Preliminary notes on the Hamar verb

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Abstract

Hamar (South Omotic) has a complex and poorly studied verbal system. The article deals with positive Imperative, Hortative and declarative verbal forms only, to the exclusion of negative verbal forms, as well as of verbs found in subordinate clauses. Interrogative forms, relative clauses and clefts will nevertheless be mentioned, since they have a role in the discussion. Likewise excluded is verbal derivation, as well as any deep analysis of the functional and semantic contents of the paradigms.
The Hamar verb is characterized by the almost total absence of subject-verb agreement (possibly an areal feature of extreme Southwest Ethiopia) and the widespread use of auxiliary and copula elements, which carry much of the TAM value and can even be compounded.

1. Preliminaries[1]

Hamar (often erroneously spelled Hamer) is a South Omotic language spoken in Southwest Ethiopia (most specifically, in the South Omo Zone of the Southern Peoples, Nations and Nationalities Region). Together with Banna, Bashada and, maybe, Karo (which nevertheless seems to be a closely

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[1] Hamar data were first collected by Mauro Tosco and Graziano Savà in July-August 2007 in Dimeka (South Omo Zone, Southern Peoples, Nations and Nationalities Region, Ethiopia). Further and more substantive work was carried on by Mauro Tosco and Sara Petrollino in January/February 2010, and by Sara Petrollino alone in March-April 2010. The authors gratefully acknowledge the assistance and support of the local Mission of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, of the *International Community Development Programme – South Omo* in Arba Minch and in Dimeka, the financial support of the *Dreikönigsaktion* (Vienna) and the help of our 2007 language assistants Shode Berk'i and Muli Wale and our 2010 assistants, Wele Wengela and Aike Belo. All errors and omissions are of course exclusively ours. In compliance with Italian academic regulations, we declare that Loredana Cupi is the author of sections 3 and 4; Sara Petrollino is the author of sections 5 and 6; Graziano Savà is the author of sections 1 and 7; and Mauro Tosco is the author of sections 2 and 8.

related but separate language; cf. Moges Yigezu [2007] for comparative phonological notes) it forms a language cluster often referred to in the literature as Hamar-Banna (ISO 639-3 code amf). The other languages belonging to South Omotic are Aari and Dime.[2]

According to the 2004 Ethiopian Census (issued on December 2008) there are 46,127 ethnic Hamar (at the time of writing no statistical data on languages have been published). In the 1994 census the Hamar mother tongue speakers were numbered at 42,838. Out of these, 38,354 were monolinguals.

While the Hamar have been the object of a great deal of attention from an ethnographical point of view, thanks to the painstaking work of Ivo Strecker, Jean Lydall, and their associates at the University of Mainz, knowledge of the Hamar language is still very limited. The works dealing with it are essentially limited to:

- Conti Rossini (1927), containing a few grammatical features and a wordlist;
- Da Trento (1941), providing a comparative list of sixty words in a few southern Ethiopian languages, with Hamar among them;
- some of the data contributed by Da Trento and Conti Rossini are briefly commented on by Cerulli (1942);
- Getahun Amare (2003): an interesting, unpublished paper on aspects of Hamar syntax;
- Tsuge (1996), with rich – but impressionistically transcribed – lexical comparative data;
- Lydall (1976): still the only available sketch of Hamar; to it we will repeatedly make reference in our contribution. However, the author makes use of highly idiosyncratic, at times unclear terminology;
- Lydall (1986) focuses on the relation between the grammatical expression of gender, number and size, and the concepts of reproduction and production among the Hamar. The data may be of interest to the linguist;
- Lydall (2002): although the article is found in the anthropological section of the proceedings of an international conference of Ethiopian studies, it is of interest to the linguist for its rich list of ideophones.

It is our modest aim in the following pages to provide a partial and still preliminary description of a few of the verbal forms of Hamar. Much to our regret, both the analysis and the semantic labels of the paradigms are still tentative and await confirmation.

2.   Words, roots, affixes and clitics

Words, roots, affixes and clitics can be distinguished in Hamar on the basis of their phonological behaviour and their semantics.

The vowel system of Hamar has 10 vowels, five of which are [-ATR] and five [+ATR]. The [±ATR] feature spreads harmonically from the root of a word to its clitics and affixes, so that all the vowels of a word are either

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2   This at least is the current and most widely accepted view. In this paper we do not endorse nor reject any specific classification of the Omotic languages, nor any view on the genetic position of Omotic as a language family.

[+ATR] or [-ATR]. On the basis of this behaviour, one may propose the following definitions of word, root, affix and clitic in Hamar:

- words are phonologically autonomous strings of elements which may, at least in principle, be uttered in isolation; the vowels of a word share the same [±ATR] value; for the same reason, word boundaries are also the boundaries of vowel harmony spread;
- roots are the part of a word which is common to all its inflected and derived forms and which bears its main lexical meaning; phonologically, roots assign the [ATR] value to the whole word according to the [±ATR] value of their vowel;
- affixes are bound elements which bear grammatical meaning; they receive the [±ATR] value of their vowel(s) from the root. Affix boundaries are marked by "-";
- clitics are elements which precede or follow a word but, different from words, are never uttered in isolation; like affixes, they receive the [±ATR] value of their vowel(s) from the root. Clitic boundaries are marked by "=".

3. The coding of the subject on the verb

Like many languages of the area, Hamar is a verb-final and head-first language.
In general, the subject is coded by a pronominal marker preceding the verbal form, and which undergoes cliticization to a following verbal form.
The Bound Pronouns are found in most syntactic roles: as objects, with postpositions, and as subjects. On the contrary, the Independent Personal Pronouns (as well as full NPs) are always syntactically optional – although they can be pragmatically required.
Table 1 lists the Independent and Bound Personal Pronouns:

Table 1: Independent and Bound Pronouns

	Independent Pronouns (IDP)	Bound Pronouns (BND)
1SG	*inta*[3]	*I*[4]
2SG	*ja*	*A*
3	*kidi*	*kI*
3F	*kodi*	*kO*
1PL	*wodi*	*wO*
2PL	*jedi*	*yE*

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[3] The transcription of Hamar is phonological and follows the IPA conventions.
- marks a morpheme boundary, \ marks stem-alternation and / marks the boundary of an intonation unit. The [±ATR] trait is distinctive and spreads harmonically from the root. Vowel length is not distinctive. Lexical and grammatical tone does certainly play a role in Hamar morphosyntax but it awaits further elucidation and is left largely unmarked in the present article. For other languages the transcription used in the sources is followed.

[4] A capital vowel will be used in order to mark either value of the [±ATR] feature, as determined by the vowel harmony rules of the language.

One and the same form is used for all non-Feminine (either Masculine or Plural) non-participants.[5] The Independent and Bound Pronouns oppose each other through the presence in the former of a syllable *-di* (where /d/ is often realized as post-alveolar [ɖ]) in all the forms except the 1sg and the 2sg.

4.   Verbal roots and stems

Verbal roots are always consonant ending; both C# and CC# are allowed in coda position. Roots, like words, may begin with either a vowel or a (single) consonant. Word-internally, two consonants only are allowed as clusters.

In our data, roots generally do not appear on their own as words, and are generally followed by affixes. Verbal roots may be extended through derivational affixes, yielding causative-, passive-, etc. extended roots. Only basic (unextended) roots will be analyzed in this article.

The minimal root is simply CV. Most verbal roots are longer, and the vast majority of them have a CVC- structure. Longer roots in most cases are the result of reduplication or assimilation of derivational extensions. The following table lists the most frequently attested verb root patterns:

Table 2: Hamar verbal-root patterns

Pattern	Root	Meaning
CV-	*li-*	'to wash'
VC-	*ʊtʃ-*	'to drink'
VCC-	*ʃan-*	'to buy'
CVC-	*ɗab-*	'to fall'
CVCC-	*pʊcc-*	'to collect'
CVCVC-	*gurin-*	'to be empty'
VCCVCC-	*ʌʃkɪmɓ-*	'to whisper'
CVCCVC-	*gungum-*	'to roll'
CVCCVCC-	*piskilɗ-*	'to cough'

In her description, Lydall (1976) analyzes Hamar verbal forms as instantiations of five stems, namely: Ø, *-a, -e, -i,* and *-o.* These conjugational stems impart a general semantic value on the root:

-   'The root alone is *immediate*; it refers to an immediate state of action.'
-   'The *a*-stem is *perfect*; it refers to an actual, completed state of action.'
-   'The *e*-stem is *imperfect*; it refers to an actual, uncompleted state of action.'
-   'The *i*-stem is *descriptive*; it refers to a general state of action.'
-   'The *o*-stem is *purposive*; it refers to an intended state of action' (Lydall 1976: 418; emphasis in the original).[6]

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[5]   The underspecification of third person pronouns is quite common typologically and in neighboring languages; cf. Tosco (2007a) for a comparative analysis of Cushitic and Romance Subject Clitics.

[6]   However, in an unpublished paper read at the "Conference on Omotic Utterances Types, Mood and Attitude Markers and Linguistic Typology" (Leiden University, 23-25 October, 2008), Lydall omits the o-stem altogether.

The stems are the basis for the derivation of the actual verbal forms, creating different "families" of paradigms.

This analysis is ingenious and seems to be basically correct, although the semantic relationship between the purported semantic value of the stems and the actual derived verbal forms is often vague. As an extreme example, Lydall (1976: 421) analyzes our Imperative and Hortative (see below, 5.1-5.2.) as Perfect and Imperfect Imperatives, respectively – i.e., as Imperatives derived, respectively, from the *a-* (Perfect) and *e-* (Imperfect) stems.

Moreover, a number of forms proposed by Lydall are refused by our informants as simply non-existent. At the present stage of our work we propose the following generalizations:

- there is simply no Ø-stem at all: any verbal form is always followed in Hamar by an affix;
- the *o*-stem is only found in dependent clauses with, as described by Lydall, a purposive (or maybe irreal) value. It is not germane to the present article (which focuses on main verbal forms) and will not be further analyzed here;
- the *a-* and *e*-stems are basically as described by Lydall: we label her *a*-stem Perfective (PFV), and her *e*-stem Imperfective (IPFV);
- the *i*-stem has a clear Perfect meaning, and we gloss it accordingly (PRF).

5. Non-declarative verbal forms

In morphological terms, the Hamar verbal forms can be classified into simple and compound. Simple forms are those in which the lexical verb, although followed by an affix, is not followed by an auxiliary and/or the copula. Compound paradigms consist of a verbal stem followed by an auxiliary, a copula or a combination of the two. Simple and compound verbal paradigms will be dealt with separately in the next sections.

In main clauses, the only simple paradigms are found in imperative and hortative clauses.

5.1. The Imperative Positive

The Imperative Positive displays the unique feature in Hamar of having preserved the subject-verb agreement. Moreover it has no auxiliary – which is a feature of declarative paradigms. The Singular and Plural forms are distinguished through a constant –*Á* vs. –*É* opposition added directly to the Verbal Root (VR).

The rule expressing the Imperative will therefore be:

Imperative = VR{-*Á*/SG, -*É*/PL}

The effect of [±ATR] vowel harmony can be seen in:

(1)   *ɪm-Á*   'give (it) (SG)!'   vs.   *baʔ-á*   'bring (it) (SG)!'

The opposition between the SG and the PL form is seen in:

(2)   *niʔ-á*   'come (SG)!'   vs.   *niʔ-é*   'come (PL)!'
(3)   *jiʔ-á*   'go (SG)!'   vs.   *jiʔ-é*   'go (PL)!'
(4)   *wadim-á*   'work (SG)!'   vs.   *wadim-é*   'work (PL)!'

5.2. The Hortative

The Hortative (HORT) has neither auxiliary nor subject-verb agreement. The root bears high tone and is followed by an equally high affix *-É*, and is therefore formally identical to an Imperative Plural form. Different from an Imperative, a Hortative is always preceded by a Bound Pronoun indexing the subject. The rule for the formation of the Hortative may be expressed as:

Hortative = BND VR-*É*

A few examples, showing the disambiguating role of the Bound pronouns, are:

(5) *ko=koys-é*   'let her plough!'
     3F.BND=plough-HORT

(6) *wa*   *kɪ=kʊm-ɛ́*   'let him/them eat meat!'
     meat   3BND=eat-HORT

(7) *wa*   *kʊ=kʊm-ɛ́*   'let her eat meat!'
     meat   3F.BND=eat-HORT

(8) *wa*   *wʊ=kʊm-ɛ́*   'let us eat meat!'
     meat   1PL.BND=eat-HORT

The Hortative is often preceded by the Imperative Positive of the verb *gʌr-* 'to let,' as in:

(9) *gʌr-Á*   *kɪ=aʃk-é*   'let him/them do!'
     let-IMP.SG   3BND=do-HORT

6. Declarative verbal forms

In order to build main declarative verbal forms, Hamar uses the verbal stem *d-* 'to be,' supplemented by, in certain instances, the copula *=nE* (COP). Four paradigms will be treated here: the Perfective, the Imperfective, the Future, and the Perfect.

6.1. The Perfective

A Perfective positive declarative sentence involves the use of the Perfective stem of the verb and of the auxiliary *d-* in its Imperfective stem. The verbal form is always preceded by the Subject Pronoun. The rule for the formation of the Perfective is

Perfective = BND=VR-PFV be-IPFV

A sentence such as

(10) *fʌrsɪ* *kɪ=ʊʧ-ʌ=d-ɛ*   'he drank beer'
     beer   3BND=drink-PFV=be-PFV

corresponds therefore to something like "it is (a fact) that he drank beer", in which the subordinate clause of the English rendering is represented in Hamar by the Perfective verbal stem.

As to Lydall (1976: 422), she calls this form the Past Imperfect, giving a few examples, such as:

(11) *na*   *ki*   *niʔ-a*   *d-e*   (Lydall's transcr.)
      yesterday   he   has-come   is-existing   (Lydall's glosses)
      na   *ki=niʔ-a=d-e*   (our transcr.)
      yesterday   3BND=come-PFV=be-IPFV   (our glosses)
      'he was coming/he came yesterday'

The inherently stative verb *d-* 'to be' in its value of a lexical verb 'to be there, to exist' has present-tense value when used in the Perfective stem:

(12) *ja*   *i=sa*   *mɪsʌk'ʌ=bʌr*   *a=d-a=d-e*
      2SG.IDP   1SG.BND=GEN   right=PROX   2SG.BND=be-PFV-be-IPFV
      'you are on my right'

Questioning a Perfective form involves the deletion of the auxiliary:

(13) *na*   *ja*   *ara*   *ʊtʃ-ʌ*
      yesterday   2SG.IDP   thing   drink-PFV
      'what did you drink yesterday?'

(14) *ayke*   *amo=te*   *ki=d-a*
      A.   place=LOC   3BND=be-PFV
      'where is Ayke?'

Answering (14) will involve, as with any other verb, the presence of the auxiliary *d-* in the Imperfective stem after the main verb in the Perfective stem:

(15) *ayke*   *ɔnɪ-n=tɛ*   *ki=d-a=d-e*
      A.   house-OBJ=LOC[7]   3BND=be-M.PFV-be-IPFV
      'Ayke is in the house'

in a parallel way to a possible answer to (13):

(16) *inta*   *na*   *bunno-n*   *ɪ=ʊtʃ-ʌ=d-ɛ*
      1SG.IDP   yesterday   coffee-OBJ   1SG.BND=drink-PFV=be-IPFV
      'yesterday I drank the coffee'

6.2. The Imperfective

The Imperfective has a clear progressive meaning: the action is taking place or is represented as taking place at the moment of speech.
The Imperfective is a doubly compound form: the Perfective form in *-a* is followed by the Locative adposition *tE* and a double instance of the auxiliary verb *d-* 'to be': the same Perfective form *d-a* followed by its Imperfective form *d-e*. The whole form can be clumsily expressed as "to be being at X-ing". The verbal form is preceded by the Bound Pronoun.
The rule expressing the declarative Progressive is:

Imperfective = BND=VR-PFV=LOC=be-PFV=be-IPFV

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[7] The conditions of use of what we call the Object marker *-n* are still unclear. It could also be considered a "construct case". It seems to mark determined accusatives, the head of genitival constructions, and it functions as a linker between a noun and a case suffix; basically, any element occurring before the verb is marked with *-n*.

(17)   *ʊtʃ-ʌ = tɛ = kɪ = d-ʌ = d-ɛ*
         drink-PFV=LOC=3BND=be-PFV-be-IPFV
         'he is drinking'

A question built on the Imperfective involves the deletion of the Imperfective auxiliary:

(18)   *taki*   *ʊtʃ-ʌ = tɛ = d-ʌ*   *ʌjnʌ*
         now   drink-PFV=LOC=be-PFV   who
         'who is drinking now?'

Alternatively, the use of the Verbal Root in its Imperfective stem and preceded by a Bound Pronoun suffices to build an interrogative Imperfective verbal form, according to the simple rule:

> Imperfective Interrogative = BND=VR-IPFV

Lydall (1976: 422) calls this form "simple present or future continuous", which are expressions of the "e-imperfective stem". She translates her examples with a present continuous in English, e.g.

(19)   *ama*   *ki*   *yɛʔ-ɛ*   (Lydall's transcr.)
         where   he   is-going   (Lydall's glosses)
         ama   *ki = yiʔ-e*   (our transcr.)
         place   3BND=go-IPFV   (our glosses)
         'where is he going?'

On the other hand, the placement of the Bound pronoun in interrogative sentences seems to be subject to further rules (maybe the presence of an Independent pronoun, as seen in [20], or of another Bound pronoun in object role, as seen in [21]):

(20)   *ja*   *amo-rra*   *niʔ-e*
         2SG   place-ABL   come-IPFV
         'where do you come from?'

(21)   *i-na*   *ara*   *gaba-rra*   *beʔ-e*[8]
         1SG-DAT   thing   market-ABL   bring-IPFV
         'what do you bring me from the market?'

Possible answers to (20) and (21) may be:

(22)   *inta*   *gaba-rra*   *niʔ-a = te = i = d-a = d-e*
         1SG.IDP   market-ABL   come-PFV=LOC=1SG.BND=be=PFV=be-IPFV
         'I am coming from the market'

(23)   *inta*   *a-na*   *wak'ati*   *baʔ-a = te = i = d-a = d-e*
         1SG.IDP   2SG-DAT   butter   bring-PFV=LOC=1SG.BND=be=PFV=be-IPFV
         'I am bringing you butter'

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[8]   In *beʔ-e* cross-laryngeal vowel-harmony applies (cf. *baʔ-á* in [2] above): a vowel preceding a glottal stop undergoes anticipatory assimilation to the quality of a following vowel. For cross-laryngeal vowel harmony, cf. Hayward (1984) for Arbore, an East Cushitic language of the Omo-Tana subgroup spoken directly to the South of Hamar.

Further phonetic processes involve the assimilation of the final vowel of the Copula =*te* to the vowel of the Bound pronoun:

niʔ-a=te=i=d-a=d-e   →   *[niʔatidade]*
come-PFV=LOC=1SG.BND=be=PFV=be-IPFV

baʔ-a=te=i=d-a=d-e   →   *[baʔatidade]*
bring-PFV=LOC=1SG.BND=be=PFV=be-IPFV

6.3. The Future

In the Future (FUT) the lexical verb appears in the Imperfective stem in -*e*, preceded by *d-* 'to be' in its Perfective stem:

> Future = BND =be-PFV =VR-IPFV

(24)   *fʌrsɪ*   *ɪ=d-ʌ=ʊtʃ-ɛ*
       beer   1SG.BND=be-IPFV=drink-IPFV
       'I will drink local beer'

(25)   *kʊltʌ*   *ɪ=d-ʌ=mʌ ʃ-ɛ*
       goat   1SG.BND=be-IPFV=slaughter-IPFV
       'I will slaughter a goat'

Whenever an object is missing, its place is taken by an "internal object" in the form of the Perfective stem of the verb. No auxiliary appears. The Past relative form of the verb appears in the position usually reserved for objects, i.e. before the Subject pronoun, which comes therefore to be sandwiched between the two verbal forms, as captured by the rule:

> Future = VR-PFV=BND=be-PFV=VR-IPFV

The full paradigm of the Future for our verb *ʊtʃ-* 'to drink' runs as follows:

(26)   *ʊtʃ-ʌ=ɪ=d-ʌ=ʊtʃ-ɛ*
       drink-PFV=1SG.BND=drink-IPFV
       'I will drink'

(27)   *ʊtʃ-ʌ=ʌ=d-ʌ=ʊtʃ-ɛ*
       drink-PFV=2 SG.BND=drink-IPFV
       'you (SG) will drink'

(28)   *ʊtʃ-ʌ=kɪ=ʊtʃ-ɛ*
       drink-PFV=3BND=drink-IPFV
       'he/they will drink'

(29)   *ʊtʃ-ʌ=kɔ=ʊtʃ-ɛ*
       drink PFV=3F.BND=drink-IPFV
       'she will drink'

(30)   *ʊtʃ-ʌ=wɔ=d-ʌ=ʊtʃ-ɛ [ʊtʃɔːdʌʊtʃɛ]*
       drink-PFV=1PL.BND=drink-IPFV
       'we will drink'

(31)   *ʊtʃ-ʌ=jɛ=d-ʌ=ʊtʃ-ɛ [ʊtʃʌɛdʌʊtʃɛ]*
       drink-PFV =2 PL.BND=drink-IPFV
       'you (PL) will drink'

Lydall (1976: 423) has a similar form which she calls 'Future Perfect':

(32) *kʊmʌ*   *o*   *də*   *kʊmɛ*   (Lydall's transcr.)
      have-eaten   we   exist   are-eating   (Lydall's glosses)
      kʊm-ʌ   *wɔ=*   *d-ʌ=*   *kʊm-ɛ*   (our transcr.)
      eat-PFV   1 PL.BND   be-PFV   eat-IPFV   (our glosses)
      'we shall eat/have eaten'

6.4. The Perfect

The Perfect expresses the present relevance of a past action; it is a double compound form, in which both the lexical verb and the auxiliary are in the Perfect stem in *-i* and are further followed by the copula *=nE*.

The invariable copula *=nE* (COP)[9] is found in nominal sentences and marks tense-less equative, attributive and possessive clauses:

(33) *kidi*   *fayya=nɛ*
      3.IDP   good=COP
      'he is good'

In this nominal construction no Bound Pronoun is used, while the subject role is fulfilled a full NP or by an Independent Pronoun (as in [33] above).

The Copula gives the Perfect a nominal character: the Bound Pronoun is not found with this verbal form, and either a full noun or an Independent Pronoun is used.

The rule for the make-up of the Perfect may therefore be expressed as:

Perfect = VR-PRF=be-PRF=COP

A typical Perfect form looks like the following:

(34) *ʊtʃ-ɪ=d-ɪ=nɛ*
      drink-PRF=be-PRF=COP
      'has/have drunk'

The interrogative form of the Perfect involves no Copula and the use of a specific Question affix on the auxiliary:

(35) *ja*   *bunno-n*   *ʊtʃ-ɪ=d-ʊ*
      2SG.IDP   coffee-OBJ   drink-PRF=be-Q
      'have you drunk the coffee?'

which can be answered, e.g., with:

(36) *inta*   *bunno-n*   *ʊtʃ-ɪ=d-ɪ=nɛ*
      1 SG.IDP   coffee-OBJ   drink-PRF=be-PFV=COP
      'I have drunk the coffee'

Confirming the nominal nature of the verbal forms followed by a copula, one can notice that the same Question affix *-u* is used in nominal interrogative sentences, such as:

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[9]   Similar copulas are attested in other Omotic languages (and beyond), as documented by the articles in Crass and Meyer (2007). The closest cognate is probably the Maale invariable copula *ne* (Azeb Amha 2001; Maale is spoken immediately to the north of the Banna variety of Hamar).

(37) *ka   bunno-u*
    this   coffee-Q
    'is this coffee?'

7.   From a relative clause to a cleft

Hamar has very rich and complex processes of subordination. For the sake of the present article, only simple relative clauses will be shown, as well as their use in clefts.
Relative clause basically involve the nominalization of a verbal root through the use of gender and number affixes, as follows:

Table 3: Nominalizing affixes

M	-*A*
F	-*ONO*
PL	-*ANA*

The use of these forms is seen in 39-41:

(38) *ε   gaba-n=te   dork'-a bašada=rra   ki=niʔ-a=d-e*
    man market-OBJ=LOC sit-M   B.=ABL   3BND=come-PFV=be-IPFV
    'the man sitting in the market comes from Bashada'

(39) *εdɔnɔ   gaba-n=te   dork'-ono   bašada=rra*
    woman   market-OBJ=LOC   sit-F   B.=ABL
    ko=niʔ-a=d-e
    3F.BND=come-PFV=be-IPFV
    'the woman sitting in the market comes from Bashada'

(40) *ε-nʌ   gaba-n=te   dork'ana   bašada=rra*
    man-PL   market-OBJ=LOC   sit-PL   B.=ABL
    ki=niʔ-a=d-e
    3.BND=come-PFV=be-IPFV
    'the men sitting in the market come from Bashada'

Relative clauses are widely used in Hamar;[10] a usual context is in answering a WH-question, as in answering (18) above, repeated here below:

(18) *taki   ʋtf-ʌ=tε=d-ʌ   ʌjnʌ*
    now   drink-PFV=LOC=be-PFV   who
    'who is drinking now?'

A cleft construction involves the focalization of the element in cleft, which is followed by the Copula =*nE* and by a relative clause:

(41) *kodi=ne   ʋtf-ʌ=tε=d-ɔnɔ*
    3F.IDP=COP   drink-PFV=LOC=be-F
    '*she* is (the one who is) drinking'

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[10]   Clefts are known to be a widespread phenomenon in the Horn of Africa (cf. Appleyard 1989) and their grammaticalization is a common path in the renewal of verbal paradigms.

(42)   *ajke=ne   ʋtʃ-ʌ=tɛ=d-ʌ*
          A.=COP   drink-PFV=LOC=be-M
          '*Ayke* is (the one who is) drinking'

Another example is provided by a few possible answers to (44):

(43)   *ayne   Ayke-na   bunno-n   im-a=te=d-a*
          who   A.-DAT   coffee-OBJ   give-PFV=LOC=be-PFV
          'who is giving Ayke coffee?'

(44)   *kidi=ne   ɪm-ʌ=tɛ=d-ʌ*
          3IDP=COP   give-PFV=LOC=be-M
          'it is him who is giving'

(45)   *kodi=ne   ɪm-ʌ=tɛ=d-ɔnɔ*
          3F.IDP=COP   give-PFV=LOC=be-F
          'it is her who is giving'

(46)   *inta=ne   ɪm-ʌ=te=d-ʌ*
          1SG.IDP=COP   give-PFV=LOC=be-M
          'it is me (M) who is giving'

(47)   *inta=ne   ɪm-ʌ=tɛ=d-ɔnɔ*
          1SG.IDP=COP   give-PFV=LOC=be-F

          'it is me (F) who is giving'
(48)   *wodi=ne   ɪm-ʌ=tɛ=d-ʌnʌ*
          1PL.IDP=COP   give-PFV=LOC=be-PL
          'it is us who are giving'

8.   Conclusions

It has been seen that the Hamar verb is characterized by the absence of subject-verb agreement on most paradigms, and by the widespread use of an auxiliary.

Reduction or complete absence of agreement seems to be widespread in Southwest Ethiopia: to the West of Hamar, Dhaasanac (East Cushitic, Omo-Tana branch) has reduced all the forms of the inherited East Cushitic paradigm to two forms only, A and B (Tosco 2001). This has been the result of extensive assimilation and leveling rules (Tosco 2007b), as seen from the comparison with the Independent Past of Somali:

Table 4: Subject-verb agreement reduction in Dhaasanac in comparison to Somali

'to open'	Somali, Independent Past	Dhaasanac, Perfective
1SG	*fúr-ay*	*fur-i* (A)
2SG	*fúr-tay*	*fuɗ-ɗi* (B)
3M	*fúr (< *fúr-i)*	*fur-i* (A)
3F	*fúr-tay*	*fuɗ-ɗi* (B)
1PL	*fúr-nay*	(Excl.) *fuɗ-ɗi* (B)
		(Incl.) *fur-i* (A)
2PL	*fur-té*	*fuɗ-ɗi* (B)
3PL	*fur-é*	*fur-i* (A)

Other languages display the same reduction of subject-verb agreement. In Dime (South Omotic; cf. Mulugeta Seyoum 2008), most of the verbal paradigms have two forms only, one for the first person (both Singular and Plural) and the other for the second and the third person. In the Past Progressive even this distinction is dropped:

Table 5: Subject-verb agreement in Dime

'to come'	1SG/PL	other persons
Imperfective	*ʔad-déét*	*ʔad-déén*
Perfective	*ʔad-i-t*	*ʔad-i-n*
Far past	*ʔad-ʔad-i-t*	*ʔad-ʔad-i-n*
Progressive (present)	*ʔad-ʔad-déét*	*ʔad-ʔad-déén*
Progressive (past)	*ʔad-ʔad-déén-ká*	

Drastic reduction is likewise attested in Maale (Ometo). According to Azeb Amha (2001: 113) "[...] the verbal paradigm in Maale is simplified: with few exceptions, e.g., the imperative, Maale verbs do not have agreement markers".

Finally, it must be mentioned the very much similar situation in the highly endangered language Ongota (unclassified), where no subject agreement is shown on the verbal word (cf. Savà and Tosco 2000).

Subject-verb-agreement reduction may be due to historical phonological processes. Languages showing subject-verb-agreement reduction often pre-serve relics of a past morphological wealth under the form of irregularities or otherwise unpredictable syncretisms: the case of Dhaasanac and possibly of Dime seem to belong here.

In other cases the absence of subject-marking on the verb seems to be due to a restructuring of the verbal system, whereby earlier verbal forms are shunned in favour of new compound forms built with a nominal form of the verbs and an auxiliary or a copula. In this case, the nominal form is often invariable, and a copula (but not generally an auxiliary) can also be invariable.

The case of Hamar and maybe other languages apparently belong here, as complete absence (rather not reduction) of the verbal paradigm is involved.

In most Hamar paradigms, neither the lexical verb nor the auxiliary or the copula shows subject-verb agreement, while the subject role is generally taken by a Bound pronoun.

Only a few of the intricacies of the Hamar verb have been tackled above, and most work lies ahead. The paper has shown that Hamar has shunned away most conjugational features of Afroasiatic and have replaced them with the ingenious and reiterated use of a few mechanisms, namely the extensive use of invariable (possibly nominal in origin?) verbal forms and auxiliaries.

This extreme Southern outpost of Omotic is a living testimony to the kaleidoscopic linguistic variation within Afroasiatic and the Horn of Africa. It is also another reminder of the necessity and urgency of language description.[11]

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[11] Work on the Hamar grammar is presently being carried on by Sara Petrollino. Our results as presented here are still very much part of a work in progress.

Abbreviations

ABL ablative postposition	M masculine
BND bound pronoun	DEF definite object marker
COP copula	PFV perfective
DAT dative postposition	PL plural
F feminine	PRF perfect
GEN genitive postposition	PROX proximative postposition
HORT hortative	Q question marker
IDP independent pronoun	SG singular
IMP imperative	SING singulative
IPFV imperfective	VR verbal root.
LOC locative postposition	

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