

*Revista*  
6.2.95

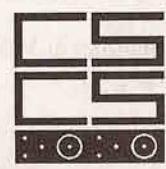
Studi Camito - Semitici 1

---

# Sem Cam Iafet

*Atti della 7<sup>a</sup> Giornata di Studi  
Camito-Semitici e Indeuropei  
(Milano, 1<sup>o</sup> giugno 1993)*

A cura di Vermondo Brugnatelli



Milano - Centro Studi Camito-Semitici - 1994

ZABORSKI, A.

1967 "Arabic Loan-Words in Somali: Preliminary Survey",  
*Folia Orientalia* 8: 125-75

## ENGLISH SUMMARY:

Arabic Loanwords in Somali - The present study takes into consideration the typology of Arabic loanwords in Somali.

Starting from the analysis of 1436 loanwords which have been provisionally identified in the *Dizionario Somalo-Italiano* by F. Agostini, A. Puglielli and Mhd. S. Ciise, systematic patterns of adaptation are observed together with their historical and geographical implications. Two different streams may have played a role in the diversification and splitting of some patterns (such as the rendering of e.g. *tā' marbū'a* or *alif maqṣūra*): through an oral dialectal and unlearned channel vs. a written, literary and learned one.

The variety of factors which are involved in the phenomenon, such as sociolinguistic variants, different phonological systems, diatopic differences in Arabic sources, etc., makes the entire matter, though not unique in the Islamic world, a very interesting topic and a promising field of research.

## On Case Marking in the Ethiopian Language Area (with special reference to subject marking in East Cushitic)

MAURO TOSCO  
(*Napoli*)

## Ø. INTRODUCTION

## 1. OVERVIEW

## 2. -i: SUBJECT MARKER OR "DEFINITIZER"?

## 2.1. Burji

## 2.2. Other HEC languages

## 2.3. Beyond HEC

## 3. -i AS A SUBJECT MARKER

## 4. A NOTE ON OBJECT MARKING IN EAST CUSHITIC

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS - ABBREVIATIONS - REFERENCES

## Ø. INTRODUCTION

The status of Ethiopia as a typical language area, along the lines of Emeneau's (1956: 16, fn. 28) classical definition ("an area which includes languages belonging to more than one family but showing traits in common which are found not to belong to the other members of (at least) one of the families") is since long well established. Lists of phonological and morphosyntactic common traits have been presented, most notably by Ferguson (1970, 1976), while more recently Hayward (1991) has drawn the attention to similar patterns of lexicalization of semantic fields across the languages of the area.

The case system is NOT among these common traits; rather, one finds in the languages of the Ethiopian area (which can be roughly equated for our purposes with the languages spoken in the modern states of Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, and Somalia) different case marking systems, whose divergence is counteracted by partially common trends of development - probably to be ascribed to the extensive topicalization and focalization mechanisms which play such an important role in



the syntax of most languages of the area (cf. Appleyard 1989).

## 1. OVERVIEW

The following table shows the expression of nominal subject and/or object marking in representative Ethiopian languages. It must be noted that the non-Afroasiatic languages spoken along the western fringe of the area are not included, and that many gaps are present among the Omotic languages, due to lack of exhaustive and reliable data.

Table. — Case marking in Ethiopian languages

### A. Languages with object marking

#### Ethiosemitic:

**Ge'ez:** *-a* ~ *-hā*; *la-*

**Tigre:** *ʔəgəl-* ~ *ʔəl-* (DEF OBJ only; indirect OBJ too)

**Tigrinya:** *nə-* (DEF OBJ only; indirect OBJ too)

**Amharic, Argobba, Gafat:** *-n* (DEF OBJ only)

**Harari:** *-u* (*-w* after V; DEF OBJ only; in Old Harari INDEF OBJ too)

**Gurage:** PWG (Gyeto, Ennemor, etc.): *ä-*; other Gurage: *yä-* (Soddo also *lä-*, *nä-*; DEF OBJ only; optional; indirect OBJ too)

#### Central Cushitic:

**Bilin:** M: *-s(i)*, F: *-t(i)*

**Awngi:** *-e /-i*; *-wa /N--*; *-o ~ -wa /C--*

**Xamtanga:** F: *-t* (OBJ = ABS in M and PI nouns)

#### Eastern Cushitic:

**Dullay:** *-n* (opt.; usual with topicalized OBJ)

#### Omotic:

**Gonga** (: Kefoid):

**Kefa:** *-n* (optional)

**Ometo:**

**Basketo:** *-n*

**Eastern Omotic** (: Aroid):

**Aari:** *-m*

**Dime:** *-im* (also INDEF ?)

**Hamer:** *-(d)am*

### B. Languages with subject marking

#### Eastern Cushitic:

**Omo-Tana:**

**Somali:** final H tone becomes non-H (*-´* → *-˘*); F nouns in C: *-i*

**Rendille:** F nouns in C: *-é*

**Bayso:** *-o* (only nouns in *-r* ?; opt.?)

**Dusenech:** *-i* and/or tone non-H with M nouns (?)

**Arbore:** 1. M nouns in C and F in V; SUBJ = ABS;

2. F nouns in C: *-é*;

3. nouns in V with final H tone (all PI's and a few M.s):

*-´* → *-˘*

**Safar:** M nouns in V: *-i*

**Saho:** "stressed" nouns and with final *-V* are marked by the change of final V to */i/* and loss of stress

**Oromo** (Southern): N.s/Adj.s in *-VV*: *-ni*;

M N.s/Adj.s in *-V*: *-ii(ni)*;

F N.s in *-V*: *-tii(ni)*

**Dirayta** (: **Gidole**): M N.s not in *-t*: ABS + *-(V)t*;

F and PI N.s: SUBJ = ABS

#### Highland East Cushitic (HEC):

**Sidamo:** F N.s: SUBJ = ABS; M N.s: *-V* → *-i/-u*

**Burji:** SUBJ: *-VV* → *-V* in F N.s; *-V* → *-i* in M N.s

**Hadiya, Kambata, Gedeo:** *-(V)* → *-i* (?)

#### Omotic:

##### Ometo:

**North Ometo:**

**Gamo:** *-ii*

**Wolaitta:** *-i*

**Zayse:** *-i* (*-y* after V)

**Koyra:** " " "

### C. Languages with both subject and object marking

#### Central Cushitic:

**Kemant:** SUBJ: M: *-i/a*; = ABS (/C\_\_); F: SUBJ = ACC; OBJ (DEF): M: *-s*; F: *-t*

#### Omotic:

**Janjero:** SUBJ: *-u* (opt.?): OBJ: *-n*

**Gimira:** SUBJ: *-i<sup>3</sup>*, *-a<sup>3</sup>*; OBJ: *-is<sup>3</sup>* (obligatory only with "specific" nouns; N.B.: superscript numbers indicate tone)

#### Kefoid

**Bworo:** SUBJ: M: *-a*, F: *-ni*; OBJ: *-a*

**Kefa:** SUBJ: *-y* (emphatic?); OBJ: *-n* (optional)



Omoto:

North Omoto:

Welaita: *-l, -y, -w*; OBJ: *-a*Kullo: SUBJ: *-i*; OBJ: *-n***D. Languages without subject or object marking**

Eastern Cushitic:

Omo-Tana:

Southern-Somali (inclusive of Boni)

Bayso (?; see also under C.)

Elmolo (?)

Omotic:

Omoto:

Chara

The table shows that all four logical possibilities are actually attested in the area:

- languages with morphological marking of the object only (group A);
- languages with morphological marking of the subject only (group B);
- languages with morphological marking of both object and subject (group C);
- languages with neither object nor object marking (group D).

The vast majority of the languages of the area falls within one of the first two groups. Languages without case marking or having marking of both cases are very rare and (especially the non-marking languages) geographically peripheric. The morphological marking of at least one case role is in accordance with the tendency of verb-final languages to have a case system (cf. Greenberg's [1966] Universal # 45). Although Greenberg's Universal has been disproved —e.g. by Sasse (1977)— it can still be accepted as a tendency (or a statistical universal?) of verb-final languages.

By and large, group A (object marking) languages can be identified with the Ethiosemitic languages, and group B (subject marking) languages with Cushitic (especially East). Omotic languages are less definable, as both possibilities —as well as no marking at all and marking of both subject and object— occur.

Generally, the object is marked only when determinate; in Dullay (East Cushitic), object marking is further limited to the topical (but see below, 4.) position of the object before the subject. Still elsewhere, object marking is optional. This is of course not rare, neither the historical origin of the object marker itself is a problem: Tigrinya and Gurage markers derive from the Ge'ez *marca dativi lä-* —itself often used for a determinate direct object. In Tigre, Tigrinya and Gurage the object marker has been retained also for an indirect object; e.g., Tigre uses for the direct object the indirect object preposition *ʔəgəl* or a shortened and prefixed form *ʔəl-*. The Harari marker *-w* has a different origin (very possibly the same of the Amharic postposed article *-w*). The object marker of a few Cushitic languages, as Dullay and Burji, is (or is derived from) a focus marker, to which we shall come back later on.

More problematic is subject marking, especially in Cushitic languages. Syntactically, its "weakness" is shown by the absence of any marking when the subject is in focus, but, often, also when the noun is followed by determinants. Morphologically, case distinction is often neutralized with certain noun classes, and a subject case is often distinguished —at least segmentally— only in a minority of nouns. E.g., Table 1 shows that there are languages which use *-i* as a subject marker for (a subset of) the masculine nouns, while others mark with the same marker (a subset of) the feminines; and still other languages use different markers. What is more important, this situation cuts across the internal subgroupings of Cushitic.

Diachronically, the weakness of subject marking is shown in its dismissal in the majority of Agaw (Central Cushitic) languages, in favour of an object marking system presumably borrowed from Ethiosemitic; and the same development is shown by Dullay, which has apparently given away subject marking and developed object marking (again, under external pressure? The neighboring Omotic languages use the same *-n* marker for objects [cf. Zaborski 1990: 625]).

Moreover, even though syntactically the subject case is marked vs. the absolutive case, phonologically the subject is often marked negatively, through the loss of High tone (e. g., masculine nouns in Somali), or, segmentally, through the reduction of the final vowel (feminine nouns in Burji).



Finally, Cushitic subject marking is typologically "irregular": as pointed out by Hayward (1988), Cushitic languages violate Greenberg's [1966] Universal #38, which states, grossly speaking, that in a language with a morphologically expressed case system the least marked case will be the one marking the subject of an intransitive verb. A similar exception to this "universal" had already been found by Comrie (1981) in the Yuman languages of Southern California, while in East Africa the same "irregularity" is shared by the genealogically unrelated (but geographically proximate) Nilotic languages: in both Cushitic and Nilotic, the subject - whether of a transitive or of an intransitive verb - is marked in respect to a "general" or absolutive form, used as citation form of the noun as well as object and as "oblique". While the shape of the absolutive is unpredictable, the subject form is more or less regularly derived from it. In both Cushitic and (Eastern and Southern) Nilotic languages, the subject form is tonally differentiated from the absolutive through the lowering of an H tone; in both language families the tonal lowering goes back, of course, to the loss of a H-toned subject suffix (cf. Dimmendaal [1986] for Nilotic and Sasse [1984] for Cushitic). While in Nilotic languages the presence of the subject form is linked to the basic VSO word order (and with the more or less topicalized orders SVO, VOS no marking of the subject N occurs), in Cushitic the subject form is not found while the subject N is in focus (as a focused subject is, at least historically, the predicate of a cleft sentence), but no word order change is normally involved.

Syntactically, Cushitic languages do not display all the characteristics of subject-prominent languages (cf. Faarlund 1988: 195): e.g., except for stative constructions, they lack true passives, by which the patient of a transitive verb is promoted to subject (and, eventually, the agent is removed); rather, just as in Nilotic (cf. Dimmendaal [1986] for Turkana), an impersonal subject pronoun (as Somali *la*) is used in order to remove a specific agent, but the patient is not promoted, and does not control verbal agreement; also dummy subjects are lacking.

On the contrary, the Cushitic languages share at least some of the characteristics which Li and Thompson (1976: 467) ascribe to topic-prominent languages.

To put it briefly, subject marking in Cushitic satisfies most criteria of markedness (cf. Croft 1990: 70 foll.):

- structural markedness (being the subject expressed by more morphemes than the absolutive);
- behavioral/distributional markedness (as the subject case has more limited a distribution than the absolutive);
- textual markedness (as the subject occurs far less frequently than the absolutive).

Though it is expressed with a limited array of formal means across the various languages, subject marking is neither morphologically nor syntactically homogeneous, and its only common trait across the Cushitic languages is in terms of its typological "exceptionality" (inasmuch the subject and not the object is marked, although these languages are clearly of the "accusative" type).

The traditional attitude has been to try and reconstruct a proto-Cushitic "case system", from which to derive, through phonological reduction and/or analogical development, the different marking of the actual present-day languages. The most coherent hypothesis has been put forward by Sasse (1984), who reconstructs *\*-i/-u* as "nominative" markers for the masculine nouns, while feminine nouns, having mostly inanimate referents, would have been unmarked (as the Indoeuropean Neuters). A subset of feminine nouns — those denoting animates — were instead marked by the same *\*-i* morpheme of the masculine nouns. Following the loss or reduction of final vowels in many languages, case-marking would have been dropped; the "negative" suprasegmental marking through tone lowering is explained by supposing that *\*-i* itself was H-toned: thus, when *\*-i* was dropped, the noun in subject case was characterized by the absence of high tone. Analogical development would be at the base of subject marking with *-i* in Omo-Tana languages (such as Somali), while a different origin is presumed for the *-[n]ii* (M) and *-tii* (F) markers of Oromo (in line with the widespread attitude which considers Oromo as a particularly innovating language).

The main advantage of this hypothesis is that all instances of *\*-i* are brought down to a single unitary source, and that a



single cause (phonological erosion) explains its absence in many languages. The presence of *\*-i* in a subclass of F nouns in Omo-Tana languages is not equally well accounted for. More importantly, the intricacies of subject marking in certain Cushitic languages for which no data were available in 1984 could not be taken into account. E.g., Burji (see also below, 2.1.) shows *-i* on masculine nouns, but a segmental marking through reduction of the final vowel and accent shift on feminine nouns, too — specularly to the marking of masculine nouns in those languages which with *\*-i* mark feminine nouns, such as Somali. Furthermore, the very violation of Greenbergian “universal” — i.e., the marking of the subject against an absolutive form, remains unexplained, as well as the lack of prototypical subject characteristics.

## 2. *-i*: SUBJECT MARKER OR “DEFINITIZER”?

### 2.1. Burji

The only HEC language for which a good description of the case system is available is Burji (Hayward 1988). The following brief notes summarize Hayward’s findings.

The main interest in Burji subject marking system lies in its double marking for definite and indefinite nouns. *-i* marks the subject form of definite masculine nouns, while definite feminine nouns are marked by the reduction and devoicing of the final vowel. E.g.:

	ABS	DEF SUBJ	gloss
F	<i>baš+aa</i> /baʃá/	<i>baš+a</i> /báʃə/	“grass”
M	<i>min+a</i> /mínə/	<i>min+i</i> /mínì/	“house”

These forms are mostly used when the noun is further defined and extended by a phrase, another set of subject forms is formed through the use of a gender-sensitive suffix *-ku* (M) / *-ti* (F). For M nouns, Hayward’s analysis actually states that *-ku* is added to the definite subject form. E.g.:

	INDEF SUBJ	
F	<i>baš+aa+t+i</i>	/baʃá:ʃì/
M	<i>min+i+k+u</i>	/minúth/

These forms, which Hayward labels “indefinite”, are used

when the noun is not further extended by modifiers. Hayward (1988: 686) rejects the hypothesis that the distinction in subject forms be simply related to gender marking, namely that “a m. or f. gender sensitive element has to appear on the head if, in the absence of any phrasal expansion to the left of the head, such an element cannot occur elsewhere in the phrase”. Hayward’s argument is based upon the fact that no such gender sensitiveness is found in non-subject position; but this argumentation weakens if we assume that gender marking is inherent in the *-ku/-ti* indefinite subject markers — i.e., that only subjects show overt gender agreement.

The fact that indeterminate marking is phonologically heavier and that, at least in masculine nouns, it is added to the definite subject forms (i.e., to the forms in *-i*), leads Hayward to suggest that the latter are being superceded by the former, newer markers. We can therefore speculate that in due time the indefinite subject marker will replace the def. subj. marker, thus marking subjects in general, irrespective of their definiteness and/or the presence of modifiers.

The Burji system seems to be the most developed among HEC languages, other languages being still in a stage of subject-formation.

### 2.2. Other HEC languages

The situation for what concerns subject marking in the other HEC languages is more difficult to assess, especially for the lack of complete, reliable descriptive works. On the whole, it seems that subject marking is not only restricted to certain noun classes (masculine?), but to definite subjects, too. On the other hand, it is still possible that the frequent reference to “facultative marking” and to *-i* or other morphemes as “definite articles” is just due to an imperfect grasp of the language and the distorting effect of working through the medium of Amharic or a European language without morphological marking of the subject nouns.

In Sidamo, *-i* is generally analyzed as a subject marker, but Cerulli (1938: 122) explicitly says that marking of the subject in Sidamo is “facultative”, and that the noun thus marked is definite. For Hudson (1976: 253-4), both *-i* and *-u* (according to the final vowel of the N) mark the subject form of masculine nouns — feminine being unmarked for subject, while



for Gasparini (1978: 4) only *-i* is used for subject masculine nouns, *-u* being restricted to the genitive. The possibility that *-i* is more a definite marker than a subject is reinforced when we know that "nouns that change *a* to *i* in the nominative do so also in the dative" (Hudson 1976: 254). Similar cases of *-i* marking for the accusative and the dative are noted by Hudson in Kambata, too. Plazikowsky-Brauner (1962: 85) provides a few examples for the Alaba dialect, such as *mánčī* "dem Manne", *míni háššo mánnu* "das Haus, welcher suchte, Mann", and, for the genitive, *míni ánnu* "des Hauses Herr". For Leslau (1952: 352) — who, as an Ethiosemitist, was not looking for a subject marker — Kambata *-i* is just a "definite article".

For another HEC language, Hadiya, apart from Plazikowsky-Brauner's statement that *-(n)i* is used for "Subject, Prädikat und genitiven Status, daneben auch solche finaler und causalser Art" (1960: 45; she calls it a "labile casus"), we have Hudson's (1976: 253) remark: "Hadiyya case marking is problematic, since in this language the final vowels of nouns are generally lost in connected speech. Consistent, however, is the change of final *o* to *i* in the nominative case. For Gedeo (formerly "Darasa"), Hudson (1976: 253) notes that subject can be unmarked, but "usually shows the final vowel *i* [...]. The final vowels of proper names are unchanged in the nominative".

It is in any case interesting that the Soddo, Goggot and Mäsqañ dialects of Gurage have borrowed (presumably from HEC) a suffix *-i* which "is used 'discourse-referentially', in the sense of 'the above-mentioned', and never generically or for general reference. [...] It is mainly used when there is a switch of focus in the discourse, but the new topic has already been mentioned" (Hetzron 1977: 56).

To sum up, HEC *-i* (and possibly other markers) seem to be as much definitizers as subject markers, or, at least, definite subject markers only.

### 2.3. Beyond HEC

Beyond HEC, a marker *-i(i)*, generally coupled with a (fossilized) gender marker, is widely found. Awngi (Central Cushitic) has a topic marker *-kí* (as well as an article *-ká*; Hetzron 1978: 127), closely resembling the Somali (East Cushitic, Omo-Tana branch) "anaphoric determiner" *-k/t-ii* (which is part of the determiners system, alongside subject

*-k/t-u*, definite article *-k/t-a*, etc.). In Dasenech, which is the only Omo-Tana language having *-i* with at least a few masculine nouns " *-i* is not confined to subject relations [...] the reason for the addition of *-i* in some instances may be sought elsewhere" (Sasse 1976: 205). In all the other Omo-Tana languages *-i* (*-e* in Arbore and Rendille) has been restricted to a subset of feminine nouns. The head of genitival clauses shows in Arbore interesting endings (Hayward 1984: 151 foll.): *-ti* is used with masculine consonant-final nouns (only *-i* with *č* or *t*); *-a* is added to consonant-final nouns with H-tone on their last vowel; *-e* is added to feminine consonant-final nouns; with vowel-final nouns no ending is added to the head. As these segmental features are accompanied by a general retraction of H-tone on the head, it is probable that *-t-* has been elided in certain contexts.

Beyond Cushitic, a suffix *-i* with more or less subject function "has definitely been found only in Ometo" (Zaborski 1990: 618). Within the North Ometo cluster, Allan (1976: 331) reports for Kullo that a noun phrase "in subject position (and sometimes in object position) can be made definite by suffixing the head noun of the noun phrase with *-i*". *-íi* is likewise the basic subject morpheme in Gamo (Hompó 1990: 364 foll.). Particularly close to Gamo seems in this regard Wolaitta (Adams 1990). From a comparison of these two dialects the following facts can be established:

— both dialects distinguish gender (M vs. F), definiteness (INDEF vs. DEF in Adams' account of Wolaitta, two INDEF grades and two DEF grades in Hompo's analysis of Gamo), and case (SUBJ vs. ABS).

— to the INDEF ABS (the basic form), both dialects add *-i* in order to create the DEF SUBJ form of most N.s (only masculine?); an INDEF SUBJ form is obtained through changing the final vowel of the basic form into *-i*.

— certain N.s (probably feminine, on the basis of the semantics of the examples), which have final vowel of the basic form *-o*, change it to *-a* in the INDEF SUBJ, while in the DEF SUBJ the segment *-iy-* is inserted between the basic form stripped of its final vowel and the *-a* of the INDEF SUBJ.



Schematically:

Gamo (Hompó 1990: 367):

M nouns	ABS	SUBJ
INDEF (grade 1)	-a	-i
DEF (grade 4)	-a-z-aa	-a-z-ii

F nouns

INDEF (grade 1)	-o / -i	-a
DEF (grade 4)	-i-y-oo	-i-y-aa

Wolaitta (Adams 1990: 407):

"horse"	ABS	SUBJ
INDEF	par-a	par-i
DEF	par-a:	par-ai

"sister"

INDEF	mičč-o	mičč-a
DEF	mičč-iyoi	mičč-iyai

In another North Omoto dialect, Mesketo (formerly referred to as "Baske(t)to"), a noun can appear with no suffixes, with a *-i* suffix, and with a gender-sensitive postposed article (M *-adi* vs. F *-indo*). As for *-i*, it is found both in subject and absolute position; Abebe (1993: 2) assumes it to be a nominal marker (and excludes that it is a subject marker; p.c.), but its absence in certain positions (such as with non-referential objects) is suggestive of a topic value. While we do not know if the definite forms of Mesketo can be used in the subject position, the absolutive forms can be compared with those of the other dialects:

DEF ABS	Mesketo	Gamo	Wolaitta
M	-a-d-i	-a-z-aa	-a:
F	-in-d-o	-i-y-oo	-i-y-o:

On the whole, the status of *-i* as a subject marker in the North Omoto cluster seems beyond doubt in Wolaitta and Gamo, while for Mesketo and Kullo an analysis as topic marker is more probable.

Outside the North Omoto cluster, and more to the East, *-i* is a subject marker in Zayse irrespective of gender (its only allomorph being *-y* after vowel; Hayward 1990b: 250). This

language does not have suffixed gender markers, while definiteness is marked before the head (in accordance with the very strict Modifier-Head syntax of this language).

In brief, we find widespread evidence for the shift from a topic to a subject marker in HEC, and possibly in Agaw and even Omotic.

### 3. *-t* AS A SUBJECT MARKER

Perhaps the most unusual subject marking system of Cushitic has been reported for Dirayta (: Gidole) by Hayward (1981).

In Dirayta all feminine and plural nouns, as well as a part of masculine nouns, end by *-Vt*. All these nouns show no subject vs. absolutive distinction, while only the subset of masculine nouns which have a different ending in the absolutive have a morphological marking of the (non-focused) subject form, and precisely by affixation of *-Vt* (plus minor adjustments). Dirayta is therefore the only language in which *-t* is used in order to mark the subject, and only secondarily the non-masculine class. The link between {t} as a singulative (as normally in Cushitic) and {t} as a subject marker (as in Dirayta) is perhaps provided by Bayso, in which the singulative suffix *-t* can be used as a definite article: Hayward (1979: 106) suggests that in Bayso "individualization or particularization is the primary function of singulative reference forms".

In brief, the subject marking system of Dirayta seems to go back to the grammaticalization of an erstwhile singulative marker, through the stage of article (Bayso).

### 4. A NOTE ON OBJECT MARKING IN EAST CUSHITIC

With the introduction of a subject marker, new ways of marking definiteness on non subject NP's had to be found. One strategy had recourse to clefting of the object, as attested, again, in Burji, in which a definite object is often marked by *-na*:

ani ka birk'a-na d'uwa  
I this (millet)-beer+*-na* drink-1S  
"I drink this beer" (Sasse and Straube 1977: 252)

Actually, *-na* is primarily a copula, connected with the



Sidamo interrogative copula *-ni* and Gedeo affirmative copula *-n* (cf. Sasse 1982: 150). According to Wedekind (1990: 481 foll.), one of the focus/identity markers *-naa*, *-k'aa*, and, in questions, *-daa* can be used with any marker in order to focalize it; e.g.:

*ʔyya diida-naa ʔitandu*  
my honey+*-naa* ate-2S  
“did you eat my honey?”

and

*ʔuu lammi wolli gabi-naa took'amanni*  
those people together from+*-naa* separated-3Pl  
“those people have been separated from each other”  
(Wedekind 1990: 488)

The fact that Sidamo and the other HEC languages do not seem to resort to this kind of topicalization is probably connected with the fact that in these languages *-i* is still available for marking definiteness of non-subject nouns.

The use of the copula *-na* as a focus marker in Burji seems to suggest that *-n* has turned into a focus marker as a result of the grammaticalization of a cleft construction — not differently from what has been proposed by Lamberti (1983) and Heine and Reh (1984) for the origin of the focus particles in Somali.

A further stage of development is found in Dullay, in which *\*-na* is no longer attested as a copula, and *-n* is restricted to the optional marking of definite objects only (and focalization has recourse to other morphological devices). This is especially the case when the object is left-dislocated, e.g.:

*qawhón miʔé híʔ*  
man+*-n* child saw-3M  
“den Mann sah das Kind”  
(Amborn, Minker, Sasse 1980: 80)

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Be it derived from a definitizer or topic marker (as possibly in HEC) or from a singulative (as in Dirayta), it is evident that the Cushitic subject will not be a “classical” nominative - i.e., it will be morphologically marked vs. the

absolutive form, and will not be used as citation form of the noun or in predicative position.

Hayward (1988: 682) has noted that, while the morphological marking of definite objects makes sense in functional terms (objects being approximately equally divided between definite and indefinite, and therefore “the major case-role most in need of the coded DEF/INDEF distinction” [Givón 1983: 73]), a parallel marking of indefinite subjects (which are overwhelmingly definite) seems lacking in human languages. The paradox is nevertheless only apparent, as languages simply do not need an indefinite subject marker: indefinite subjects can either be ungrammatical, or be introduced through presentative constructions. In the case that a subject has a low topical status, Cushitic languages often resort to subject-focusing. Thus, a non-referential, indeterminate subject will often be focalized, introducing what in the text will become the normal (determinate) topic, as in the following Somali sentence which marks the beginning of a folk-tale:

*nin doob ah baa beri damcay in uu guursado...*  
man single is FOC day wanted that he marries...  
“a single (man) once upon a day wanted to marry...”

On the other hand, when a definite/topic marker is turned into a subject marker, new markers of definiteness have to be found out. Definite markers are most usually of deictic origin (cf. Greenberg 1978 and Harris 1980), and Cushitic languages are no exception: a proximate demonstrative “this” (such as still found in Burji *ka*) is the most probable source of the article in Somali and other languages.

Only Burji seems to have developed a new indeterminate subject marker, through affixation of the same gender-markers *-ku* and *-ti* which in HEC languages link the modifiers to the following head, with which they agree in gender (see Hudson 1976 for details). Now, Burji has extended the use of these elements to “true” articles (Hudson 1976: 260), while in the other HEC languages they are mainly restricted to relative and genitive clauses, being optional and rare in other cases. In other words, the development of “true” articles seems to be directly proportional to the development of *-i* as a full-fledged subject marker.



This cursory overview of a few subject systems in East Cushitic seems to suggest that subject marking can go back to an erstwhile topic marker, while object marking can derive from a focus construction. Both cases are clear instances of a grammaticalization process, whereby a more concrete (here: pragmatically-bound) element acquires a new, more abstract (: purely syntactic) meaning.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The final version of this paper was prepared in the summer 1993 during my stay at the Institut für Afrikanistik of the University of Cologne, as part of a research project on "Grammaticalization in the Ethiopian language area" sponsored by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.

I wish to express my thanks to Ulrike Claudi, Bernd Heine, and Heinz Roberg for their precious insights and comments; special thanks are due to Hans-Jürgen Sasse for his valuable remarks and criticisms to an earlier, much longer version of this work, and for the long, fruitful discussions we had on this and related topics. Any imprecision, omission, or downright error is, of course, exclusively mine.

#### ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Absolute	INDEF	Indefinite
Adj	Adjective	M	Masculine
Art	Article	N	Noun
C	Consonant	OBJ	Object marker
DEF	Definite	PI	Plural
F	Feminine	S	Singular
FOC	Focus marker	SUBJ	Subject marker
H	High tone	TOP	Topic marker
HEC	Highland East Cushitic	V	Vowel

#### REFERENCES

- ABEBE, Alemayehu  
1993 "A Sketch of the Mesketo Grammar", *S. L. L. E. (Survey of Little-known Languages of Ethiopia) Linguistic Report 8* (Addis Ababa, June/July 1993): 1-9.
- ADAMS, Bruce  
1990 "Name Nouns in Wolaitta", in: Hayward 1990a: 406-412.

- ALLAN, Edward J.  
1976 "Kullo", in: Bender 1976: 324-350.
- AMBORN, Hermann, Gunter MINKER, Hans-Jürgen SASSE  
1980 *Das Dullay: Materialien zu einer ostkuschitischen Sprachgruppe*, Berlin: Reimer.
- APPLEYARD, David L.  
1989 "The relative Verb in Focus Constructions: An Ethiopian Areal Feature", *Journal of Semitic Studies* 34/2: 291-305.
- BENDER, M. Lionel (ed.)  
1976 *The Non-Semitic Languages of Ethiopia*, East Lansing, Michigan: African Studies Center, Michigan State University.
- CERULLI, Ernesto  
1938 *Studi Etiopici II. La lingua e la storia dei Sidamo*, Roma: Istituto per l'Oriente.
- COMRIE, Bernard  
1981 *Language universals and linguistic typology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- CROFT, William  
1990 *Typology and Universals*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DIMMENDAAL, Gerrit J.  
1986 "Prominence Hierarchies and Turkana Syntax", in: Gerrit J. Dimmendaal (ed.), *Current Approaches to African Linguistics (vol. 3)*, Dordrecht: Foris: 127-48.
- EMENEAU, M.B.  
1956 "India as a linguistic area", *Language* 32/1: 3-16.
- FAARLUND, Jan T.  
1988 "A typology of subjects", in: Michael Hammond, Edith Moravcsik, and Jessica Wirth (eds.), *Studies in Syntactic Typology*, Amsterdam: Benjamins: 193-207.
- FERGUSON, Charles  
1970 "The Ethiopian language area", *Journal of Ethiopian Studies* 8/2: 67-80.  
1976 "The Ethiopian language area", in: M. Lionel Bender, J. Donald Bowen, Robert L. Cooper and Charles A. Ferguson (eds.), *Language in Ethiopia*, London: Oxford University Press: 63-76.



- GASPARINI, Armido  
1978 *Grammatica pratica della lingua sidamo*. Awasa, mimeogr.
- GIVÓN, Talmy  
1983 "Topic continuity in discourse: The functional domain of switch-reference", in: John Haiman and Pamela Munro (eds.), *Switch Reference and Universal Grammar*, Amsterdam: Benjamins: 51-82.
- GREENBERG, Joseph H.  
1966 "Some universals of grammar with particular reference to the order of meaningful elements", in: Joseph H. Greenberg (ed.), *Universals of grammar*, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press: 73-113.  
1978 "How does a language acquire gender markers?", in: Joseph H. Greenberg, Charles Ferguson, and Edith Moravcsik (eds.), *Universals of human language*, Stanford: Stanford University Press: 47-82.
- HARRIS, Martin B.  
1980 "The marking of definiteness: A diachronic perspective", in: Elizabeth C. Traugott, Rebecca Labrun, and Susan Shepherd (eds.), *Papers from the Fourth International Conference on Historical Linguistics*, Amsterdam: Benjamins: 75-86.
- HAYWARD, Richard J.  
1979 "Bayso revisited: some preliminary linguistic observations - II", *BSOAS* 42: 101-132.  
1981 "Nominal Suffixes in Dirayta (Gidole)", *BSOAS* 44: 126-144.  
1984 *The Arbore Language: A First Investigation*, Hamburg: Buske.  
1988 "Is there a language with an indefinite nominative - Burji?", in: Taddese Beyene (ed.), *Proceedings of the Eight International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*, Addis Ababa: Institute of Ethiopian Studies, and Frankfurt a.M.: Frobenius Institut, J.-W.-Goethe Universität: 1988: 679-691.  
1990a (ed.), *Omotic Language Studies*, London: University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies.  
1990b "Notes on the Zayse Language", in: Hayward 1990a: 210-355.

- 1991 "À propos patterns of lexicalization in the Ethiopian language area", in: Daniela Mendel and Ulrike Claudi (eds.), *Gedenkschrift Peter Behrens. Ägypten im Afro-orientalischen Kontext (AAP Sondernummer 1991)*; Köln: Institut für Afrikanistik: 139-156.
- HEINE, Bernd and Mechthild REH  
1984 "Diachronic Observations on Completive Focus Marking in Some African Languages", *Sprache und Geschichte in Afrika* 5: 7-44.
- HETZRON, Robert  
1977 *The Gunnän-Gurage Languages*, Napoli: Istituto Orientale.  
1978 "The nominal system of Awngi (Southern Agaw)", *BSOAS* 41/1: 121-141.
- HOMPÓ, Éva  
1990 "Grammatical Relations in Gamo: a Pilot Sketch", in: Hayward 1990a: 356-405.
- HUDSON, Grover  
1976 "Highland East Cushitic", in: Bender 1976: 232-277.
- LAMBERTI, Marcello  
1983 "The Origin of the Focus Particles in Somali", in: Rainer Voßen and Ulrike Claudi (eds.), *Sprache, Geschichte und Kultur in Afrika. Vorträge, gehalten auf dem III. Afrikanistentag, Köln, 14./15. Oktober 1982*, Hamburg: Helmut Buske: 57-112.
- LESLAU, Wolf  
1952 "Notes on Kambatta of Southern Ethiopia", *Africa* 22: 348-359.
- LI, Charles N. and Sandra A. THOMPSON  
1976 "Subject and Topic: A New Typology of Language", in: Charles N. Li (ed.), *Subject and Topic*, New York: Academic Press: 457-489.
- PLAZIKOWSKY-BRAUNER, Herma  
1960 "Die Hadiya-Sprache", *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* 16: 38-76.  
1962 "Grammatik der Aläbä-Sprache", *Rassegna di Studi Etiopici* 18: 83-96.
- SASSE, Hans-Jürgen  
1976 "Dasenech", in Bender 1976: 196-221.  
1977 "Gedanken über Wortstellungsveränderung", *Papiere zur Linguistik* 13: 82-142.



- 1982 *An Etymological Dictionary of Burji*. Hamburg: Buske.
- 1984 "Case in Cushitic, Semitic and Berber", in: James Bynon (ed.), *Current Progress in Afro-Asiatic Linguistics*, Amsterdam: Benjamins: 111-126.
- SASSE, Hans-Jürgen and Helmut STRAUBE  
 1977 "Kultur und Sprache der Burji in Süd-Äthiopien: ein Abriss", in: Wilhelm J. G. Möhlig, Franz Rottland, and Bernd Heine (eds.), *Zur Sprachgeschichte und Ethnohistorie in Afrika*, Berlin: Reimer: 239-266.
- WEDEKIND, Klaus  
 1990 *Generating Narratives. Interrelations of Knowledge, Text Variants, and Cushitic Focus Strategies*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- ZABORSKI, Andrzej  
 1990 "Preliminary remarks on case morphemes in Omotic", in: Hayward 1990a: 617-629.

## Particli Camito-Semitici

Werner VYCICHL  
 (Ginevra)

### Introduzione

Il tema della mia conferenza odierna tratta di un fenomeno delle lingue berbere mai spiegato: la geminazione della prima radicale di certe forme verbali e nominali. Si vedrà che il problema è camito-semitico e non semplicemente berbero.

### Forme verbali berbere

In tuareg *elmed* significa "imparare" e il suo causativo *selmed* "insegnare" (letteralmente "far imparare").

- |     |                                   |                                      |
|-----|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| (a) | <i>elmed-ey</i> "ho imparato"     | futuro <i>éd-elmed-ey</i> "imparerò" |
|     | <i>i-lmed</i> "ha imparato"       | <i>éd-i-lmed</i> "imparerà"          |
| (b) | <i>esselmed-ey</i> "ho insegnato" | <i>éd-selmed-ey</i> "insegnerò"      |
|     | <i>i-sselmed</i> "ha insegnato"   | <i>éd-i-selmed</i> "insegnerà"       |

La forma semplice del verbo si coniuga senza geminazione, ma il causativo (*selmed*) gemina *s* nel perfetto (*esselmed-ey*), ma non nel futuro (*éd-selmed-ey*), benché tutti e due i tempi si coniughino cogli stessi affissi.

### Beni Snus (Algeria) e Siwa (Egitto)

Ma pare che la coniugazione del perfetto provenga da una coniugazione a suffissi: le forme del perfetto dei Beni Snus (Algeria, regione di Tlemcen) sono citate secondo E. Destaing, *Etude sur le dialecte des Beni-Snous*, I, Paris 1907 (p. 96) e le forme di Siwa secondo le mie notizie: