

ASPECTS OF THE VERB IN OMETO

AZEB AMHA

1. INTRODUCTION

Ometo represents a large group of languages within Omotic which are classified together as a genetic unit because their phonology, grammar and lexicon are quite close. According to Fleming's 1976 classification, these languages are further subdivided into the following four groups:

1. North Ometo, e.g. Gofa, Wolaitta, Kullo, Malo, Oyda and Dorze.
2. East Ometo, e.g. Zayse-Zargula, Koorete, Gidicho and Kachama.
3. West Ometo, e.g. Basketo and Doko-Dolo.
5. South Ometo, consisting of only one language, namely Maale.

In Bender's 1988 classification (cited in Hayward (---)), however, North, West and South Ometo languages are grouped together and are identified by one and the same name, North Ometo. When looking at the verbal morphology of these languages, however, as will be seen partly in this paper, Fleming's classification is more appropriate. Thus, based on Fleming's classification, the paper will discuss the verb conjugation in the negative and interrogative forms of the four genetic units mentioned above by taking a representative language from each one. The languages discussed are: Kullo, Koorete, Basketo and Malle, representing north, east, west and south Ometo respectively.

2. PREVIOUS STUDIES

There are several studies on the individual languages of the Ometo cluster. But comparative studies focusing on group characteristics are not many. To mention a few, are Fleming (1976), Hayward (1984) and Zaborski (1984)

In Fleming (1976), lack of inflection is considered as one of the characteristic features of Ometo. Concerning this, Fleming writes "Grammatically, they are distinguished most of all by their loss of most traditional Afro-Asiatic or even Omotic verb inflections, the only ones retained being /-ete/ (2nd person plural), /-ona/ (3rd person plural, more rarely), and /-ino/ (1st person plural, a few conjugations)". But in this paper, it is argued that this should not be considered as a characteristic feature for the group as a whole.

All Ometo languages mark verbal inflections such as for tense and aspect. In some Ometo languages even both of the two features are distinguished morphologically. The difference among these languages lies in marking the nominal inflections, person, number and gender in the verb. Some of the languages mark these features in detail whereas others do not mark them at all¹. There are languages that take a middle position because they mark part but not all of the nominal features. The following examples illustrate this in the representative languages:

1 (a) North Ometo:

Kullo marks person number and gender of Pronominal subjects as shown in the following examples:

tani geya b- a- dd- i
I market go-lsg-past-lsg
'I went to the market'

East Ometo:

orete does not always mark pronominal subjects as in the following sentence.

(c)

tani gaDesa hand-o
I Market go-past
'I went to the market'

(c) West Ometo:

Basketo marks number and 3rd person gender of the subject.

tani gabi lukk-a-de
I market go-lsg-past
'I went to the market'

(d) South Ometo:

Maale marks no subject in its verb inflection.

tani boka ad-ene
I Market go-past
'I went to the market'

As shown in the examples, Kullo and basketo mark person. Kullo has formally different discontinuous morphemes for marking person and number features of subjects. Basketo identifies only the number and gender of third person subjects. Maale and Koorete on the other hand, show only tense. In these two languages the form of the verb in the affirmative perfective and imperfective aspect is invariable for all persons, number and gender. Hence in the face of such extreme cases of kullo (North Ometo), and Maale (South Ometo), it is difficult to take lack of inflection as a characteristic feature of Ometo in general. Rather, this property should be taken as a feature distinguishing member languages of Ometo- i.e., as a feature of subclassification within Ometo as a whole.

Furthermore, in the interrogative and in the negative forms of the verb, even Maale² shows some remnants of verbal inflections for subject.

Verb inflection for the different tense and aspect forms in Ometo has been discussed by several scholars. Zaborski (1984) in particular provides a general picture of Ometo verb inflections by comparing different languages. However, the languages for which he had a large quantity of data seem to be Wolaitta, Gofa, and Kullo, all coming from the same subgroup of north Ometo.

The verb conjugations he gives for Basketo which are based on Cerulli (1938) appear not to be correct.³ Moreover, Zaborski (1988:28) himself questions the reliability of his data for Maale, which he got from the anthropologist Don Donham's unpublished material. This paper was in part stimulated by his work and aims at filling in some of the gaps in his data.

Among the languages considered in this paper, Kullo has been well described in Allan (1976) in which the topics (of this paper) have also been partly treated. Hayward (1982) describes Koorete including its verb inflections which are discussed in detail. As shown in his work, the verb paradigm in Koorete has a complex pattern because most verbs have different stems for the infinitive, imperfective and perfective aspects. For example, the verb root for the word 'go' (which is most used in this paper), has the infinitive stem /hamm-/, the imperfective /hang-/, and the perfective /hand-/ (for a detailed analysis of this see Hayward (1982)). In this paper, I shall deal with the verbal affixes of tense and aspect attached to these stems.

The third part of this paper shows verbal and nominal inflections in the affirmative declarative forms. Earlier studies mentioned above have already determined the form of this for Kullo and Koorete. When there is disagreement in the analysis or in the data of these studies, it will be indicated. The data on Basketo and Maale, however, are new and these may help to fill in some of the gaps. In part four, I shall show how negative and interrogative verbs show nominal and verbal information.

3. VERBAL INFLECTION IN AFFIRMATIVE-DECLARATIVE FORMS

With regard to tense-aspect distinctions in the four languages, the following should be noted. Basketo makes past, future, and present continuous tenses and perfective imperfective distinctions.⁴ Maale distinguishes perfective and imperfective aspects and the present continuous tense. Koorete has also a three-way distinction, namely, perfective, imperfective and present continuous tense. Kullo marks present, past, future and present continuous tenses differently. Each of these tense-aspect distinctions is shown below.

3.1. TENSE

3.1.1. Past Tense

The following paradigm shows the conjugation of the verb for 'go' in the past tense. In both languages, the left most morpheme represents the root verb.

Basketo

1sg lukk-a-de
 2sg lukk-a-de
 3ms lukk-i-de
 3fs lukk-a-de
 1pl lukk-i-de
 2pl lukk-i-de
 3pl lukk-i-de

Kullo

b-a-dd-i
 b-a-dd-a
 b-e-dd-a
 b-a-dd-u
 b-e-dd-o
 b-e-dd-ita
 b-e-dd-ino

The past tense morpheme is /-de/ in Basketo and /-dd/ in Kullo. Basketo distinguishes number /-a/ singular, except for 3ms, and /-i/ and /-a-/ for 3ms and 3fs respectively. In Kullo each person is marked differently by discontinuous morphemes. Concerning person marking in the past tense, Allan (1976:335) provides the following examples:

<u>singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
1sg. -di	1Pl. -du or do
2sg. -da	2pl -dita
3ms. -da	3pl -dino
3fs. -du	

Apart from this, Allan treats /a/ and /e/ as 'pronominal vowels' showing number and gender in the third person. Hiwot (1988) argues that these are part of the discontinuous morphemes distinguishing person, number and gender. Following her I take the following morphemes to be subject markers in Kullo.

1sg. -ai	1Pl. -eto
2sg. -aa	2pl -eita
3ms. -au	3pl -eino
3fs. -au	

3.1.2. Future Tense

	Basketo	Maale	Kullo
1sg	lukk-anda	aD-and-ane	b-a:n-a
2sg	lukk-anda	aD-and-ane	b-a:n-a
3ms	lukk-anda	aD-and-ane	b-a:n-e (-wa)
3fs	lukk-anda	aD-and-ane	b-a:n-a (-aw)

1pl	lukk-anda	aD-and-ane	b-a:n-a
2pl	lukk-anda	aD-and-ane	b-a:n-itta
3pl	lukk-anda	aD-and-ane	b-a:n-awanta

In Basketo and Maale, the morpheme /-and(a)/ marks the future tense⁵. However, these two languages do not mark pronominal subjects within the future tense. Kullo uses the morpheme /a:n/ to mark this tense. But it also distinguishes person, except first person and second singular, which are marked by the same morpheme.⁶

3.1.3. The present continuous tense

The present continuous tense in these languages, except in Maale, is often expressed by the use of auxiliary verbs 'be' or 'exist'. Malle has a different morpheme {-ane} to mark this tense. The following examples show this:

2a) Basketo:

tani lukki - Keddi woDe
 I go - ? exist
 'I am going'

b) Maale:

tani a D-ane
 I go-pres.cont
 'I am going'

c) Koorete:

tani ham-iyako ta yese⁷
 I go -(?) I copula
 'I am going'

d) Kullo:

tani b- a de?- ey
 I go-gerundive exist-1sg
 'I am going'

In Allan (1976:335), a paradigm for the verb /sa?-/
 'bite' in Kullo is given:

/ta sa?adi/ai/ 'are biting'
 /ne sa?adia/ 'You' are biting

From this paradigm, Zaborski (1988:27) lists the following morphemes which he called 'affirmative present' but it is formally identical to what we have called the present continuous morphemes above:

Sing.1.	-adi-ay	pl. 1.	-ide-etu
2.	-aid-a	2.	-ide-ita
3m.	-ide-e	3.	-ide-inu
3f.	-adi-aw		

The paradigm given by Allan, in fact, represents a complex verb consisting of two verbs, that is, the first verb /sa?/ 'bite' which occurs in its gerundive form (designated by the morpheme /-a/ for the singular, except in 3ms, and by /-i/ for the plural and for 3ms, and by the second verb /de?-/ 'be' or 'exist' which is inflected for person, number, and gender like any other verb in the language. Thus, the paradigm is as follows:

Kullo present continuous tense (modified)

1sg.	sa?- a	de?-ay
2sg.	sa?- a	de?-a
3ms.	sa?- i	de?-e
3fs.	sa?- a	de?-aw
1pl.	sa?- i	de?-o
2pl.	sa?- i	de?-itta
3pl.	sa?- i	de?-oyta

The inflectional markers attached to the verb /de?-/ show the present tense. The contrast between the following two sentences illustrates the distinction between the present tense and the present continuous tense in Kullo:

- 3 (a) ta sa?- ay
I bite-pres/habitual
'I bite'
- (b) ta sa?- a de?- ay
I bite-gerund exist-pres/habitual
'I am biting'

3.2. ASPECT

3.2.1. The Imperfective Aspect

Only for Basketo and Koorete can we identify imperfective aspect. Basketo again uses the same n and gender markers used in the past tense. The following sentences illustrate this form in the two languages

4a) Basketo:

tani gabi lukk-a- re
I market go- 1sg-impf.
'I go to the market'

(b) Koorete:

tani gaDess-ako ta hang-e⁸
 I market-to 1sg go-impf.
 'I go to the market'

The following paradigm summarizes the conjugation for all persons, number and gender.

	<u>Basketo</u>	<u>Koprete</u>
1sg.	lukk-a-re	hang-e
2sg.	lukk-a-re	hang-e
3ms.	lukk-i-re	hang-e
3fs.	lukk-a-re	hang-e
1pl.	lukk-i-re	hang-e
2pl.	lukk-i-re	hang-e
3pl.	lukk-i-re	hang-e

3.2.2. The Perfective Aspect

Of the four representative languages, three have a distinct form for the perfective aspect. As stated in (3.1.3) the perfective form of the verb in Koorete can also be formed with /yese/or/yece/

	<u>Basketo</u>	<u>Maale</u>	<u>Koorete</u>
1sg	lukk-ine	aD-ene	hand-o
2sg	lukk-ine	aD-ene	hand-o
3ms	lukk-ine	aD-ene	hand-o
3fs	lukk-ine	aD-ene	hand-o
1pl	lukk-ine	aD-ene	hand-o
2pl	lukk-ine	aD-ene	hand-o
3pl	lukk-ine	aD-ene	hand-o

The perfective morpheme is /-ine/ in Basketo, /-ene/ in Maale and /-o/ in Koorete. All are invariably the same throughout the conjugation.

4. VERBAL INFLECTION IN THE NEGATIVE AND INTERROGATIVE

As mentioned in the introduction, the negative and interrogative forms of the verb conjugation exhibit some remnants of pronominal subject inflections even in those languages which have lost this type of inflection in their other paradigms. This suggests that these paradigms are more conservative or archaic than their corresponding affirmative counterparts.

The negative and interrogative forms discussed here are those marked morphologically in the verb. Whether sentence negation, as opposed to lexical negation, in an utterance yields different forms is not clear. Similarly, the function and position of interrogative pronouns in a sentence with a negative verb would be interesting for future study. From the incomplete data I have collected so far, it appears that the negative in subordinate clauses has also a form which is different from those in main clauses.

4.1. The Interrogative

The interrogative in these languages has different forms in the perfective and imperfective aspects.

4.1.1. Interrogatives in the perfective aspect

The following examples show the interrogative forms in the four languages:

a) Kullo:

neni geya b aa-dd-i
 You market go-past-interrog. 2s
 'Did you go to the market?'

b) Koorete:

neni gaDesa hand-u
 You market go-interrog. 2sg
 'Did you go to the market?'

c) Basketo:

neni gabi lukk-i
 you market go-interrog. 2sg
 'Did you go to the market?'

Maale:

neni bo:ka aD-iyā
 You market go-interrog. 2sg
 'Did you go to the market?'

c) Following table summarizes the interrogative forms for all persons and numbers.

	<u>Basketo</u>	<u>Maale</u>	<u>Koorete</u>	<u>Kullo</u>
3bJ	-ina	-ene	-eya	-ita
3bJ	-i	-iya	-u	-i
1bJ	-e	-iya	-eya	-e
3Fg	-a	-iya	-eya	-e
1pl	-e	-ene	-eya	-o
2pl	-e	-iya	-oyuta	-ite
3pl	-it	-iya	-eya	-ino

The table shows that Basketo marks each person by a different interrogative morpheme. Here, except for 2nd plural, person number and gender are distinguished and the distinguishing morphemes are different from those used in the affirmative form of the past tense verb.

Maale distinguishes first person singular and plural from the rest. Koorete distinguishes 2nd person singular and plural with different morphemes, all the other persons being marked by the same morpheme. Kullo again has a full class of different morphemes marking the different persons, number and gender and these are still different from those person markers used in the affirmative conjugation of the verb.

4.1.2. Interrogative in the imperfective aspect/ future tense

The examples below, from Maale and Koorete, illustrate the interrogative in the imperfective aspect:

- (a) Maale: nuni aD-anda
We go-impf.
'Do (will) we go?'
- (b) Koorete: nuni gaDesa haŋma hang-e
We market go -impf.interrog
'Do(will) we go to the market?'

The following table shows the interrogative morphemes in the four languages.

<u>Person</u>	<u>Basketo</u>	<u>Maale</u>	<u>Koorete</u>	<u>Kullo</u>
1sg	-a-r-a	-anda	-e	-nita
2sg	-a-r-a	-anda	-e	-ni
3ms	-i-r-a	-anda	-e	-ane
3fs	-a-r-a	-abda	-e	-nawini
1pl	-i-r-a	-anda	-e	-ane
2pl	-i-r-a	-anda	-e	-anite
3pl	-i-r-a	-anda	-e	-anawante

In Basketo, the imperfective interrogative has a form similar to the affirmative imperfective one except for the deletion of the last vowel /-e/ of the imperfect morpheme /-re/, because sequences of vowels are not allowed in the language. In Maale, person is not marked in the imperfective, future interrogative. The form /-anda/ is a future tense marker while only raising the intonation distinguishes question forms. Like in Maale, Koorete also does not mark person in the imperfective interrogative. Only the verb root and the interrogative morpheme /-e/ show this form. In Kullo, once again, each person is designated by a different morpheme.

4.2. The Negative

The negative in these languages has three forms depending on aspect and mood. Each of these forms is shown below.

4.2.1. The Negative in the perfective Aspect

<u>Person</u>	<u>Basketo</u>	<u>Maale</u>	<u>Koorete</u>	<u>Kullo</u>
1sg	-akay	-ibase	-basso	-a-bayk-i
2sg	-akay	-ibase	-basso	-a-bak-a
3ms	-akay	-ibase	-basso	-i-ben-a
3fs	-akay	-ibase	-basso	-a-bik-u

1pl	-akay	-ibase	-basso	- <u>i</u> bok-o
2pl	-akay	-ibase	-baytako	<u>i</u> -beyk-ita
3pl	-akay	-ibase	-basso	<u>i</u> -beyk-ino

Basketo and Maale do not mark nominal inflections. Koorete has a distinct form only for the second person plural. Kullo distinguishes each person, number, and gender by different morphemes. These person markers in Kullo are similar to those given in the conjugation for the past tense. But here identifying the first vowel of the discontinuous morphemes is difficult because in the singular form it appears before the negative morpheme whereas in the plurals it occurs inside the negative morpheme (see the vowels underlined).

4.2.2. The Negative in the Imperfective Aspect

Person	Basketo	Maale	Koorete	Kullo
1sg	-a-bas(e)	-uwase	-wasso	- <u>i</u> -k-e
2sg	-a-bas(e)	-uwase	-wannako	-a-k-a
3ms	-a-bas(e)	-uwase	-wasso	-e-n-a
3fs	-a-bas(e)	-uwase	-wasso	-u-k-u
1pl	-a-bas(e)	-uwase	-wans'iko	-o-k-u
2pl	-a-bas(e)	-uwase	-waytako	-i-k-ita
3pl	-a-bas(e)	-uwase	-itiwasso-	i-k-ino

In Basketo the imperfective negative morpheme is /-bas/ or /base/. The number and gender markers are the same ones used in the past tense and in the imperfective aspect. Maale's negative imperfective morpheme is /-uwase/, invariable for all persons. Koorete shows different forms for different persons and numbers.

4.2.3. The Negative in the Imperative-Jussive Mood

<u>Person</u>	<u>Basketo</u>	<u>Maale</u>	<u>Koorete</u>	<u>Kullo</u>
2sg	-app-e	-ippo	-ofna	-oppa
3ms	-app-e	-eppo	-ofe	-oppo
3fs	-app-e	-ippo	-ofe	-uppu
2pl	-app-ut	-ippoti	-ofita	-oppite
3pl	-app-e	-ippo	-	-oppino

5. CONCLUSION

In the first part of this paper, the inflection of the verb in Ometo for the different tenses and aspects in the affirmative form was described. It was shown that of the four representative languages, Kullo has the most detailed system of marking pronominal subjects. Basketo, in all instances, identifies number and gender only. Maale and Koorete, however, do not inflect for person, number and gender in this form. Based on this, it was argued that the statement that these languages are characterized by lack of inflection is not correct and does not apply to all the four languages. The structure of the verbal paradigms does not provide evidence that these languages should be put under one node in the family tree, also because the actual subject marking forms vary widely across the Ometo groups. Hence, Fleming's sub-division into four separate units, North, East, West and South Ometo would seem to be more appropriate than Bender's classification of them into three; North, East and Chara.

The second part of the paper dealt with the conjugation of the verb in the negative and interrogative moods. Here again Kullo has a more elaborate system of inflection. However, compared to the first section, even the non-inflectional language Maale, and Koorete to a lesser extent, also exhibits some distinctions for pronominal subject thereby showing that negative and interrogative verb paradigms tend to be more archaic and conservative than their corresponding affirmative counterparts.

Notes

¹ In the languages that mark these features, it is only the subject that is shown in the verb inflection.

² I say 'Even' here because as stated in Fleming (1976: 51); "In Maale in the south, inflection has gone altogether..." However, among others, there are imperative 2sg. /-e/ vs. /-wate/ and jussive 3sg /-om/ vs. 3pl. /-ongo/ distinctions in this language.

³ Zaborski lists the conjugation on the left side taken from Cerulli (1938). But from data elicited recently, the correct forms are those in brackets.

Sing.	1.	maos	(mo:de)
	2.	mes	(mo:de)
	3m.	mes	(muyide)
	3f.	mes	(mo:de)
pl.	1.	mis	(muyide)
	2.	mes	(muyide)
	3.	mes	(muyide)

⁴ Usually it is difficult to determine a certain morpheme as a tense or aspect marker because in most Omotic languages, the same form may show the future tense or the imperfective aspect. In this paper, when, at least one tense and a perfective aspect are clearly distinguished, it is assumed that both tense and aspect exist; otherwise, I assume that the language distinguishes only aspect. In Basketo for example, tense and aspect are both functional because past tense and perfective aspect are clearly distinguished.

⁵ The morpheme /-ane/ attached here to the future tense marker is identical to the present continuous tense morpheme. It can be replaced by another morpheme /-ake/ with the meaning remaining the same. Thus, both /tani aD-and-ane/ and /tani aD-and-ake/ mean 'I will go'.

⁶ Allan (1976) states that the morpheme /-a:na/ marks the future tense for all persons, but my informants prefer the paradigm given here.

⁷ The copula /yese/ has a past counterpart, /yece/ or /yeca/. Thus the contrast between:

/tani miako ta yese/ 'I am eating'
and
/tani miako ta /yeca/ 'I was eating'.

It is difficult to say that /yese/ here marks a 'present' or 'continuous' tense because when combined with the perfective form of the main verb, it shows the perfective aspect as in:

/tani mu:diko ta yese/ 'I have eaten'.

⁸ Koorete has patterns of verb paradigms in which the verb root is reduplicated to mark different aspects. Thus, as an alternative to example (b), we have the following:

/tani gaDessako hangako ta hange/
'I (will) go to the market'.

fne
ifa.
cne

REFERENCES

- Allan, E.J. 1976. "Kullo," In: M.L. Bender, (ed.). The Non-Semitic Languages of Ethiopia. East Lansing: Michigan State University.
- Bender, M.L. (ed.) 1976a. The Non-Semitic Languages of Ethiopia. East Lansing: Michigan State University, African Studies Center.
- Bender, M.L. et al., (eds.) 1976b. Language in Ethiopia. London: Oxford University Press.
- Fleming, H. 1976. "Cushitic and Omotic," in: M.L. Bender, et al. (eds.) Language in Ethiopia. London: Oxford University Press, (34-53).
- Hayward, R.J. 1982. "Notes on the Koyra Language," Afrika und Ubersee 65, 2:211-268.
- _____. 1990. (ed.) Omotic Language Studies. London: School of Oriental and African Studies.
- Hiwot Teferra. 1988. "Kullo Verb Morphology," BA Thesis, Department of Linguistics, Addis Ababa University.
- Zaborski, A. 1984 "Remarks on the Verb in Omoto," in S. Rubenson, (ed.), Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, University of Lund, 26-29 April, 1982

REFERENCES

- Allan, E.J. 1976. "Kullo," In: M.L. Bender, (ed.). The Non-Semitic Languages of Ethiopia. East Lansing: Michigan State University.
- Bender, M.L. (ed.) 1976a. The Non-Semitic Languages of Ethiopia. East Lansing: Michigan State University, African Studies Center.
- Bender, M.L. et al., (eds.) 1976b. Language in Ethiopia. London: Oxford University Press.
- Fleming, H. 1976. "Cushitic and Omotic," in: M.L. Bender, et al. (eds.) Language in Ethiopia. London: Oxford University Press, (34-53).
- Hayward, R.J. 1982. "Notes on the Koyra Language," Afrika und Ubersee 65, 2:211-268.
- _____. 1990. (ed.) Omotic Language Studies. London: School of Oriental and African Studies.
- Hiwot Teferra. 1988. "Kullo Verb Morphology," BA Thesis, Department of Linguistics, Addis Ababa University.
- Zaborski, A. 1984 "Remarks on the Verb in Omoto," in S. Rubenson, (ed.), Proceedings of the Seventh International Conference of Ethiopian Studies, University of Lund, 26-29 April, 1982