

NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

THE OROMO NOMINAL AND ADJECTIVAL  
PREDICATES

BY  
YIRGU NIGUSSIE

*A Linguistic Project Submitted to the Graduate School in  
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Translation Studies*

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Approved:  
Supervisor:

  
DR. Robert Carlson

Second Reader:

  
DR. Maik Gibson

External Reader:

  
DR. Okoth Okombo

July, 2007

## STUDENT'S DECLARATION

### THE OROMO NOMINAL AND ADJECTIVAL PREDICATES

I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other College or University for academic credit.

The views presented herein are not necessarily those of the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology or the Examiners.

(Signed) \_\_\_\_\_  
Yirgu Nigussie

July, 2007

## ABSTRACT

The term “predicate nominals” denotes those predicates which encode the semantic content of the predication in a noun (Payne 1997, 111). As such they are used to present background information in narrative discourses, whereas in stative discourses they are employed to present foreground information (Longacre 1996, 230) thereby making their description worthwhile. The goal of *this paper is to explore how nominal predicates are encoded in Oromo*. This will be accomplished in four chapters.

In chapter one, relevant background information concerning the language will be presented. Since nominal predicates are often encoded by the use of copulas (Payne 1997, 114) the latter constitute a major part of the description of the former. In fact, the discussion of nominal predicate encoding strategy is explained in terms of copulas. These strategies will be treated in chapter two in relation to their prototypical characteristics. The constraints on copula choice will also be examined. In chapter three the Oromo nominal predicates and secondary predicates will be introduced and analyzed. Since the syntactic distinction is not significant<sup>1</sup>, adjectival predicates will not be treated in depth in this paper. Chapter four contains the conclusion and summary.

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<sup>1</sup> Adjectival predicates behave differently in respect to agreement with the subject but the structure of the two clauses are the same.

To

Emebet, Ephrem and Nahom

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AUX	Auxiliary
C	Common
CAU	Causative
COP	Copula
DAT	Dative
DEF	Definite
DUP	Duplication
F	Feminine
GEN	Genitive
IMPRF	Imperfective
INTR	Interrogative
ITR	Iterative
M	Masculine
MID	Middle voice
NEG	Negative
NOM	Nominative
NPST	Non-past

PART	Participle
PAS	Passive
PL	Plural
PRF	Perfect
PRG	Progressive
PRP	Purpose
PST	Past
REL	Relative
SG	Singular

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### The People & the Language

The Oromo people reside across the boundaries of two east African nations, Ethiopia and Kenya. The total number of Oromo that live in Ethiopia is 30,000,000 (Gordon 2005, 117, 118). The people live in the Oromia Administrative Region, the largest region in the country.

The economy of the Oromo is based mainly on agriculture and animal husbandry. In the Oromia region there are also mining industries, tourism, and medium and small-scale industries such as textile.

Traditionally the Oromo believe in God, *Waaqa*, who though far removed from daily experience, is ultimately responsible for every thing that happens to human beings. As the Oromo adopted Christianity the name *Waaqa* was maintained for God. Islam is also one of the main religions with many adherents among the Oromo people.

“Oromo is viewed as one people speaking one language.” (Gordon 2005, 117, 118). The language is known as Afaan Oromo or Oromiffa. It used to be referred to as Galligna, from Galla which is a derogatory name and thus is not accepted by the people. This name has been used largely in former literature on the language.

The Oromo language is one of the Cushitic languages, which form a branch of the Afro-Asiatic family. Speakers of three of the six major dialects of Oromo reside in Ethiopia. These are Southern (Borana-Arsi-Guji), Eastern and West Central Oromo. The other three, Garreh-Ajuran, Orma and Sanye are located in Kenya (Gordon 2005, 133-136). The major related languages include, Dirashe, Gedeo, Hadiyya, Kambata, Konso, Sidama, Somali, and Xamtanga (Gordon 2005, 18).

Afaan Oromo, along with the other major languages, Amharic and Tigrigna, is broadcast over the Voice of Ethiopia radio and Ethiopian Television. There are a few weekly newspapers in the language (Gordon 2005, 118).

The language was reduced to writing in its own orthography only in the past fifteen years. Nevertheless there is a substantial amount of literature in Oromo. These include a complete Bible in the West Central dialect, a complete Bible in the Southern dialect, several bilingual and trilingual dictionaries and grammar books. The bilingual dictionaries are in either Amharic or English.

Trilingual dictionaries are in both Amharic and English. There are also linguistic publications about Oromo including grammar, vocabulary and a comparative study of Oromo dialects. While writing this paper, I did not have access to many of the writings that have been produced in Ethiopia.

### Orthography

The Oromo orthography consists of fifty three graphemes. Long phonemes are represented by doubling the symbol for the short phoneme.

**Table 1 The Oromo Orthography**

Phonemes	Graphemes	Phonemes	Graphemes	Phonemes	Graphemes
/t/	T	/f/	F	/t'/	x
/t:/	Tt	/m/	M	/t':/	xx
/c:/	C	/m:/	Mm	/c'/	c
/k/	K	/s/	S	/c':/	cc
/k:/	Kk	/s:/	Ss	/k'/	q
/dʔ/	Dh	/ʃ/	Sh	/k':/	Qq
/dʔ:/	Dhdh	/n/	N	/i/	li
/ʔ/	'vowel	/n:/	Nn	/e/	Ee
/h/	H	/ɲ:/	Ny	/ɛ/	A
/g:/	Gg	/r/	R	/ɨ/	I
/g/	G	/r/	Rr	/ə/	E
/j:/	Jj	/l/	L	/a/	Aa
/j/	J	/l:/	Ll	/u/	Uu
/d:/	Dd	/j/	Y	/u/	U
/d/	D	/j:/	Yy	/o/	Oo
/b:/	Bb	/w/	W	/ɔ/	O
/b/	B	/w:/	Ww		
/f:/	Ff	/p':/	Ph		

/ʔ/ is represented by ' only when preceded by a vowel as in *bu'e* /buʔə/ 'went down'. Otherwise it is represented by a vowel as in *amma* /ʔem:ε/ 'now'.

## Morphology & Syntax

### Word Order

The basic word order of Oromo is SOV.

- (1) *Gammadaa-n mana ijaar-e.*  
 Gamada-NOM house build-3SG.PST  
 'Gamada built a house.'

- (2) *Gammadaa-n bareedaa dha.*  
 Gamada-NOM handsome is  
 'Gamada is a farmer.'

Auxiliaries follow the verb immediately.

- (3) *barattoot-ni barachaa jir-an.*  
 boy-NOM learning AUX-3PL  
 'The students are learning.'

Modifiers follow the head noun in noun phrases.

- (4) *nama gaarii*  
 person good  
 'A good person'
- (5) *saree san*  
 dog that  
 'That dog'
- (6) *gurbi-cha xiqqaa*  
 boy-DEF small  
 'The small boy'
- (7) *harr-oota lama*  
 donkey-PL two  
 'Two donkeys'
- (8) *guyyaa sadaffaa*  
 day third  
 'third day'
- (9) *ilma nama-a*  
 son man-GEN  
 'Son of man'

Relative clauses follow the nouns they modify.

- (10) *micoo-n kaleessa dhuf-t-e sun*  
 girl-NOM yesterday come-F-3SG.PST that  
 'The girl who came yesterday'

## Gender

Oromo has two genders, masculine and feminine. There is agreement in gender between modifiers and the head noun of the NP, predicate adjectives and the subject of the clause, and person markers on the verb and the subject of the clause. Gender is only distinguished in the singular.

(11) *saatti-n gaafa hin-qab-d-u.*  
 cow-NOM horn NEG-have-F-SG.NEG  
 'The cow doesn't have a horn.'

(12) *qotiiyyo-n gaafa hin-qab-u.*  
 ox-NOM horn NEG-have-M.SG.NEG  
 'The ox doesn't have a horn.'

(13) *saatto-lee-n gaafa hin-qab-an.*  
 cow-PL-NOM horn NEG-have-C.PL.NEG  
 'The cows do not have horns.'

## Case System

In Oromo the subject is marked as nominative whereas the object is the unmarked basic case. The nominative and other cases are marked by a suffix or suffixes.

(14) *Yeenchee-n kolfa dhag-eess-i.*  
 Yenche-NOM laugh hear-F.3SG-NPST  
 'Yenche hears laugh.'

(15) *Tulluu fi allayyaa-n kolfa sana*  
 hill and valley-NOM laugh that

*dhag-a'an-ii kolf-an-ii gara ishee-tti*  
 hear-3PL-PART laugh-3PL-PART to her-to

*deebis-u.*

return-3PL.NPST

‘The hill and the valley, hearing that laugh, and laughing, return to her.’

(16) *uffatni Teetoo<sup>3</sup> akka cabbii addaat-ee lafa*  
 clothes Teto.GEN like ice be.white-PART ground

*ibs-a.*

light-M.3SG.NPST

‘Teto’s clothes being white like ice, lighten the ground.’

(17) *isaani-f hojje-te.*  
 they-DAT work-M.3SG.PST

‘He worked for them.’

The Oromo case system is shown as follows.

---

<sup>3</sup> Genitive case is formed by lengthening the final vowel of the possessor. Thus there is no difference in form between the genitive and the basic cases for possessor nouns that end in long vowels.

Table 2 The Oromo Case System

	Singular	Plural
Basic	-∅	-∅
Nominative	-n/-ni/-i/-∅	-n/-ni
Genitive	lengthened final vowel/-ii for words that end in a consonant	lengthened final vowel
Dative	-f	-f

The Oromo definite article is a bound morpheme suffixed to a noun or an adjective. The definite article agrees in gender and case with the noun or the adjective as shown below.

- (18) *nami-ch-i*                      *mooti-cha*                      *arg-e*.  
 man-DEF.M-NOM                      king-DEF.M                      saw-3SG  
 ‘The man saw the king.’

- (19) *fardi-ch-i*                      *arg-am-e*.  
 horse-DEF.M-NOM                      find-PAS-3SG.M.PST  
 ‘The horse was found.’

- (20) *maqaa nami-ch-aa yaadat-t-e*  
 name                      man-DEF.M-GEN                      remember-F-3SG.PST  
 ‘She remembered the name of the man.’

(21) *kobe gurbi-cha-af bit-e*  
 shoe boy-DEF.M-DAT buy-3SG.PST  
 'He bought shoes for the boy'

(22) *mica-ttii-n gara mana barnoota-a deem-t-e*  
 girl-DEF.F-NOM to house education-GEN go-F-3SG.PST  
 'The girl went to school.'

(23) *uffata muca-ttii-f bit-t-e*  
 clothe-NOM girl-DEF.F-DAT buy-F-3SG.PST  
 'She bought clothes for the girl'

Plural nouns do not take a definite article thus the definite article does not have a plural form. Definiteness in the plural must be inferred pragmatically.

(24) *ijoolle-n nagaa dha.*  
 children-NOM fine COP  
 'The children are fine.'

(25) *ijoollee-n taba jalat-ani.*  
 children-NOM play love-3PL.NPST  
 'Children love play.'

The paradigm of the Oromo definite article *-cha* (masculine) and *-itt* (feminine) is as follows.

Table 3 The Oromo Definite article

	Masculine	Feminine
Basic	<i>-cha</i>	<i>-ttii</i>
Nominative	<i>-chi</i>	<i>-ttiin</i>
Dative	<i>-chaaf</i>	<i>-ttiif</i>
Genitive	<i>-chaa</i>	<i>-ttii</i>

### *Tense and Aspect*

There are two basic tenses, past and non-past. The difference between present and future events can be shown in the non-past by the addition, when necessary, of a temporal adverb, as shown in examples (27) and (28) below.

(26) *ishii-n uffata bit-te.*  
 she-NOM clothes buy-3SG.F.PST  
 'She bought clothes.'

(27) *ishii-n amma uffata bit-ti.*  
 she-NOM now clothes buy-3SG.F.NPST  
 'She buys clothes now.'

(28) *ishii-n boru uffata bit-ti.*  
 she-NOM tomorrow clothes buy-3SG.F.NPST  
 'Tomorrow she will buy clothes.'

Oromo also has complex tense/aspect forms. The marked aspects are progressive, perfective and iterative. Progressive aspect is marked for the past and present by means of a suffix on the verb and an auxiliary. The progressive is used to depict a process as it unfolds.

- (29) *nami-ch-i*      *deem-aa*    *tur-e.*  
 man-DEF-NOM    go-PRG      AUX.PST-3SG.M  
 ‘The man was going.’

- (30) *namich-i*      *deem-aa*    *jir-a.*  
 man-DEF-NOM    go-PRG      AUX.NPST-3SG.M  
 ‘The man is going.’

Oromo has both past perfect (pluperfect) and non-past perfect, i.e. present or future perfect. It is marked by means of a suffix on the verb and an appropriate auxiliary in the case of past and present. The future perfect is marked by an adverbial phrase of time with the forms of the present perfect.

- (31) *nami-ch-i*      *deem-ee*    *tur-e.*  
 man-DEF-NOM    go-PRF      AUX.PST-3SG.M  
 ‘The man had gone.’

- (32) *nami-ch-i*      *deem-ee*    *jir-a.*  
 man-DEF-NOM    go-PRF      AUX.NPST-3SG.M  
 ‘The man has gone.’

- (33) *boru*        *yoona*        *nami-ch-i*        *deem-ee*  
 tomorrow    this time    man-DEF-NOM    go-PST.3SG.M

*jir-a.*

AUX.NPST-3SG.M

‘Tomorrow by this time the man will have gone.’

The iterative aspect is marked by means of reduplication of the first syllable of the verb. Iterative depicts the action indicated by the verb as repeated or affecting several objects. In sentence (35) below the action of the verb is repeated within a certain interval while in (37) the action affects several objects.

- (34) *garaa-n*        *na*        *ciniin-a*  
 stomach-NOM    me        bite-NPST.3SG.M  
 ‘I have a stomach ache.’

- (35) *garaa-n*        *na*        *ci-ciniin-a.*  
 stomach-NOM    me        ITR-bite-NPST.3SG.M  
 ‘I have (a recurring) stomach ache.’

- (36) *aduree-n*    *shinii*    *cabs-ite.*  
 cat-NOM        cup        break-PST.3SG.F  
 ‘A cat broke a cup.’

- (37) *aduree-n    shinii    ca-cabs-ite.*  
 cat-NOM    cup    ITR-break-PST.3SG.F  
 ‘A cat broke (several) cups.’

The Iterative aspect can be combined with the progressive aspect or the perfect to show the progressive or perfective nature of the iterative action.

- (38) *achi    de-debi-aa    jir-a.*  
 there    ITR-return-PRG    AUX.NPST-3SG.M  
 ‘He keeps on returning there.’

- (39) *achi    de-debi-ee    jir-a.*  
 there    ITR-return-PRF    AUX.NPST-3SG.M  
 ‘He has kept on returning there.’

## CHAPTER TWO

### OROMO COPULAS

A nominal predicate is a construction in which the semantic content of the predication is contained in a noun as opposed to a verb. The strategy for relating the subject with the predicate may involve a copula or a simple juxtaposition of a subject and a predicate. A copula can be either a verb or a particle. The former inflects for grammatical functions such as person and number whereas the latter doesn't (Payne 1997, 111-119).

Oromo uses both strategies, i.e. copular construction and juxtaposition, to join the subject and the predicate. Furthermore, there are two copular particles and two copular verbs used in copular clause constructions.

#### Copular Particles

Oromo has two copular particles, *ti* and *dha*. As invariant particles, they do not inflect for any category. As indicated in (40-43) below, for instance, both particles remain unchanged in spite of a gender difference for which Oromo verbs are consistently inflected.

- (40) *obboleetti-n isa-a barat-tuu dha.*  
 sister-NOM he-GEN student-F COP  
 'His sister is a student.'
- (41) *obboleess-i isa-a barat-aa dha.*  
 brother-NOM he-GEN student-M COP  
 'His brother is a student.'
- (42) *kun abbaa isa-a ti.*  
 this.M father he-GEN COP  
 'This is his father.'
- (43) *tun haadha isa-a ti.*  
 this.F mother he-GEN COP  
 'This is his mother.'

The two particles have distinct functions. *ti* is used with possessive predicates, i.e. when the predicate nominal is a genitive construction as shown in (44) and (45) below and also, of course, in (42) and (43) above. (46) is grammatically incorrect because *ti* not *dha* is appropriate here.

- (44) *dargaggu-mma-n abdii biyya-a ti.*  
 youth-hood-NOM hope country-GEN COP  
 'Youth is the hope of a country.'
- (45) *jaalall-i kenna uumama-a ti.*  
 love-NOM gift nature-GEN COP  
 'Love is a gift of nature.'

- (46) \**jaalall-i kenna uumama-a dha.*  
 love-NOM gift nature-GEN COP  
 ‘Love is a gift of nature.’

*dha* is used elsewhere. (49) is ungrammatical because *dha* not *ti* is appropriate in this construction.

- (47) *dargaggummaa-n ibidd-ummaa dha.*  
 youth-NOM fire-hood COP  
 ‘The state of youth is a fire.’

- (48) *obboleetti-n isa-a barat-tuu dha.*  
 sister-NOM he-GEN student-F COP.  
 ‘His sister is a student.’

- (49) \**obboleetti-n isa-a barat-tuu ti.*  
 sister-NOM he-GEN student-F COP  
 ‘His sister is a student.’

### Juxtaposition

Despite the fact that copula is a major element in a nominal predicate clause, it is clear that a nominal predicate clause may not have a copula to link its subject and predicate. We may still describe such a clause in terms of copula i.e. as having a zero copula. In other words, the subject and the predicate can be juxtaposed to form a clause.

Stassen (1997, 62) makes a distinction between juxtaposition and copular strategies in terms of how a “copular function can be performed”. In cases where copular functions are accomplished using overt lexical items the strategy is said to be a full copula strategy whereas in cases where there is no such an overt marking it is termed a zero copula strategy.

For instance, juxtaposition is employed as a strategy for equating subject and predicate in cases where a copula is used in the past tense but not in the present. The use of a particular form of copula or no copula can thus be constrained by various phenomena (Givón 1984, 92).

Oromo uses a zero copula as yet another strategy i.e. the subject and predicate are juxtaposed to form nominal predicate clauses. The distribution of this strategy is not limited to either possessive predicates or otherwise as can be seen in (50) and (52) below. In other words it is used across the distinctions associated with the use of the particles *ti* and *dha*.

The use of juxtaposition is constrained merely by a phonological phenomenon. It is used with a predicate that ends in a short vowel regardless of whether it is possessive or not. Whereas (50) and (52) are grammatically appropriate (51) and (53) are not.

(50) *dargaggummaa-n humna.*  
 youth-NOM strength  
 ‘Youth is strength.’

(51) \**dargaggummaa-n humna dha.*  
 youth-NOM strength COP  
 ‘Youth is strength.’

(52) *kun abbaa kiyya.*  
 this father my  
 ‘This is my father.’

(53) \**kun abbaa kiyya ti.*  
 this father my COP  
 ‘This is my father.’

In written texts the final vowel of a predicate is often lengthened to make use of *dha* as an alternative to juxtaposition. In (54) below the subject and the predicate are juxtaposed. Yet it is possible to use *dha* after the final vowel if the predicate is lengthened as shown in (55).

(54) *dhimm-i kun fudhatama kan qabu.*  
 matter-NOM this.M acceptance which has  
 ‘This matter is (one) which has acceptance.’

(55) *dhimm-i kun fudhatama kan qabuu dha.*  
 matter-NOM this.M.NOM acceptance which has COP  
 ‘This matter is (one) which has acceptance.’

The lengthening option is used perhaps to indicate to the reader that he is at the end of a sentence. A nominal predicate clause in which the subject and predicate are juxtaposed may not signal such information to the reader, who could then continue reading across sentences and miss the point of what he is reading. Such an overt marking may seem redundant with punctuations offering the same clue but it also seems helpful for the less skilled readers.

It is not always possible, however, to lengthen the vowel of the predicate to use the particle. The lengthening scheme is employed when the nominal predicate ends in a relative clause. *humna* in (50) above repeated as (56) below is a noun which, unlike a predicate ending in a relative clause, does not allow the lengthening, rendering (57) ungrammatical.

(56) *dargaggu-mmaa-n humna.*  
 youth-hood-NOM strength  
 ‘Youth is strength.’

(57) \**dargaggu-mmaa-n humnaa dha.*  
 youth-hood-NOM strength COP  
 ‘Youth is strength.’

Juxtaposition does not alternate with *ti* as it does with *dha*. In fact, its use in possessive predicates which essentially have long vowels<sup>4</sup> and therefore call for the use of the copula *ti* is limited to predicates ending with a first person

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<sup>4</sup> As stated above genitive case is formed by lengthening the final vowel of the possessor.

singular and plural possessive pronoun (58) and (59) or second person plural possessive pronoun (60). *ti* is not used with these possessive pronouns since they have short final vowels. The exception to this rule is an alternative form of the first person singular, *koo* which has a long final vowel and thus is used with *ti* and cannot be juxtaposed (61).

(58) *sun*                    *mana*   *kiya*.  
 that.M.NOM   house   my  
 ‘That is my house.’

(59) *sun*                    *mana*   *keenya*.  
 that.M.NOM   house   our  
 ‘That is our house.’

(60) *sun*                    *mana*   *kee-ssan*.  
 that.M.NOM   house   your-PL  
 ‘That is your house.’

(61) *sun*                    *mana*   *koo*   *ti*.  
 that.M.NOM   house   my   COP  
 ‘That is my house.’

### Copular Verbs

A verbal copula is said to be semantically “empty” (Payne 1997, 115) or depleted (Givón 1984, 91). The term ‘depleted’ seems more appropriate since

it carries what Payne terms “whatever is involved in converting a noun phrase into a predicate” (Payne 1997, 115) and thus is not completely empty.

Part of the semantic content, as low as that may be, includes tense and aspect. The fact that verbal copulas carry these semantic categories is evident in that languages manipulate them for these very functions. In some languages they are inflected whereas in others they are restricted to marked tenses as other strategies are used in unmarked tenses (Givón 1984, 92).

Payne (1997, 117) summarizes some basic features of copular verbs as the following:

(i) Copular verbs tend to be very irregular. That is, they often exhibit unusual conjugational patterns as compared to the more “normal” verbs in the language. Paradigms of copular verbs tend to be suppletive and/or defective...

(ii) Copular verbs belong to the same semantic class as very stative verbs, e.g., *stand, sit, live, exist, appear, seem, become*, etc. Often they derive from other stative verbs or occasionally from simple verbs of motion such as *go* or *come*.

(iii) Copular verbs tend to function as auxiliaries in other constructions...”

Payne’s statements about the features of verbal copulas are rightly relaxed since these verbs, as argued by Stassen, “do not form a homogenous class” (Stassen 1997, 91ff).

*tur-*

Oromo has a verbal copula, *tur-* which is used in the past tense. As a verb, it is inflected for gender, person and number. Whereas *tur-* is used along with *ti* in clauses with possessive predicate (62) and (63), it is used alone in a clause whose counterpart in the present tense would employ juxtaposition (64) or the particle *dha* (65). However, it is used along with *dha* for the purpose of emphasizing the predicate (66).

- (62) *tun*            *michuu*    *isa-a*        *ti*        *tur-t-e.*  
 this.NOM.F    friend        he-GEN      COP        COP.PST-F-3SG.  
 ‘This was his friend.’

- (63) *kun*            *michuu*    *isa-a*        *ti*        *tur-e.*  
 this.NOM.M    friend        he-GEN      COP        COP.PST-3SG.M  
 ‘This was his friend.’

- (64) *kun*            *michuu*    *kiyya*        *tur-e.*  
 this.NOM.M    friend        my            COP.PST-3SG.M  
 ‘This was my friend.’

- (65) *obboleess-i*    *isa-a*        *barat-aa*     *tur-e.*  
 brother-NOM    he-GEN      student-M    COP.PST-3SG.M  
 ‘His brother was a student.’

- (66) *obboleetti-n*    *isa-a*        *barat-tuu*    *dha*    *tur-t-e.*  
 sister-NOM      he-GEN      student-F    COP        COP.PST-F-3SG  
 ‘It was a student that his sister was.’

The Oromo copular verb *tur-* is restricted to past tense. In fact it is the past tense form of an auxiliary verb used in verbal clauses. Its present tense form is *jir-*. Below *tur-* is used in verbal clause as an auxiliary in (67) and as a past tense copular verb in (68).

- (67) *dhimm-i-ch-i*                      *yaaddessaa*      *ta'a-a*              *tur-e*.  
 matter-NOM-DEF-NOM      worrying              become-PRG      AUX-3SG.M.PST  
 'The matter was becoming worrying.'

- (68) *dhimm-i-ch-i*                      *yaaddessaa*      *tur-e*.  
 matter-NOM-DEF-NOM      worrying              COP-3SG.M.PST  
 'The matter was worrying.'

The Oromo copular verb, *tur-* exhibits all the features Payne claims verbal copulas have. First, it has unusual inflectional pattern in that its present form *jir-* is from a different root. It is also different in meaning from its present tense counterpart *jir-* which means 'to exist, be present'.

Since *jir-* doesn't occur in nominal predicate clauses and the purpose of the examples (69) and (70) is merely to show the inflectional pattern, the forms *tur-* and *jir-* are presented as they occur in verbal clauses as auxiliaries.

- (69) *ishii-n*              *uffata*              *bita-a*              *tur-t-e*.  
 she-NOM              clothes              buy-PRG              AUX-F-3SG.PST  
 'She was buying clothes.'

- (70) *ishii-n uffata bita-a jir-ti.*  
 she-NOM clothes buy-PRG AUX-F.3SG.NPST  
 ‘She is buying clothes.’

Second, it (*tur-*) belongs to the category of stative verbs. Its basic meaning is ‘to stay’.

- (71) *Tufaa-n biyya ala-a tur-e.*  
 Tufa-NOM country outside-GEN stay-M.3SG.PST  
 ‘Tufa was abroad.’

Third, as shown below in (72) and also (67) and (69) above, the verbal copula *tur-* is used as an auxiliary in verbal clauses.

- (72) *bokkee-nyi rooba-a tur-e.*  
 rain-NOM rain-IMPRF AUX-M.3SG.PST  
 ‘The rain was raining.’

### *ta-*

Oromo uses another verbal copula, *ta-*. *ta-* is a polysemous word with ‘become’ and ‘be’ among its several senses<sup>5</sup>. In its latter sense, i.e. ‘be’ it is used in nominal predicates of subordinate clauses.

<sup>5</sup> Gamta (1989, s.v. *ta-u*<sup>2</sup>) identifies six senses of this word, four senses as a verb and two more as an adverb.

## Conditional

- (73) *nam-i-ch-i*                    *bareedaa* *yoo*    *ta-'e*                    *gaarii* *dha*.  
 man-NOM-DEF-NOM   handsome if            COP-3SG.PST   good   COP  
 'If the man is handsome, it is good.'

## Reason

- (74) *waan*                    *ganna*    *ta-'e-ef*                    *qorr-a*.  
 because                    winter    COP-3SG.PST            be.cold-3SG.NPST  
 'It is cold because it is winter.'

## Complement

- (75) *Naayroobi-n*    *magaala*    *guddoo*                    *akka*    *ta-at-e*  
 Nairobi-NOM    city                    big                    that            COP-F-3SG.PST  
  
*beek-am-aa*                    *dha*.  
 know-PAS-3SG.PST    COP  
 'It is known that Nairobi is a big city'

## Relative

- (76) *madda*    *barreeffama*                    *kenyaa*    *kan*    *ta'e*    *qorannoo*  
 source    writing                    our-GEN    which    COP    study  
  
*proofeesara*    *Gurmuu*    *ti*.  
 professor                    Gurmu                    COP  
 'It was the study by Professor Gurmu which was the source of our writing.'

*Purpose*

(77) *nam-i-ch-i*                      *fayyaa*      *akka*      *ta-'u-uf*  
 man-NOM-DEF-NOM      healthy      PRP      COP-3SG.NPST-PRP

*wallan-ti.*

treat-F.3SGNPST

‘She treats the man so that he will be healthy.’

Unlike *tur-* the verbal copula *ta-* is not restricted to any tense but is used in the past as in (73-76) above and the non-past tenses as shown above in (77) and below in (78). The non-past is either the present or the future.

(78) *guyyaan*      *sun*      *guyyaa*      *ayyaanaa*      *akka*      *ta-'u*  
 day-NOM      that      day      holy      that      COP-3SG.NPST

*beek-am-e*

know-PAS-3SG.PST

‘It was known that that day will be a holyday.’

The copula *ta-* doesn’t satisfy most of the characteristics Payne alleges verbal copulas to have. It inflects for every function a typical Oromo verb inflects for. Unlike *tur-*, whose present counterpart is from another root, *ta-* inflects for both past and non-past tenses. Also it doesn’t serve as an auxiliary in verbal constructions. In fact, it takes an auxiliary in a verbal clause as shown in (79) below.

- (79) *dhimm-i-ch-i*                      *yaaddessaa*   *ta'a-a*                      *tur-e*.  
 matter-NOM-DEF-NOM   worrying      be-PRG                      COP-3SG.M.PST  
 'The matter was becoming worrying.'

### Negation

The negative copula is *miti*.

- (80) *hanni*                      *hojji*      *miti*.  
 theft-NOM      work      NEG  
 'Theft is not work.'

*miti* is a copular particle, and thus requires a preceding long vowel as the other copular particles do. Moreover, it is impossible to leave it out (i.e. with juxtaposition + a short vowel) as in (81) because then negation would not be marked at all. In order to accomplish negation, the final vowel of the predicate has to be lengthened to be followed by the copula as in (82).

- (81) *kun*   *abbaa*   *kiyya*.  
 this   father   my  
 'This is my father.'

- (82) *kun*      *abbaa*      *kiyyaa*      *miti*.  
 this      father      my              NEG  
 'This is not my father.'

*dha-* in (83) is replaced by the negative particle in (84).

(83) *obboleetti-n isa-a barat-tuu dha.*  
 sister-NOM he-GEN student-F COP  
 ‘His sister is a student.’

(84) *obboleetti-n isa-a barat-tuu miti.*  
 sister-NOM he-GEN student-F NEG  
 ‘His sister is not a student.’

*ti-* accompanies the negative copula (86).

(85) *kun abbaa isa-a ti.*  
 this.NOM.M father he-GEN COP  
 ‘This is his father.’

(86) *kun abbaa isa-a ti miti.*  
 this.NOM.M father he-GEN COP NEG  
 ‘This is not his father.’

Clauses with copular verbs are negated in a different way from those with copular particles. Nominal predicate clauses that have verbal copulas to link their subjects and predicates are negated by *hin* plus a negative suffix on the verbal copula like all verbal clauses. The examples of negative nominal predicate clauses indicated below (88, 90) are given alongside their affirmative counterparts (87, 89) respectively for the purpose of comparison. The negative particle does not inflect for person, gender or number. The copular particles including *ti* do not occur along with the verbal copula in negative nominal predicates.

- (87) *kun barsiisaa akka ta-'e*  
 this.NOM.M teacher that COP-M.3SG.NPST.NEG

*beek-a.*

know-1SG.NPST

'I know that this is a teacher.'

- (88) *kun barsiisaa akka hin ta-ane beek-a.*  
 this.M teacher that NEG COP-NEG know-1SG.NPST

'I know that this is not a teacher.'

- (89) *kun hiriyyaa isa-a ti tur-e.*  
 this.NOM.M friend he-GEN COP COP-M.3SG.PST

'This was his friend.'

- (90) *kun hiriyyaa isa-a hin tur-re.*  
 this.NOM.M friend he-GEN NEG COP-NEG

'This was not his friend.'

### Interrogative

In Oromo interrogatives of nominal predicates are formed simply by lengthening the final vowel of the appropriate copula (91-94). Interrogatives that have a predicate ending in a short vowel, i.e. interrogatives that are derived from a clause with juxtaposed subject and predicate, lengthen the final vowel of the predicate (95).

- (91) *mica-n*      *dheer-aa*      *dha-a?*  
 boy-NOM      tall-M      COP-INTR  
 ‘Is the boy tall?’
- (92) *kun*              *michuu*      *isa-a*      *ti-i ?*  
 this.NOM.M      friend      he-GEN      COP-INTR  
 ‘Was this my friend?’
- (93) *kun*              *michuu*      *kee*      *ti*      *tur-e-e?*  
 this.NOM      friend      your      COP      COP-M.3SG.PST-INTR  
 ‘Was this your friend?’
- (94) *kun*              *michuu*      *naa-f*      *ta-’a?*  
 this.NOM.M      friend      me-DAT      COP-M.3SG.NPST-INTR  
 ‘Will this be a friend to me?’
- (95) *kun*              *michuu*      *kiyya-a?*  
 this.NOM.M      friend      my-INTR  
 ‘Is this my friend?’

Oromo uses the negative copula to form tag questions.

- (96) *micaa-n*      *barat-aa*      *dha,*      *miti-i?*  
 boy-NOM      student-M      COP      NEG.COP-INTR  
 ‘The boy is a student, isn’t he?’
- (97) *kun*              *michuu*      *kee*      *ti,*      *miti-i?*  
 this.NOM.M      friend      my      COP      NEG.COP-INTR  
 ‘This was my friend, wasn’t he?’

(98) *kun michuu kee ti tur-e, miti-i?*  
 this.NOM.M friend your COP COP-M.3SG.PST NEG.COP-INTR  
 ‘This was your friend, wasn’t he?’

(99) *kun michuu naa-f ta'-a miti-i?*  
 this.NOM.M friend me-DAT COP-M.3SG.NPST NEG.COP-INTR  
 ‘This will be a friend to me, won’t he?’

(100) *kun michuu keenya, miti-i?*  
 this.NOM.M friend our NEG.COP-INTR  
 ‘This is our friend, is not he?’

Oromo uses a different form of interrogative copula, *moo*, for “disjunctive questions” (Owens 1985, 106). It is used along with the copular particles, *ti*, *dha* or the verbal copulas *tur-*, *ta-*. It is used alone with clauses formed by juxtaposition of subject and predicate.

(101) *niiti-n isa-a Bashaaddu dha moo Magartuu dha?*  
 wife-NOM he-GEN Beshadu COP INTR Megertu COP  
 ‘Is his wife Beshadu or Megertu?’

(102) *kun akka michuu isaa-f ta'-u barbaad-a*  
 this that friend he-DAT COP-3SG.NPST want-3SG.NPST  
  
*moo akka hin ta-ane barbaad-a?*  
 INTR that NEG COP-NEG want-3SG.NPST

‘Does he want this one to be a friend to him or not?’

- (103) *kun michuu kee ti tur-e moo hin tur-re?*  
 this.NOM friend your COP COP-M.3SG.PST INTR NEG COP-NEG  
 ‘Was this one your friend or not?’

- (104) *sun nama moo muka?*  
 that person INTR wood  
 ‘Is that a person or wood?’

### Case Marking

In Oromo, unlike in many languages, the subject-predicate relationship in nominal predicates follows the pattern of subject-object relationship in verbal clauses. The subject is marked as nominative while the predicate is in the basic form as discussed and illustrated earlier in chapter one.

#### Verbal clause

- (105) *ishii-n uffata bit-te.*  
 she-NOM clothes buy-3SG.F.PST  
 ‘She bought clothes.’
- (106) *Yeenchee-n Kolfa dhag-eess-i.*  
 Yenche-NOM laugh hear-F.3SG-NPST  
 ‘Yenche hears a laugh.’

## Nominal predicate Clause

(107) *micoo-n      barat-tu      dha.*  
 girl-NOM      student-F      COP  
 'The girl is a student.'

(108) *muci-ch-i              barat-aa              dha      tur-e.*  
 boy-DEF-NOM              student-SG.M      COP      COP-M.3SG.PST  
 'The boy was a student.'

### CHAPTER THREE

#### TYPES OF PREDICATES

The fact that copular clauses can be formed without a copula implies that it is the subject and the predicate that are the defining constituents of copular clauses. Predicates of a copular clause can be nouns or adjectives. Predicates that are nouns are said to be nominal predicates and those that are adjectives are called adjectival predicates (Givón 1984, 91).

There are both nominal and adjectival predicates in Oromo. (109) and (110) are nominal and adjectival predicates respectively.

(109) *kan ishii fuudh-e nama bira-a ti.*  
who she marry-M.3SG.PST man other-GEN COP  
'The one who married her was another man'

(110) *mucoo-n qall-oo tur-t-e.*  
girl-NOM slim-F COP-F-3SG.PST  
'The girl was slim.'

### Nominal Predicate Clauses

Nominal predicates are categorized into two sub-types of predicates based on the semantic relationship between the subject and the predicate. According to Payne (1997, 114) “equative clauses are those which assert that a particular entity (the subject of the clause) is identical to the entity specified in the predicate nominal” whereas “proper inclusion is when a specific entity is asserted to be among the class of items specified in the nominal predicate”.

In Givón’s terminology the former is “referential” and the latter “non-referential” or “attributive” (Givón 1984, 91). Longacre (1996, 230) calls them descriptive and equative respectively.

It is interesting to see how the term “equative” is used differently by Payne and Longacre to refer to opposing categories of nominal predicate. I find it helpful, then, to specify which terminology I will use to refer to these two categories. Henceforth, I will use Payne’s terms ‘equative’ and ‘proper inclusion’ as he defined them.

Oromo has both equative (111-113) and proper inclusion (114, 115) nominal predicates clauses. Clauses (111-113) consist of subjects that are matched by their predicates in such a way that the subject is identified or referred to by the predicate as a particular entity. In contrast, clauses (114, 115) have subjects that are described by the predicates as belonging to a class indicated

by the predicates whose extension includes but is not limited to the entity it describes.

- (111) *kun abbaa isa-a ti.*  
 this.NOM.M father he-GEN COP  
 ‘This is his father.’

- (112) *nami-ch-i michuu isa-a ti tur-e.*  
 man-NOM-NOM friend he-GEN COP AUX.PST-3SG.M  
 ‘The man was his friend.’

- (113) *nam-i-ch-i sun Caalaa dha.*  
 man-NOM-DEF-NOM that.M Chala COP  
 ‘That man is Chala.’

- (114) *obbole-tti-n isa-a barat-t-uu dha.*  
 sister-F-NOM he-GEN student-F COP  
 ‘His sister is a student.’

- (115) *obbole-tti-n isa-a daldal-t-uu tur-te.*  
 sister-F-NOM he-GEN merchant-F COP.PST-3SG.F  
 ‘His sister was a trader.’

There is no syntactic distinction between equative and proper inclusion nominal predicates in Oromo.

## Adjectival Predicate Clauses

Oromo has adjectival predicate clauses. Adjective predicates agree in number and gender with their subjects.

(116) *micaa-n dheer-aa dha.*  
 boy-NOM tall-M COP  
 'The boy is tall.'

(117) *micoo-n dheer-tuu dha.*  
 girl-NOM tall-F COP  
 'The girl is tall.'

(118) *muc-i-ch-i ham-aa dha tur-e.*  
 boy-NOM-DEF-NOM bad-M COP COP-M.3SG.PST  
 'The boy was bad.'

(119) *mucoo-n qall-oo dha tur-t-e.*  
 girl-NOM slim-F COP COP-F-3SG.PST  
 'The girl was slim.'

(120) *ati jabaa dha.*  
 you.NOM strong COP  
 'You are strong.'

Adjectives and thus adjectival predicates are marked for plurals by means of reduplication.

- (121) *ijoolle-n*            *xi-xiqqoo*    *dha.*  
 children-NOM        DUP-small    COP  
 ‘The children are small.’
- (122) *duborto-ot-ni*        *bab-bareedu*        *dha.*  
 woman-PL-NOM        DUP-beautiful        COP  
 ‘The women are beautiful’

### Secondary Predicates

There are secondary predicate constructions in Oromo. Schultze-Berndt & Himmelmann (2003, 22-23) list six criteria that define a depictive secondary predicate construction from a cross-linguistic point of view. In this section, I will discuss the depictive secondary predicate construction in Oromo in relation to the first five of those criteria. I will not deal with the sixth criterion which is concerned with the restriction on classes of words to which depictives belong, since I am specifically concerned with nominal and adjectival predicates.

According to Schultze-Berndt & Himmelmann the first criterion is that a depictive secondary predicate construction involves two distinct predicates (the main and the depictive) and that the event stated by the depictive lies within the time frame of the event indicated by the main predicate.

Oromo has a construction that contains two different predicates. The main predicates *dhuge* in (123) and *oofa* in (124) are finite verbs whereas the

secondary predicates *duwwaa* and *leexoo* respectively are adjectival predicates dependent on their respective main predicates.

- (123) *nam-i-ch-i*                      *buna*    *duwwaa*    *dhug-e*.  
 man-NOM-DEF-NOM    coffee    empty    drink-M.3Sg.PST  
 ‘The man drank the coffee without sugar.’ (Lit. The man drank coffee empty.)

- (124) *farda*    *leexoo*                      *oof-a*.  
 horse    with.no.burden    drive-3SG.M.NPST  
 ‘He drives the horse with no burden.’

The secondary predicate expresses a state that is true during the time expressed by the main predicate. In (125) below it is during the time that the boy eats that he is greedy.

- (125) *gurb-i-ch-i*                      *deega*            *nyaata*.  
 boy-NOM-DEF-NOM    greedy            eat-3SG.M.NPST  
 ‘The boy eats greedily.’ (Lit. The boy eats (as) a greedy one.)

Schultze-Berndt & Himmelmann claim that the fact that the depictive secondary predicate expresses an event that is contained in the time frame indicated by the main predicate sets depictives apart from attributive modifiers (2003, 3). This will be discussed below along with the fifth criteria.

The second criterion proposed by Schultze-Berndt & Himmelmann is that “the depictive is obligatorily controlled, i.e. it predicates an event of one participant of the main predicate, the controller, which is not expressed separately as an argument of the depictive”. In (126) below the depictive *qullaa* is controlled by or is predicated of the object *niitii* and in (127) and (128) *duwwaa* is controlled or predicates on the objects *gootaraa* and *buna* respectively. In each case the controller has not been expressed separately as an argument of the depictive.

- (126) *nami-ch-i*                      *niitii*                      *qullaa*                      *dhaab-e*.  
 man-DEF-NOM                      woman                      naked                      stand-3SG.M.PST  
 ‘The man made the woman stand naked.’

- (127) *gootaraa*                      *duwwaa*                      *hambis-an*.  
 store                      empty                      leave-3PL.PST  
 ‘They left the store empty.’

- (128) *ishi-n*                                      *buna*                      *duwwaa*                      *dhug-di*.  
 she-NOM                                      coffee                      empty drink-F.3SG.NPST  
 ‘She drinks the coffee without sugar.’ (Lit. she drinks coffee empty.)

In (129-131) below *leexoo*, *jiraa*, and *deega* respectively are predicated of their respective subjects *fardichi* and *namichi* and *gurbichi*.

- (129) *fard-i-ch-i*                                      *leexoo*                                      *guluf-e*.  
 horse-NOM-DEF-NOM                                      unburdened                                      run-M.3SG.PST  
 ‘The horse galloped unburdened.’

- (130) *nam-i-ch-i*                      *jiraa*      *awwaal-am-e*.  
 man-NOM-DEF-NOM      living      bury-PAS-M.3SG.PST  
 ‘The man was buried alive.’

- (131) *gurb-b-i-ch-i*                      *deega*              *nyaata*.  
 boy-NOM-DEF-NOM      greedy              eat-3SG.M.NPST  
 ‘The boy eats greedily.’

The third criterion by Schultze-Berndt & Himmelmann is that the predication expressed by the depictive concerning the controller is at least partially independent of the predication communicated by the main predicate. This criterion distinguishes depictives from complex predicates. According to the authors a constituent level negation or prosody test can be used to distinguish depictives from periphrastic or complex predicates.

The predication expressed by *duwwaa* in (127) above can be negated independently of the main predicate and therefore is independent to some extent and does not form a complex predicate as shown below in (132).

- (132) *gootaraa*      *duwwaa*      *hin*      *hambis-nne*.  
 store              empty              NEG      leave.NEG  
 ‘They did not leave the store empty.’

Unlike a complex predicate whose constituents cannot be negated independently the predication *duwwaa* in (132) is negated without also necessarily negating the main predication, *hambisan*.

The fourth criterion is concerned with how integrated the depictive secondary predicate is into the main predicate. According to Schultze-Berndt & Himmelmann, “The depictive is not an argument of the main predicate. i.e. it is not obligatory” (Schultze-Berndt & Himmelmann (2003, 23). In all of the examples of the depictive secondary predicate given above the depictive predicate can be left out without changing the meaning or the grammatical relation of the constituents of the main predicate as in (134) and (136) below.

(133) *fard-i-ch-i*                      *leexoo*                      *guluf-e.*  
 horse-NOM-DEF-NOM      unburdened      gallop-M.3SG.PST  
 ‘The horse galloped unburdened.’

(134) *fard-i-ch-i*                      *guluf-e.*  
 horse-NOM-DEF-NOM      gallop-M.3SG.PST  
 ‘The horse galloped.’

(135) *farda*    *leexoo*                      *oof-a.*  
 horse    with.no.burden      drive-3SG.M.NPST  
 ‘He drives a horse with no burden.’

(136) *farda*    *oof-a.*  
 horse    drive-3SG.M.NPST  
 ‘He drives a horse.’

The fifth criterion put forward by Schultze-Berndt & Himmelmann distinguishes depictives from modifiers. According to the authors, “The depictive does not

form a low-level constituent with the controller, i.e. it does not function as a modifier of the controller”. They see that, because depictives describe a state or an event vis-à-vis one participant of the main predicate, they have a function similar to that of attributive modifiers. The difference lies in the fact that what depictives express is time oriented, i.e. the state or event conveyed by the depictives are true particularly within the time limit indicated by the main predicate. There is no such link between attributive modifiers and the main predicate’s time frame. Attributive modifiers simply modify a noun phrase regardless of the temporal frame of the main predicate (Schultze-Berndt & Himmelmann 2003, 3).

The fact that depictives express a state or an event that is true within the time limit indicated by the main predicates was discussed above in relation to Oromo. Here, I will focus on how depictives in Oromo are distinguished from modifiers both on semantic and syntactic grounds.

In Oromo depictive secondary predicates controlled by direct objects occur at the same place where modifiers occur and agree in case with their controllers apparently making it difficult to distinguish modifiers from depictives on a syntactic level. The idea of time frame is, therefore, helpful in distinguishing depictive secondary predicates from modifiers. In (137) below the fact that the horse was *leexoo* particularly during the time expressed by the main predicate

*oofa* identifies its function as a depictive secondary predicate as opposed to a modifier.

- (137) *farda leexoo oof-a.*  
 horse with.no.burden drive-3SG.M.NPST  
 'He drives the horse with no burden.'

The semantic distinction is also expressed by syntactic means. That *leexoo* in (137) above is a depictive, and not a modifier of *farda* is shown by stressing *farda* differently from the way it is pronounced if *leexoo* is its modifier. In other words, the two interpretations have two different prosodic patterns.

Unlike modifiers which always immediately follow the noun they modify as in (139), depictives can be separated from their controllers as shown in (138) and (140) below.

- (138) *farda san leexoo oof-a.*  
 horse that unburdened drive-3SG.M.NPST  
 'He drives that horse unburdened.'

- (139) *farda leexoo san oof-a.*  
 horse unburdened that drive-3SG.PST  
 'He drives the unburdened horse.'

- (140) *nam-i-ch-i*                    *mana*   *isa-a*        *diimaa*   *dib-e.*  
 man-NOM-DEF-NOM   house   he-GEN   red        paint-3SG.M.PST  
 'The man painted his house red.'

In cases where the subject of the clause is the controller of the depictive predicate, the syntactic distinction is clearer. In such cases the subject is marked as nominative whereas the depictive is unmarked as shown in (141) and (142). Modifiers, on the other hand, agree in case with head noun as shown in (143) and (144).

- (141) *fard-i-ch-i*                    *leexoo*                *guluf-e.*  
 horse-NOM-DEF-NOM    unburdened        run-M.3SG.PST  
 'The horse galloped unburdened.'

- (142) *niitii-n*                    *qullaa*        *ejjet-t-i.*  
 woman-NOM        naked        stand-F-3SG.NPST  
 'The woman stands naked.'

- (143) *fard-i-ch-i*                    *leexo-n*                *guluf-e.*  
 horse-NOM-DEF-NOM    unburdened-NOM    gallop-M.3SG.PST  
 'The unburdened horse galloped.'

- (144) *niiti-n*                    *qullaa-n*        *sun*    *maraat-tu*    *dha.*  
 woman-NOM    naked-NOM    that    mad-F        COP  
 'That naked woman is mad.'

Oromo does not have a depictive controlled by a subject of a transitive verb. In the examples given above depictives are controlled by the subject only when the verb is intransitive and thus has no object. Otherwise they are controlled by the object.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### CONCLUSION

Oromo employs a combination of verbal and non-verbal copulas as well as a zero copula strategy in encoding nominal predicates. There are two copular particles *dha* and *ti* of which the latter is used in a clause with a predicate nominal that is a genitive construction and the former is used elsewhere.

The strategy of juxtaposition is used across the distinctions made between these two particles, the constraint being a phonological phenomenon. Specifically, juxtaposition is employed in a clause with a predicate ending in a short vowel.

The language also has two verbal copulas *tur-* and *ta-*. *tur-* is restricted to the past tense whereas *ta-* is used across all tenses in nominal predicates of subordinate clauses.

Oromo has both nominal and adjectival predicates but makes no distinctions in

encoding them. The predicate nominals can be either equative or proper inclusions. However, apart from the semantic distinction, the language does not distinguish them in the way they are encoded.

Oromo allows a subject and object controlled secondary predicate construction. The subject is the controller only if the verb is intransitive, i.e. when there is no object. Otherwise depictives are controlled by the object.

In cases where the object is the controller it is difficult to distinguish the secondary predicates from modifiers in written texts. In an utterance however, the controller is pronounced differently and therefore the distinction is clear. Since unlike modifiers, secondary predicates can be separated from their controllers by an intervening word such as a demonstrative the fact that Oromo does indeed allow an object controlled secondary predicates can be validated.

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## APPENDIX

### *Tiruu lafa bu'e akka hintaanee* Lest Anyone be Useless

- (1) *Umrii-n dargaggu-mmaa qormaata heddu of*  
age-NOM youth-hood temptation many self  
*keessa-a qab-a.*  
in-from have-3SG.M.NPST

'Youth hood has many challenges in it.' Lit. 'The age of youth hood has many test in itself'

- (2) *dargaggu-mmaa-n humna; yeroo bu'uur-ri*  
youth-hood strength, time foundation-NOM  
  
*gara-fuuldura-a itti kaa-'am-uu dha,*  
to-future-GEN at place-PAS-NPST.3SG COP  
  
*abdi biyya-a ti, qabeenya.*  
hope country-GEN COP wealth

'Youth hood is strength; is a time at which a foundation of the future is placed; (it) is a hope of a country; (it) is a wealth.'

- (3) *umrii daugagg-ummaa-tti want-i hund-i*  
 age youth-hood-at thing-NOM all-NOM

*nama-tti bareeda.*  
 person-to be.beautiful

‘During youth hood everything appears to be beautiful to a person.’ Lit.  
 ‘At the age of youth hood everything be beautiful to a person’

- (4) *sani-s kana-s qaba-dh-uu, gadidhiis-i*  
 that-also this-also hold-MID.IMPRV-SG leave-IMPRV.SG

*nama jechi-siis-a.*  
 personsaying-CAU-3SG.NPST

It (youth hood) makes one to desire to try everything.’ Lit. ‘It (youth hood) makes a person to say “hold this” and leave that”.’

- (5) *kan itti hin-beek-nee-f sadarkaa-n kun*  
 who at NEG-know-NEG-for stage-NOM this.m

*ibidd-ummaa dhas.*  
 fire-hood COP-also

‘For one who does not know how to handle it, this stage is fire also.’ Lit.  
 ‘For who does not know at it, this stage is fire hood also’

(6) *isa itti beek-ee qalbiqabeessummaa-dhaan,*  
 he at know-PART.3SG discernment-with

*bilchin-aan, hubannaa-dhaan fi mil'at-aan*  
 maturity-with watchfulness-with and vigilance-with

*deddeebi-'uu-f ammo bakkalcha ganama-a ti.*  
 walk-REL-for whereas star morning-GEN COP

'But for him who knows and walks (lives) with discernment, maturity, watchfulness and vigilance it is a morning star'

(7) *egaa umrii kana gaaga'ama wayitii amma-a*  
 then age this.M damage season now

*dhibeen edsii qaqqab-siisa-a jir-uun*  
 disease AIDS-GEN happen-CAU-PRG AUX-with

*walbira qab-n-ee yoo ilaal-le dhimm-i-ch-i*  
 together hold-1PL-PART when see-1PL matter-NOM-DEF-NOM

*heddu yaaddressaa ta'aa jir-a.*  
 many worrying be-PRG AUX-3SG.NPST

'Then, when we compare this age and the damage that AIDS is causing this time the matter is becoming worrying.' Lit. 'Then, when we hold side by side and see this age and the damage that the AIDS disease is causing, the matter is becoming worrying.'

(8) *qaama hawaasa-a dhukkub-ni edsi-i irrajireess-aan*  
 body society-GEN disease-NOM AIDS-GEN greater.extent-with

*fix-aa jir-u keessaa dargagg-oot-ni umrii-n*  
 finish-PRG AUX-REL out.of youth-PL-NOM age-NOM

*isaanii waggaa 15 hanga 30-tti arg-am-an*  
 their year 15 up.to 30-at find-PAS-3PL.NPST

*sadarkaa olaanaa qaban.*  
 stage higher have-3PL.NPST

‘Out of the portion of the society that the AIDS disease is killing to a greater extent, the youth whose age ranges from 15 to 30 years have higher numbers’

(9) *dargagg-oot-ni balaa qaba-at-ee dhiis-ee*  
 youth-PL-NOM danger have-MID-3SG leave-3SG

*otoo addaan hin-baaf-at-in saalqunnamti*  
 without apart NEG-bring.out-MID-NEG sexual.intercourse

*dabal-at-ee waa hunda raawwach-uu-f*  
 include-MID-PART thing all do-INF-for

*ariif-at-an.*  
 hurry-MID-3PL.NPST

‘The youth hurry to do everything including sexual intercourse without discerning whether it has danger or not.’

- (10) *saalqunnamtii-n seeraa eegg-at-ee*  
 sexual.intercourse rule keep-MID-PART

*warra lama-an jidduu-tti raawwat-am-uu-n*  
 partner two-those between-at do-PAS-INF-NOM

*kennaa uumamaa ti.*  
 gift nature.GEN COP

‘Sexual intercourse, its rule being kept, to be done between the partners, is a gift of nature.’

- (11) *saalqunnamtii-n adeemsa walhormaataa dhal-oon-ni*  
 sexual.intecourse process reproduction generation-PL-NOM

*akka ittifufu taa-sis-uu dha.*  
 that continue happen-CAU-INF COP

‘Sexual intercourse is a process of reproduction that makes generations to continue.’

- (12) *dhimm-i kun akka amantiitti-s yoo*  
 matter-NOM this.M as belief-also if

*ilaal-am-e fudhatama kan qabuu dha.*  
 see-PAS-M.3SG acceptance which has COP

‘This matter, if seen as a belief, is (one) which has acceptance.’

(13) *Waaqayyo goch-i-ch-i karaa qulqulluu fi*  
 God deed-NOM-DEF-NOM way pure and

*jaalala of keessa-a qab-uun akka*  
 love self in-from has-with that

*raawwatamu abboom-a; eenyumtuu sireen*  
 fulfilled command-3SG.NPST anyone bed

*isa-a qulqulluu haa ta-u jech-uun.*  
 he-GEN pure let be-3SG.NPST say-by

‘God commands that the deed fulfilled in a pure way and with deepest love; by saying let anyone’s bed be pure.’

(14) *abboommii-n kun ergaa guddaa*  
 commandment-NOM this.M message big

*of keessaa qaba.*  
 self in-from has

‘This commandment has an important message in itself.’

(15) *nam-ni Waaqayyo-n fakkeenya isaatiin uume*  
 man-NOM God-NOM image his-in create-3SG.PST

*waan tokko raawwach-uu dura naanness-ee,*  
 thing one do-INF before turn-PART

*irra ded-deebi-'ee baas-ee bus-uu qaba.*  
 on DUP-return-PART take.up-PART take.down-INF has

'A man God created in His image has to think over again and again before doing any thing.'

(16) *asitti-s achitti-s kuf-ee ka'a ta-anaan*  
 here-also there-also fall-PART rise be-if

*namni kun siree-n isa-a akkamin*  
 man this.M bed-NOM he-GEN how

*qulqulluu ta-'a ree?*  
 pure be then?

'If a man falls and rises here and there how will this man's bed be pure then?'

(17) *qulqullummaa dhab-uu qofa otoo hin-ta-ane*  
 purity lack-INF only without NEG-be-NEG

*akka tiruu lafa bu-'e dhib-ee bara-a*  
 like liver ground fall-3SG.PST disease year-GEN

*kana-an faal-am-uu-n-is hin*  
 this.M-with contaminate-PAS-INF-NOM-also FOC

*uum-am-a.*

will be create-PAS-3SG

'It is not only the lack of purity, (but) like liver that fell on the ground there is a possibility of being contaminated by this disease of the time.'

(18) *gorsa sagalee Waaqayyoo kana*  
 advice voice God-GEN this.M

*fudh-ann-ee haala amma keessa jir-ruun*  
 take-1PL-PART situation now in exist-1PL.with

*yoo walsim-siif-n-ee ilaal-le dargagg-oota*  
 if relate-CAU-1PL-PART see-1PL youth-PL

*kiinyaa-f hiddu misa ta-'uu dand-'a.*  
 our-for many well be-to can-3SG.NPST

'if we take this advice of God's word and relate it to the situation we are currently in and see it can be very well for our youth.'

(19) *Rabbi namni karaa qulqulluu ta-'een*  
 God man-NOM way pure be-by

*akka walhoru fedha isa-a ti.*  
 that reproduce desire he-GEN COP

'It is God's desire that humankind reproduce in a way that is pure.'

(20) *dhal-oon-ni ammaa otuma halkanii*  
 generation-PL-NOM now-GEN while night

*guyyaa gors-i kana fakkaatu garanaa*  
 day advice-NOM this.M like this.side

*garasii dhangaluu dhibee edsii-tiin*  
 that.side flow disease AIDS-by

*garmalee harca'-aa kan jiru.*  
 exceedingly fall-PRG that AUX-3SG.NPST

'It is while an advice like this one flows here and there that the current generation is exceedingly falling (dying).'

(21) *dhuguma umrii-n kun gufuu-wwan adda*  
 it.is.true age-NOM this.M obstacle-PL various

*addaa-tiin marfam-ee jir-a; dhibee edsii-tiin,*  
 various-by surrounded-PART AUX-3SG AIDS-by

*hojdhabdummaa-dhaan, abdi kutannaa-dhaanii fi*  
 unemployment-by hope losing-by and

*kan kana fakkaatu-dhaan.*  
 which this like-by

‘It is true (that) this age is surrounded by various obstacles; by AIDS disease, unemployment, hopelessness and the likes’

(22) *gufuu-wwan kana keessaa inn-i hamaa-n*  
 obstacle-PL this out.of he-NOM worst-NOM

*dhibee edsii ti.*  
 disease AIDS COP

‘Out of these obstacles the worst is the AIDS disease.’

(23) *dargaggeess-i boru barat-ee, daldalee, buufatee,*  
 youth-NOM tomorrow learn-PART trade-PART make.profit-PART

*mana dhaabb-at-ee jireenya isa-a gaggeessuu-f*  
 house build-MID-PART living he-GEN lead-PRP

*abdii-n irra kaa'ame dhibee kana-an*  
 hope-NOM on placed disease this-by

*qabam-naan karoor-ri kun dhadhaa ibidda bu-e*  
 caught-if plan-NOM this.M butter fire fall-3SG.PST

*ta-'a.*

be-3SG.NPST

'If the youth in whom hope has been placed to lead his life in the future (by) learning, trading, making profit and building a house is caught by this disease (HIV/AIDS), then the plan will be butter that fell into fire.'

(24) *kana jalaa baraar-am-uu-f suuta*  
 this under save-PAS-INF-PRP slowly

*ilaall-at-aa tarkaanfa-chuu qofa tu nama*  
 see-MID-PRG walk-INF only it.is person

*gargaar-a.*

help-3SG.NPST

'To be saved from this, it is only walking slowly and watchfully that helps one.'

(25) *waan tokko irra-tti hatattamaan tarkaanfii*  
 thing one on-at hurriedly step

*fudha-chuu-n dura irra ded-deebi-'an-ii*  
 take-DEF-NOM before on DUP-return-3PL-PART

*itti yaad-uu-n mala gaabbii*  
 to think-DEF-NOM wisdom regret

*hin-qab-nee dha.*  
 NEG-have-NEG COP

‘Before hurriedly taking step on something it is wise to think over.’

(26) “*mormi kan uum-amee-f garagal-ee*  
 neck why create-PAS-PRP turn-PART

*ilaaluuf” jedh-a Oromoo-n oggaa*  
 see-INF-PRP say-3SG.NPST Oromo-NOM when

*mammaaku.*  
 say.proverb

“‘The neck is created to enable one to turn and see” says an Oromo proverb.’

(27) *akkuma-n seensa irra-tti ibsuu-f yaal-e*  
 as-1SG introduction on-at state-PRP try-1SG

*tiruun lafa bu'ee huuba qab-at-ee*  
 liver ground fall-3SG.PST dust hold-MID-PART

*ka'a.*  
 arise

'As I tried to state in the introduction liver that fell on the ground  
 absorbs dust.'

(28) *kanaaf dhalli nama-a akka-s akka*  
 for.this offspring man-GEN like-that lest

*hin-ta-ane-f alaaluma-tti of haa*  
 NEG-be-NEG-PRP far-at self let

*eegg-at-uu-n dhaamsa koo ti.*  
 keep-MID-SJNT-NOM message my COP

'For this (reason) it is my message that humans be careful lest they  
 become like that (the fallen liver).'