenses are formed as given in (a) and (b) below:

a) Simple Tenses: are formed by affixes:

1. Present

Positive: (h) in-bek-ti, 'She knows, is knowing'.

Negative: (h) in-bek-tuu**, 'She does not know'.

2. Past

Positive: bek-a, 'I/he knew'

Negative: (h) in-bek-ne, 'didn't know' - for all persons.

3. Future:

Positive: Identical with present, e.g., (h) in-bek-ti, 'She will know'.

Negative: Identical with present, e.g., (h) in-bek-tu, 'She will not know'.

* Oromo tenses are treated differently by different people: Hodson and Walker, 29ff., Launhardt, 71ff.; Gragg, 188-189. I have mainly adopted Gragg's in this analysis.

** This form (h) in-bek-tu also means 'You do not know' in the positive.

b) Compound Tenses: These are formed by combining the verb with various forms of one or another of the verb "be" as an auxiliary:

1. Present Perfect:

Positive: adeemee(n)* jira → adeemeera 'I/he have/has gone'.

Negative: Identical with past neg.

2. Present Continuous:

Positive: adeemuu-ti** jira 'he is in the process of going'.

Negative: adeemuu-ti (h) in-jir-u, 'he is not in the process of going.

N.B. It is the jir- that is conjugated for persons in such cases.

3. Past Continuous:

Positive: adeemaa(n) tur-e 'I/he was going'.

Negative: adeemaa (h) in-tur-~~re~~, 'I/he wasn't going'.

4. Pluperfect

Positive: adeemee(n) tur-e, 'I/he had gone'

Negative: (h) in-adeemne(n) tur-e, 'I/he had not gone'.

5. Pluperfect Continuous:

Positive: adeemaa(n) jir-a(n) tur-e, 'I had been going'.

Negative: adeemaa (h) in-jir-u(n) tur-e, 'I had not been going'.

6. Future Definite:

Positive: adeemuu-f(an) jira, 'I/he was about to go'.

Negative: adeemuu-f(h) in-jiru, 'I/he was not about to go'.

*-(n) or (an) shows first person.

**Pleonastic, -ti (see Nordfeldt, 33).

7. Future Perfect:

Positive: adeemuu-f(an) tur-e, 'I/he would have gone'.

Negative: adeemuu-f (h) in-tur-re, 'I/he would not have gone'.

8. Future Indefinite: ("he may...")

Positive: nan/hin-adeema ta?-a, 'I/he may go'.

Negative: (h) in-adeemu(n) ta?-a, 'I/he may not go'.

9. Conditional:

Positive: nan/(h) in-adeema(n) tur-e, 'I/he should be going'.

Negative: (h) in-adeemu(n) tur-e, 'I/he should not be going'.

The above illustrates the use of copulas as auxiliaries in forming verbal tenses. The verb "to be" in the various tenses is dealt with below.

5.2 Expression of Existence and Location

5.2.1 Past: It was mentioned earlier that jir- is the copular form used to express 'existence' and 'location' (cf. 4.1) in the present tense. This copular form jir- has no past form. The auxiliary tur- is used with jir- to indicate the past tense of both 'existence' and 'location' as given below.

	<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>
Sg. 1 c.	jir-a	jir-a-n tur-e
2 c.	jir-ta	jir-ta tur-te
3m.	jir-a	jir-a tur-e
3f.	jir-ti	jir-ti tur-te
Pl. 1 c.	jir-ra	jir-ra tur-re
2 c.	jir-tu	jir-tu tur-tan(i)
3 c.	jir-u	jir-u tur-an(i)

5.2.2 Future: Existence and location are expressed by using ta?- as an auxiliary with copular jir-:

?annaan-(ni) suKii keessa jir-a ta?-a

(milk-(subj) + shop + in + be-subj. + aux. - subj.)

There will be/may be milk in the shop(grocery).

nam-icci mana bukee jir-a ta?-a

(man - sing. + house + near + be - subj. + aux. - subj.)

The man will be/may be near the house.

5.3 Attribute and Identity

5.3.1 Present:, {-Da} is used in its various allomorphic shapes.

5.3.2 Past: In its conjugated form for person, number, and gender,

tur- is used to express attribute and identity in the past. Examples:

hool-icci gurracca tur-e

(sheep - sing. + black + be - subj.)

The sheep was black.

nittii-n kun hattuu tur-te

(woman - subj. + this + thief + be - subj.)

This woman was a thief. etc.

5.3.3 Future: ta?- is used to express attribute and identity in the future tense:

hool-icci gurracca ta?-a

(sheep - sing. + black + be - subj.)

The sheep will be/may be black.

nittii-n kun hattuu taa-ti

(woman - subj. + this + thief + be - subj.)

This woman will be/might be a thief.

5.4 Possession

5.4.1 Present: Kab- in its conjugated form for person, number, and gender is used to express possession in the present tense (cf. 4.2.3).

5.4.2 Past: The auxiliary tur- is used with Kab- to express past possession (both alienable and inalienable).

Examples:

ragassaa-n horii Kab-a tur-e

(Ragassaa - subj. + money + has + aux. - subj.)

Ragassa had money.

ragassa-n ?ija Kab-a tur-e

(ragassa - subj. + eye + has + aux. - subj.)

Ragassa had eyes.

6.0 Verb "to be" in the Negative

6.1 Existence and Location: The copular jir- that is used to express 'existence' and 'location' in the positive is negated in different tenses like any verb:

	Positive (Present)	<u>N e g a t i v e</u>		
		<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	<u>Future</u>
Sg. 1 c.	jir-a	(h) in-jir-u	(h) in-jir-un tur-e	(h) in-jir-un ta?-a
2 c.	jir-ta	(h) in-jir-tu	(h) in-jir-tu tur-te	(h) in-jir-tu ta?-a
3m.	jir-a	(h) in-jir-u	(h) in-jir-u tur-e	(h) in-jir-u ta?-a
3f.	jir-ti	(h) in-jir-tu	(h) in-jir-tu tur-te	(h) in-jir-tu ta?-a
Pl. 1 c.	jir-ra	(h) in-jir-ru	(h) in-jir-ru tur-re	(h) in-jir-ru ta?-a
2 c.	jir-tu	(h) in-jir-ta-nu	(h) in-jir-ta-nu tur-tan(i)	(h) in-jir-tanu ta?-a
3 c.	jir-u	(h) in-jir-an-u	(h) in-jir-anu tur-an(i)	(h) in-jir-anu ta?-a

Note that both the copula and auxiliary are conjugated in the past negative while auxiliary ta?- is unconjugated for person, number, and gender in the future.

6.2 Attribute and Identity

6.2.1 Present: Oromo miti 'is/are not' negative verbal form is used to express 'attribute' and 'identity' in the present tense. Examples:

<u>Affirmative (Present)</u>	<u>Negative (Present)</u>
hoolaa-n kun gurracca-Ø (sheep - subj. + this + black + is) This sheep is black.	hoolaa-n kun gurracca miti (sheep - subj. + this + black + is not) This sheep is not black.

Affirmative (Present)

biSaan-(ni) sun Kabana?aa-Da.
(water - (subj.) + that + cold + is)

That water is cold.

kun(i) obboolleesa koo-ti
(This + brother + my - is)

This is my brother.

Negative (Present)

BiSaan-(ni) sun Kabana?aa miti
(water -(subj.) + that + cold + is not)

That water is not cold.

kun(i) obboolleesa koo miti
(This + brother + my + is not)

This is not my brother.

/miti/ is not inflected for person, number and gender. It is the direct negative of the copular form [-Da] and its various allomorphic shapes. /miti/ unlike {-Da} is a free morpheme.

6.2.2 Past: /(h) in-tur-re/* which is the regular negative form of tur- is used to express negative 'attribute and 'identity' for all persons, number, and gender. Examples:

Positive (Past)

hool-icci gurraccatur-e
(sheep - sing. + black + be - subj.)
The sheep was black.

nittii-n kun hattuu tur-te
(woman - subj. + this + thief + be-subj.)
This woman was a thief

Negative (Past)

hool-icci gurracca (h) in-tur-re
(sheep - sing. + black + was not)
The sheep was not black.

nittii-n kun hattuu(h) in-tur-re
(woman-sing.+ this + thief + was not)
This woman was not a thief.

*Note that this form also means 'we stayed'.

6.2.3 Future: ta?- is conjugated for person, number and gender according to the usual verbal pattern to express 'attribute' and 'identity' in the future.

<u>Positive(Future)</u>	<u>Negative(Future)</u>
hool-icci gurracca ta?-a (sheep - sing. + black + be - subj.) The sheep will be/may be black.	hool-icci gurracca(h)in-ta?-u (sheep - sing. + black + will not be) The sheep will not be/may not be black.
nittii-n sun hattuu taa-ti (woman - subj. + that + thief + be - subj.) That woman will be/might be a thief.	nittii-n sun hattuu(h)in-taa-tu (woman - subj. + that + thief + will not be) That woman will not be a thief.

6.3 Possession: The copula Kab- which is used to express alienable and inalienable possession (cf. 4.2.3) in its conjugated form for person, number and gender is similarly conjugated in the negative to express the idea of possession in the different tenses as given in the following table:

Positive (Present)	<u>N e g a t i v e</u>		
	<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	<u>Future</u>
Sg. 1 c. Kab-a	(h) in-Kab-u	(h) in-Kab-u-n tur-e	(h)-in-Kab-u-n ta?-a
2 c. Kab-da*	(h) in-Kab-du	(h) in-Kab-du tur-te	(h)-in-Kab-du ta?-a
3m. Kab-a	(h) in-Kab-u	(h) in-Kab-u tur-e	(h) in-Kab-u ta?-a
3f. Kab-di	(h) in-Kab-du	(h) in-Kab-du tur-te	(h) in-Kab-du ta?-a
Pl. 1 c. Kab-na	(h) in-Kab-nu	(h) in-Kab-nu tur-re	(h) in-Kab-na ta?-a
2 c. Kab-du	(h) in-Kab-danu	(h) in-Kab-danu tur-an(i)	(h) in-Kab-du ta?-a
3. Kab-u	(h) in-Kab-anu	(h) in-Kab-anu tur-an(i)	(h) in-Kab-u ta?-a

* Note that /t/ → /d/ after /b/.

7.0 Conclusion

In the preceding pages the grammar of "to be" in Oromo is given in detail. It is interesting to note that Oromo has a complex suppletive system. It is worth comparing Oromo with other SOV* languages, since Greenberg(1963), Ferguson (1976:69-70), and others point out that SOV word order has important consequences for other aspects of the grammar of a language. Ferguson and others ascribe this SOV order in Ethio-Semitic to Cushitic influence. Oromo seems to be of the "Rigid III" type of Greenberg, whereas Giiz and Tigre show a few of the characteristics, and Amharic and Tigrinya are also transitional (see Ferguson 1976:75 and also Bach 1970:10ff.). Polotsky (1960) long ago pointed out the similarity of Amharic and Turkish syntax, both being of SOV type. It may be illuminating to compare briefly the morphology and syntax of the copula in "Rigid III" languages: Japanese and Oromo, and in supposedly transitional languages, Amharic and Hindi (Bach 1972:11). The situation is outlined in the following table.

a. Japanese ⁸.

Table 1

		<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	<u>Future</u>
<u>Positive:</u>	1. Existence	ar- ar i-*	-ta	ar- ar i- + ga
	2. Possessive	ar-**	-ta	ar- ar i- + ga
	3. Locative	ar- ar i-	-ta	ar- ar i- + ga
	4. Identity	da- da des- de dear	-ta	ar- ar i- + ga
	5. Attribute	da- da des- de dear	-ta	ar- ar i- + ga
<u>Negative:</u>	All negatives are periphrastic involving -masé			

*SOV Subject-object-verb.

** ar- inanimate
i- animate

b. Oromo

		<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	<u>Future</u>
<u>Positive:</u>	1. Existence	jir-	jir-tur-	jir-ta?a
	2. Possessive	Kab-***	Kab-tur-	Kab-ta?a
	3. Locative	jir-	jir-tur-	
	4. Identity	-Da	tur-	ta?-
	5. Attribute	-Da	tur-	ta?-

Negative: Neg. of jir and kab- is regular

Neg. of -Da is miti.

c. Amharic

		<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	<u>Future</u>
<u>Positive:</u>	1. Existence	all(ə)-	nəbbər-	nor -
	2. Possessive	all(ə)-	nəbbər-	nor -
	3. Locative	all(ə)-	nəbbər-	hon -
	4. Identity	n(ə)-	nəbbər-	hon -
	5. Attribute	n(ə)-	nəbbər-	hon -

Negative: Neg. of all(ə)-is yəlləm (irregular)

Neg. of n(ə)-is aydelleḿ (irregular)

Neg. of nor(ə)-is aynorim (regular)

Neg. of hon(ə)-is ayhonim (regular)

Kab- is a verb; there is no corresponding use of jir- like Amharic allə- for possessive.

d. Hindi

		<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	<u>Future</u>
<u>Positive:</u>	1. Existence	hai	tha	hog-
	2. Possessive	hai	tha	hog-
	3. Locative	hai	tha	hog-
	4. Identity	hai	tha	hog-
	5. Attribute	hai	tha	hog-

Negative: "nahin" is placed before hai in all categories.

In the above table (a-d) Hindi has invariable present whereas Japanese and Amharic use two copulas: Copula₁ for categories 1, 2, and 3, and copula₂ for 4 and 5. Oromo is nearly the same except that copula₁ is replaced by copular verbs.

All have invariable past positive with Oromo having invariable tur- used with the verbs, and tur- alone substituting for -Da .

In the future, Amharic has verbs but not in one-to-one agreement with the present tense copulas (see table). Oromo has invariable auxiliary ta?a used with the verbs and ta?a substitutes for -Da. Japanese and Hindi, however, have invariable -ga and hog- throughout respectively.

SOV languages may have suppletive negatives for copulas (Ferguson:72).

Amharic has this striking feature for both copula₁ and copula₂.

Oromo copular verbs have regular negatives, while -Da has the suppletive miti. The Japanese negative is periphrastic and constant throughout. Hindi uses a regular negative nahin 'not', placed before the copula.

To sum up, the following single table shows agreements (+) and disagreements (-) among the four languages on four relevant features: distribution and nature of copular forms in present, past, future, and negative.

Table 2

	<u>Language</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Past</u>	<u>Future</u>	<u>Negative</u>
Rigid III	Japanese	+	+	+	+
	Oromo*	+	+	-	-
Non-rigid III	Amharic	+	+	-	-
	Hindi	-	+	+	+

The interpretation of this table raises interesting questions. The "Rigid III" languages agree on only two features (and one of these is found in all four languages). Amharic and Oromo agree on all features. There is no pattern in the "transitional languages" (they agree only on the universal constant past).

Thus it seems that Amharic has followed the Oromo pattern (though this must be from earlier contact with other Cushitic languages). But "Rigid III" order does not seem to impose much uniformity on "to be" constructions. Hindi can be seen as transitional, sharing two features with Japanese (plus the constant past) and differing on the present. Time and space do not permit pursuing this topic here, but it would be of great interest to check these features in other Cushitic and Ethio-Semitic languages and also in Omotic.

* Oromo has verbs corresponding to copula.

Notes

- ¹ The ad-hoc committee consisted for the most part of representative speakers of different dialects of Oromo. The members were: Ato Asfaw Biratu, Ato Boshera Tolosa, Ato Dejene Leta, Ato Demissie Wolde-Aregay, Ishetu Kebede (present writer, who acted as a chairman), Ato Fisseha Sisay, Ato Mulugeta Eteffa, Ato Seifu Metaferia, Dr. Tilahun Gemta, Dr. Tito Lappiso. The committee met each Friday for 1½ hours for three months.
- ² For details of nominative case formation see Launhardt 1973:39ff., and Nordfeldt 1941:22.
- ³ Oromo has a two-gender system: feminine and masculine. Names of small objects, astronomical phenomena (moon, sun, star) are feminine. Other nouns have their natural gender or are masculine. For details see Gragg: 180 and also Launhardt: 146ff.
- ⁴ Plural number is formed by the use of different suffixes. The commonest ones are: -oota and -oolii. For further details, see Gragg, 180-181.
- ⁵ -ti is defined as having the meaning of "is/it is" by Nordfeldt (1947:112). A recently published book Hirmaataa Dubbii Afan Oromo (1973:35ff) by the Ethiopian Students' Association in Europe treats -ti and -Da as having the same meaning.

⁶ Nordfeldt(1947:23) clearly states that genitive in Oromo is formed in the two ways mentioned. Launhardt confirms this in his detailed description of Oromo cases (1973:55ff.). Dr. Bender, however, disagrees with my analysis that makes -ti a copula in the genitive. His alternative analysis will be found in "A Note on Copula and Genitive in Oromo", forthcoming.

⁷ For details of Auxiliary verbs in Oromo see E. Viterbo(1992:XXIII ff.); M. Moreno(1939: 82-85); B. Battista Cavallera(1939:100ff.); P. Gaetano da Thiene(1939:XXIX-XXXI); and Nordfeldt 1947:111ff.

⁸ The data for the Japanese and Hindi are obtained from Verhaar's, The Verb 'Be' and Its Synonyms series: Japanese from Part 3, Vol. 2(1968) and Hindi partly from Part 2, Vol. 6(1968) and partly also from an informant(Dr. N.P. Singh, member of teaching staff of Institute of Language Studies at AddisAbeba University). I very much appreciate his co-operation and willingness.

Appendix

Sample list of words that represent the three Form Classes:

1. Form class 1:

1.1	<u>-Ca</u>	<u>Gloss</u>		<u>-Ca</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
	beela	hunger		saba	people
	bifa	image		sa?a	cow
	bofa	snake			
	bona	dry season	1.2	<u>C₁C₁a</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
	buna	coffee		?amma	now
	haaDa	mother		?ebba	blessing
	hafuura	breath		hiyya	country
	hantuta	rat		boolla	hole
	Kuba	finger		Dibba	hundred
	lafa	land		gurra	ear
	laga	river		hammeeñña	cruelty
	lama	two		miilla	leg
	lola	war		reeffa	dead body
	magaala	dark, brown		soogidda	salt
	mana	house		tabba	uphill
	maseena	sterile animal		tokko	one
	mi?a	things	1.3	<u>-C₁C₂a</u>	
	mimiiTTa	pepper		Dirsa	husband
	muka	tree		garba	slave
	naaca	crocodile		harka	hand
	nama	man		har?a	today

minixa

1.3 $C_1 C_2 a$ (Cont'd.)

		<u>-CVV</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
hum na	power, strength	mootii	king
korma	bull	muuzii	banana
keerensa	leopard	sadii	three
killeensa	wind	saree	dog
marga	grass	siree	bed
mirga	left	sodaa	fear
morma	neck		
rifeensa	hair		

2. Form class 2:

2.1 -CVV

	<u>Gloss</u>
haaduu	knife
hamaa	cruel
hanKaaKuu	egg
haaraa	new
hiDii	lip
hojii	work
hoolaa	sheep
horii	money
lafee	bone
liKii	debt
loomii	lemon
maKaa	name
mataa	head
moofaa	old garment

2.2 -C₁C₁VV

?adurree	cat
?irree	arm
burree	spotted
DoKKee	mud
guyyaa	day
haPPii	thin
harree	donkey
hattuu	thief
haTTee	cunning
hurraa	fire-wood
kellaa	fence
laPPee	heart
lubbuu	soul
meeTTii	palm tree
raammoo	worm
reettii	goat

2.2 -C₁ C₁ VV (Cont'd) Gloss

saññii	seed
soddaa	son-in-law
woggaa	year
woyyaa	cloth

2.3 -C₁ C₂ VV

abdi	hope
farsoo	local beer
furdaa	thick, fat
garbuu	barley
hiryaa	companion
marKaa	porridge
milki	fortune
salPoo	light, easy
sangaa	ox
wongoo	fox

-G

Gloss

halkan	night
hilkaan	teeth
kuDan	ten
Koraan	fire-wood
miDaan	grain, food
sadeet	eight
sagal	nine
San	five



Form 3 class 3:

<u>-C</u>	<u>Gloss</u>
afaan	mouth
?afur	four
?aannan	milk
biSaan	water
bor	tomorrow
foon	meat

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