

The grammaticalization of mood and modality in Omotic: A typological perspective

Gerrit J. Dimmendaal

The Omotic branch of the Afroasiatic phylum manifests some typologically unusual features in terms of modality marking, such as the formal marking of the Imperative and the Declarative moods. The present contribution seeks to explain the origin of these formal properties. It also investigates the relevance of paradigmatic oppositions in grammatical systems and the role of self-organising principles for grammaticalization processes.

1. Introduction

Languages frequently have formal ways of marking how a speaker views the state of affairs being described in an utterance, or, alternatively, how the speaker wishes it to be understood by the hearer. This grammatical property reflecting the expressive role of an utterance rather than its referential or informational status, has also been referred to by a range of alternative terms, such as the emotive, social-expressive, or interpersonal role. In a recent typological study on the subject (Kärkkäinen, Sorjonen and Helasvuo 2007: 322), this contrast is referred to as the subjective versus the representational role of language.

Languages commonly distinguish between Indicative (or Declarative), Imperative, and Interrogative mood on the verb as speech acts, as pointed out in the typological survey by König and Siemund (2007). Attempts to link modality marking to clause types probably go back to the Greek philosopher Protagoras (4th century BCO), as argued by Allan (2001: 343). Protagoras distinguished between four moods in Greek, the Optative-subjunctive, the Interrogative, the Declarative, and the Imperative. As further pointed out by Allan (2001: 344), “[g]rammarians in the western classical tradition have recognized a degree of coincidence between clause-type and illocutionary force [...] probably since 300 BCE [...]” Lyons (1968: 307) points out that interrogative sentences “[...] are not traditionally regarded as modal, because in most languages [...] the syntactic distinction between declarative and interrogative sentences is not associated with a difference of verbal inflexion or the selection of a particular auxiliary, but with the employment of various interrogative particles or pronouns, with a difference of word-order, or with intonation, together with the ‘indicative mood’.” Lyons presents the label ‘indicative mood’ as a sneering quote because “[s]imple declarative sentences [...] are, strictly speaking, non-modal (‘unmarked’ for mood). If, however, a particular language has a set of one or more grammatical devices for ‘marking’ sentences according to the speaker’s

commitment with respect to the factual status of what he is saying (his emphatic certainty, his uncertainty or doubt, etc.), it is customary to refer to the ‘unmarked’ sentences also (by courtesy as it were) as being ‘in a certain mood’; and the traditional term for this ‘unmarked’ mood is *indicative* (or *declarative*)” (Lyons 1968: 307).

Whereas the two grammatical domains of modality and clause type clearly do not necessarily coincide in Indo-European languages, Omotic languages do occasionally provide almost perfect matches between the two, as we shall see below. Interestingly, the strong link between sentence structure and illocutionary force is a rather permanent property of languages belonging to this Afroasiatic branch. Moreover, Omotic languages – unlike many others – usually have a formal way of marking Indicative mood, thereby distinguishing such verb forms from verbs in corresponding Interrogative sentences.

The present contribution sets out to investigate mood and modality marking in Omotic from a typological point of view (section 2), followed by a historical interpretation of two formally marked mood distinctions, Imperatives and Declaratives (section 3). Section 4 puts this phenomenon, involving pronominal subject (or agent) marking on different constituents within a clause, in a historical perspective. The historical development of Interrogative mood marking is central to section 5. In section 6, the historical-comparative results are discussed within the frame of current grammaticalization models. In the final section (7), the pattern of modality marking in Omotic languages is compared to the system in neighboring Nilo-Saharan languages, since these share a range of typological properties. However, contrary to Nilo-Saharan, Omotic languages have a kind of “black hole”, the position immediately following the verb, which absorbs all formal marking of illocutionary and perlocutionary force.

2. Omotic modality marking in a cross-linguistic perspective

From a cross-linguistic point of view, Omotic languages not only turn out to be rather rich in terms of modality marking, they also manifest a number of peculiarities which are relatively rare elsewhere. First, it is striking that modality marking is almost always expressed on the verb, rather than by way of such a strategy in combination with the use of particles. In Indo-European languages, for example, inflectional systems of modality marking are often complemented by an alternative strategy, the use of particles. There is a variety of such markers in German, as shown by Abraham (1991), e.g. *aber*, *auch*, *bloß*, *denn*, *eben*, *eigentlich*, *halt*, *ja*, *mal*, *nur*, *vielleicht*, *wohl*, *zudem*. These usually occur in a number of different positions in the sentence, sometimes in combination with each other, as in example (1).

- (1) wie konnte ich bloß den Schlüssel verlieren?
how could 1SG ATT DEF key loose
‘how could I possibly loose the key?’

These sentences may express different speech acts. The philosopher Austin (e.g. 1975) has argued for a distinction between locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts in this respect. In his model, “[p]erlocutionary acts refer to the relation between the utterance and its causal effects on the addressee. In contrast, illocutionary and locutionary acts are alternative descriptions of the utterance”, as Kissine (2008: 1189) also observes. Assertions or questions would thus be examples of illocutionary acts. Examples from German such as (1) indeed show that it is useful from a typological point of view to distinguish between illocutionary and perlocutionary acts, and the same would be true of other languages. The (rhetorical) question in German above represents an illocutionary act, as the speaker is asking a question rather than making a statement. Markers such as *bloß* on the other hand trigger perlocutionary effects. They are also referred to in the literature as attitude markers, emphatic markers, addressive particles, or (in the French literature) *particules modales*. They are also found in Afroasiatic languages such as Hausa. In this Chadic language, a formal distinction occurs between Indicative, Imperative, Subjunctive, Potential, and Rhetorical mood, all of which are expressed by way of verbal inflections (compare Newman 2000, Jaggar 2001). But in addition, a range of modal particles are found, described in meticulous detail by Newman (2000: 326-334), who points out that they are known by speakers as the *gishirin Hausa*, ‘the salt of the Hausa language’. Compare the following example from Newman (2000: 327), where absence of tone marking means the syllable contains a high tone:

(2) tsàyā dai ‘hang on just a moment!’
 stop MP

Omitting such particles, or using them where an alternative form from the same paradigm might have been used, or where the use of such an attitude marker might have been avoided, triggers conversational implicatures of some kind. For example, the presence of *dai* may soften the abruptness of a statement (Newman 2000: 327). Newman (2000: 326) characterizes the modal particles as a “[...] closed set of intensifying, specifying, restricting, focusing, connecting particles [...] They serve to express a personal attitude, state of mind, emphasis or contrast, corrective, conversational flow, or other pragmatic or discourse functions.” In other words, they are instances of perlocutionary acts in Hausa discourse.

These markers follow the constituents they modify in Hausa, e.g. the verb in example (2) above. But unlike other constituents in the language, they manifest considerable freedom regarding the syntactic position where they can occur (Newman 2000: 332). This is further illustrated in example (3), where the same marker occurs between the indirect object marker *wa* and the indirect object.

- (3) kà kaucè wà dai mahàukàcin nàn
 2SG:M:SUBJ avoid PREP MP madman this
 ‘avoid this madman!’

This strategy of modality marking by way of particles is not entirely absent from the Omotic branch. In his description of Benchnon, Rapold (2006: 446) makes reference to an injunctive particle (glossed as ‘how’) introducing clauses with Optative or Imperative clauses.

- (4) wòs nī hámè
 how 1+2NOM go.NFS-MED_{opt}
 ‘come on, let’s go!’

But interestingly, the marking or formal expression of illocutionary and perlocutionary acts tends to converge in one syntactic position in various Omotic languages, namely immediately following the verb, preferably forming a phonological word with the latter. This position is consequently referred to as the “black hole” of Omotic languages in section 7 below.

Amha’s (2001) detailed analysis of Maale, an Ometo language, illustrates this typological peculiarity of Omotic. Compare the following distinctions on the sentence-final verb for the Declarative mood.

Declarative affirmative:

- (5) ʔatsí ziginó mukk-é-ne
 person-M:NOM yesterday come-PERF-AFF:DEC
 ‘the man came yesterday’

Declarative mirative:

- (6) ka hay-í amm-é-y
 INTERJ this-NOM give.fruit-PERF-MIR
 ‘oh, this one has given fruit (talking of a three year old mango tree)’

Declarative veridical (as a modal distinction expressing an increased intensity of the truth of a proposition):

- (7) ʔekk-i
 take:VER
 ‘yes, I will certainly take’

Modality marking in Maale also interacts with evidentiality marking, as with the Declarative informative (Azeb Amha 2001: 288):

- (8) lúú dííl-á ?áá-skay
 down flour-NOM exist-NEW:DEC
 there is flour in (the house) down there'

The strategies for Declarative and (polar) Interrogative mood marking contrast with each other in Maale, which is characterized by the absence of a mood marker, as is common for Omotic.

- (9) ?atsí mukk-íya 'did the man come?'
 person-M:NOM come-PERV:Q

Similar subdivisions for the Declarative mood are reported for other Omotic languages. Rapold (2006: 226), for example, refers to a counter-expectational (as part of the Indicative mood). Lamberti and Sottile (1997), in their description of Wolaitta, point out that the Indicative (referred to here as the Declarative) includes a past dubitative. "[...T]he past dubitative expresses the speaker's uncertainty about the happening of the action and can be rendered into English by the addition of the adverb "maybe" [...]" (Lamberti and Sottile 1997:149).

Omotic languages are essentially head-final or "leftward-branching" languages both at the phrasal and at the clausal level. Thus, nominal modifiers tend to precede the noun, whereas the verb tends to occur in clause-final position. Preverbal constituents, both arguments and adjuncts, are usually marked for case; their position relative to each other and to the verb, however, fluctuates. Variable scope for modality marking in Omotic languages thus tends to be expressed, not by modifying the position of modality markers, as is the case for Chadic languages like Hausa above (which lacks case marking), but instead by alternating pre-verbal constituent order, i.e. through "scrambling".

Amha (2001: 235-242) shows that in Omotic languages like Maale subjects and objects may also occur after the verb in main (though not in dependent) clauses. In such constructions, involving focus marking and other pragmatic effects such as residual information, the verbal modality markers presumably do not have scope over these syntactic arguments.

Maale is characteristic for Omotic in that it shows a formal contrast on the verb between Declarative and Interrogative mood (data from Amha 2001: 212):

- (10) nee-kó mácc-á ?afkó kats-á-ne
 2SG:GEN-GEN wife-NOM meat-ABS cook-IMPERV-AFF:DEC
 'your wife cooks meat'

- (11) nee-kó mácc-á ʔaʃkó kats-á-ne
 2SG:GEN-GEN wife-NOM meat-ABS cook-IMPERV-AFF:DEC
 ‘does your wife cook meat?’

It is common for Omotic languages to make a formal distinction between Declaratives, Interrogatives, and Directives / Imperatives (including Optative, Hortative, Subjunctive or Jussive forms) as main modal distinctions on the verb.¹ Characteristically, the Declarative mood is morphologically more complex than the corresponding Interrogative mood form in Omotic. The following examples from Wolaitta with the Perfective forms for the verb ‘tell, ʔod - illustrate this feature (Table 1).

Table 1 Perfective verb forms in Wolaitta

Person	Declarative	Interrogative
1SG	ʔod-aási / ʔod-ádisi	ʔod-ádina
2SG	ʔod-ádasa	ʔod-ádí
3SG:M	ʔod-íisi / ʔod-ídesi	ʔod-ídé
3SG:F	ʔod-aásu / ʔod-ádusu	ʔod-ádé
1PL	ʔod-ída	ʔod-ídó
2PL	ʔod-ídeta	ʔod-ídéti
3PL	ʔod-ídosona	ʔod-ídóna

Whenever a binary contrast in meaning is involved, it is not necessary for a language to mark both from a formal point of view. This may be seen as an instantiation of the economy principle. Its manifestation can be found in the fact that forms which are pragmatically unmarked, e.g. because of their high frequency in day-to-day communication, are often left unmarked morphologically. Less commonly occurring forms would be marked through morphological means under these conditions. But declarative statements presumably have a higher frequency than interrogative statements, and so the frequency principle makes the wrong predications when it comes to

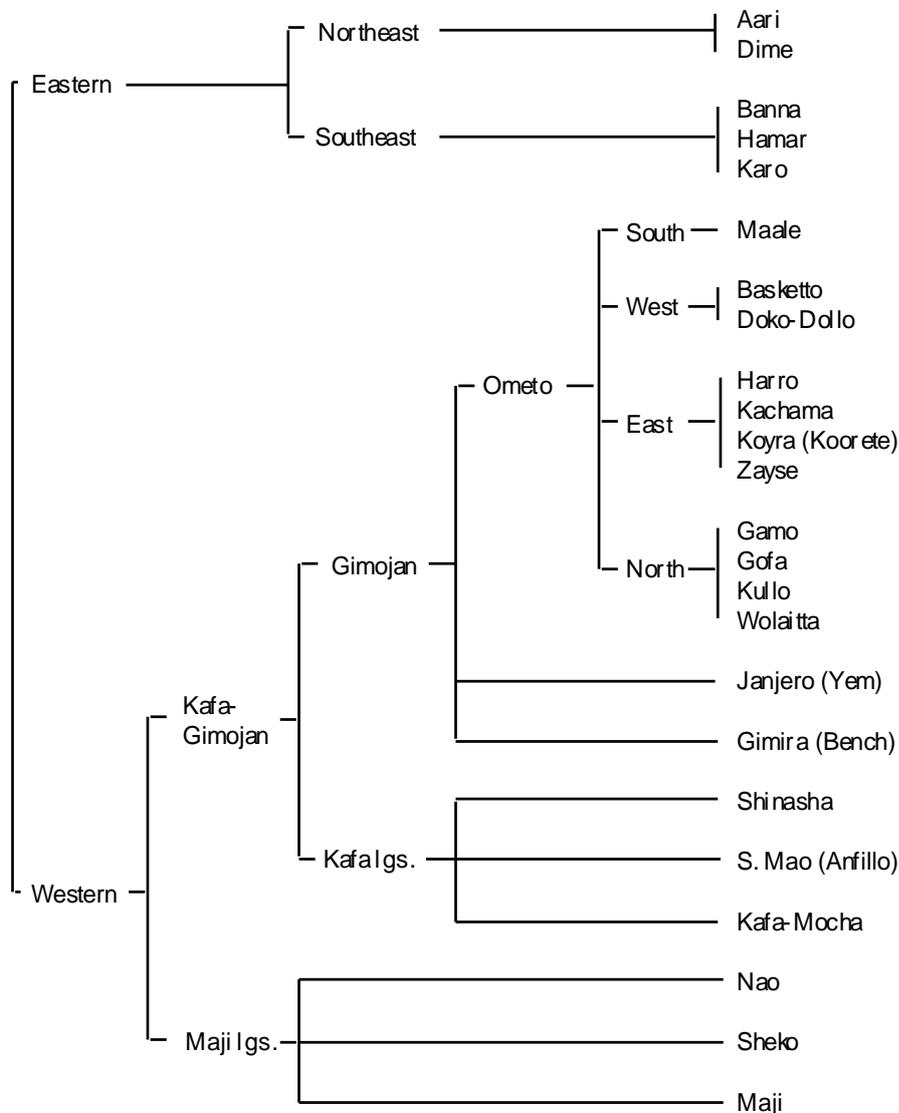
¹ A number of authors mention additional formal distinctions. For example, Lamberti and Sotilla (1997: 147) include formal distinctions such as the Relative or the Conditional for Wolaitta. However, these are presumably not mood distinctions, but rather formal variations of the Declarative in dependent (subordinate) clauses.

understanding modality marking in Omotic. Consequently, there must be another important principle at work, as argued below.

3. Omotic modality marking in a historical perspective

In the discussion of diachronic aspects of Omotic modality marking below, we follow the genetic subclassification of Amha (2012). The classification into two main sub-branches goes back to Fleming (1976: 300). This is very similar to Bender (1971), whose Aroid (Southern) branch corresponds roughly to Fleming's Eastern branch, and whose Northern Omotic corresponds roughly to Fleming's Western branch (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The subclassification of Omotic



3.1. Extending the interactional role of Directives

Hompó (1990: 391) points out that there is no formal distinction between Imperatives and Jussives in Gamo, an Omoto language. Instead, the verb form used with the second person as addressee is part of a paradigm which includes all persons. This pattern is more widespread across Omotic. The singular Jussive / Imperative paradigm with the verb ‘hit’, for example, has the following structure:

1SG	šoč’-o
2SG	šoč’a
3SG	šoč’o
Polite	šoč’ite

In Kullo and Haro (also Omoto languages), a similar formal marking strategy is found. Allan (1976: 337) shows that in Kullo, the singular (affirmative) form takes a suffix -a, whereas the plural takes a suffix -iite in the imperative.

- (12) y-a ‘come (sg)!’
 y-iite ‘come (pl)!’

The formal similarity to the pronominal affixes used with the Jussive mood paradigm in Kullo above is obvious.

Amha (2012: 457) reports a formally marked Imperative for Zargulla, involving a similar suffix:

- (13) yéw-a ‘come!’

Cross-linguistically, it is common for Imperative verb forms to be short and, usually, to lack a formal marking for the second person, at least in the singular. The suffixes used with verb forms in Omoto languages like Kullo appear to have resulted from an extension of Jussive or Hortative mood forms. The latter modality distinctions often involve full paradigms for all person and number distinctions occurring in a language.

The claim that Imperative (Directive) markers in languages like Kullo derive historically from second person markers is confirmed by comparative evidence from other Omotic languages. The marker -a for the second person singular, for example, is attested in such distantly related Omotic languages as Hamar, where a “stem-form” a is found (Lydall 1976: 414); the corresponding second person plural “stem-form” is ye. However, these pronominal markers do

not occur in Imperative forms; instead, perfect or imperfect verb stems are used (Lydall 1076: 421):

- (14) kuma ‘eat!’
 has.eaten

In another member of the Omoto cluster, Koorete, the Imperative takes a suffix -wa, as shown by Sisay (2008). But the second person Imperative form is in fact part of an Imperative-Optative paradigm, in which the second person does not take a person-marking prefix, whereas other personal forms do. Characteristically, mood markers tend to be absent from such Imperative mood verb forms. As Hellenthal (2010: 406) points out in her description of the Omotic language Sheko, “[w]ith an Imperative, one does not evaluate or assert a proposition but one gives a directive for the addressee to follow up.” Consequently one would not necessarily expect to find a modal marker in this type of construction.

The extension of hortative or jussive forms to include directive (imperative) meanings, i.e. avoiding direct commands, may have a cultural explanation.² For example, in Nilotic languages belonging to the Teso-Turkana group it is not possible grammatically to mention a first person (singular or plural) object on the verb in Imperative forms, whereas in corresponding Indicative forms this is obligatory for the first person. Instead, a passive verb form is used, as in the following Karimojong example (data from Novelli 1985).

- (15) k-iz-irwor-ikin-ae
 IMP-CAUS-speak-DAT-PASS
 ‘speak to me (us)! (lit. cause to be spoken to)’

Similarly, one may avoid coming across as too authoritative by using impersonal third person passive forms when speaking on behalf of a group of people (‘we’), as in Turkana (Dimmendaal 1991: 299).

- (16) è-los-ì-o
 3-go-IMPERV-PASS
 ‘there will be some (people) going, one (including we) will go’

For additional observations on the structure of imperatives from a general typological point of view, see Aikhenvald (2010).

² See the pioneering studies in Enfield (2002) on so-called “ethno-syntax”, i.e. the link between grammar and cultural experience.

Amha (2001) does not treat these markers in Maale as copulas, because synchronically predication of a nominal category (e.g. of a noun or adjective) is expressed by another marker, -ke (Amha 2001: 226):

- (19) kaní-ke ‘it is / was a dog’
dog-be:AFF:DEC

Maale expresses negation in corresponding predicative constructions by means of a verb *t-* plus the same negation marker as used in verbal constructions.

- (20) kani t-uwá-se ‘it is/was not a dog’

Whereas in Maale, the shape of Declarative mood markers is not sensitive to person, number or gender properties of the subject or agent of the verb, in many other Omotic languages it is. There are solid comparative reasons, as further shown below, for assuming that person / number marking on the verb as found in modern Wolaitta is a reflex of the original system in Omotic. In Wolaitta, we find fused (portmanteau) morphemes expressing person, gender and number, which can no longer be separated morphologically from the Declarative marker, as illustrated in Table 1 above. Moreover, these markers fuse with aspect and negation markers, but the actual inflectional system (with these exponents) must be old, as argued in section 4 below.

Interestingly, one finds all kinds of intermediate stages for these inflectional properties in terms of morphological complexity between the two extremes of Wolaitta and Maale. Koorete, for example, is also characterized by a rich inflectional system, marking tense, aspect, person and mood in Declarative verb forms (Sisay 2008: 196). Cross-reference (agreement) markers are added to the verb stem in affirmative constructions, and to the negative existential auxiliary in corresponding negative constructions in the Declarative. With the Interrogative mood, a different set of pronominal reference markers for subjects is used (Sisay 2008: 121). In Dime on the other hand, the inflectional morphology for the Declarative has been reduced to a simple alternation between -*t* for the first person singular and plural, and -*n* for the second and third person singular and plural (Seyoum 2008: 123). Verbs are not inflected for person with the Interrogative mood in Dime (Seyoum 2008: 130).

As the Declarative mood markers frequently fuse with adjacent person and / or tense-aspect markers, it is not always easy to identify their basic (or original) form. Apart from a marker -*ne* (as in Maale and other languages discussed below), a number of other markers are attested. The marker -*k(k)o* (plus allomorphs) is restricted to a group of languages within the Omoto cluster, more specifically Gamo, Koorete, and Haro. Examples 21 and 22 are from the latter language (Woldemariam 2009: 106, 119):

(21) ʔés-í míssi-gillá-pa ʔung-á-kko-ʔé-dd-e
 he-NOM tree-LOC-ABL fall-INF-FOC-3M:SG-PERV-AFF:DEC
 ‘he has fallen from a tree’

(22) ʔassá-z-i moló-kko ʔé-wong-ín-e
 man-M:DEF-NOM fish:ABS-FOC 3MS-buy-PAST-AFF:DEC
 ‘the man bought *fish*’

Another Declarative mood marker is -tte in Basketo, and the presumably cognate form -tee (alternating with -tta) in Zayse. In all cases, these modality markers appear to be etymologically related to and historically derived from copulas. Amha (2007) presents a preliminary inventory of common copulas in Omotic, and points towards a number of widespread markers. The Declarative mood markers in Basketo and Zayse, for example, correspond to the Dizi affirmative copula -ti- (Amha 2007: 113). This parallels the case of the Maale Declarative mood marker -ne and its historical link with a copula ne in Hamar. These examples thus present cases of so-called *heterosemy*, a phenomenon whereby related forms and their different, but related, meanings belong to different morphosyntactically determined grammatical categories. (Lichtenberk 1991, Enfield 2006).

Of course, the encliticization, and subsequent suffixation, of such copulas (as in Maale) does not necessarily lead towards a new modality distinction, unless the presence of such markers contrasts with their absence in alternative sentence types. And this is exactly what one finds in many Omoto languages. Historically, these affirmative markers, stating the correctness of some statement, were apparently avoided in questions, thereby giving rise to a mood distinction between Declarative and Interrogative, though the actual markers have been “renewed” over and over again.

3.3 *The hermit-crab principle*

The formal contrast between Declarative mood and Interrogative mood is deeply rooted in Omotic languages, as shown above. Whereas the degree of inflectional complexity with Declarative mood varies between individual languages, the actual contrast is stable. In a language like Maale, where the marking of person, number or gender in combination with this former copula has completely disappeared, we find clear evidence for an original marker -ne in the Declarative mood. A different Affirmative mood marker is found in a range

of other Omoto languages, as shown above. Thus, in Zargulla, we find a marker -tte. Nevertheless, there are still remnants of an earlier Declarative marker -ne. Amha (2012: 461) makes the following interesting observation:

“All Zargulla tense markers end in *-ne*. It is possible that, at some stage, this morpheme had a morphological function of marking modality in the language. Another Omoto language, Maale, uses a cognate form *-ne* as a sentence-type marker which distinguishes affirmative declarative clauses from negative declarative and from interrogative clauses. In Zargulla, how-ever, *-ne* is attested in both declarative and (polar) interrogative questions. Because of this, the morphemes *-inne* (past), *-ine* (present or habitual), *-ene* in Zargulla are not further analysed in this chapter.”

A presumably cognate form, -ni, occurs in Anfillo (Goshu 2007). Consequently, this Declarative mood marker and the corresponding copula or focus marker (*ne) is the form with the widest distribution within Omotic.

The marker -tte in Zargula is probably a reflex of another widespread Omoto copula, a phenomenon that may also be found in Omoto languages like Wolaitta where the word-final segmental sequence -sV / -tV in Declarative mood forms is probably a reflex of the same copula. Lamberti and Sottile (1997: 168), in their description of Wolaitta, refer to so-called “verb topicalization”. From the examples, however, it is clear that verb focusing or focalization is involved. This construction is also formed by means of a marker -tte in Wolaitta:

(23) ta yaasi-tte ‘I *did* come’

Interestingly, Zargulla and other languages belonging to the Omoto cluster have not lost the formal distinction between the two moods when the marker ne was generalized (i.e. extended) over Declarative (Indicative) and Interrogative. Instead, it initiated a marker -s(e)- (< -tte), again derived from a copula, with Declarative mood, thereby *maintaining* the distinction between the latter and the Interrogative mood.³

(24) ?esi guta gakk-o-tte-s-ene
 3MSG:NOM tomorrow arrive-INT-FOC-3M:SG-FUT
 ‘he *will arrive* tomorrow’

This marker (glossed as a focus marker by Amha 2012) is absent in corresponding Interrogative sentences.

³ Reflexes of such a marker with an initial t- are found elsewhere in Omotic, e.g. in Aari (Hayward 1998: 109).

Zargulla manifests another interesting property, namely that the very same focus marker plus person / number / gender inflection may also appear on other syntactic categories, e.g. adverbs of time, as in the following question.

- (25) ?esi guta-tte-s gakk-o-ne
 3M:SG:NOM tomorrow-FOC-3M:SG arrive-INT-FUT
 ‘will he arrive *tomorrow*?’

The emergence of a new Declarative mood marker constitutes a classical instance of the so-called “hermit crab” principle as proposed by Heath (1998), i.e. a strong tendency to maintain preexisting categories whose prior expression have become obsolete.

4. Pronominal (re)alignment in a historical perspective

The origin of formal marking of the Imperative (Jussive, Hortative) is related to enclitical pronominal reference marking on the verb, as argued above. Declarative mood markers resulted from copulas used to affirm the correctness of a statement, and frequently merged with person / number / gender markers on verbs, as further argued above. But subject (or agent) is also expressed by way of clitics on other constituents across Omotic, and therefore this cannot be the entire story when it comes to mood and modality marking in this family. The morphosyntactic distribution of these clitical pronominal subject markers frequently depends on information packaging, more specifically on focus marking, in a clause. Compare Aari, as described by Hayward (1990).

- (26) its-ek-itsido ‘are they *eating* (verb focus)?’
 eat-3PL-eating

- (27) keta sen-ak itsido ‘will they eat *tomorrow*?’
 3PL tomorrow-3PL eat

A similar pattern is found in Koorete, as shown by Sisay (2008: 107, 112, et passim). In this Ometo language, pronominal subject (agent) marking is expressed by way of proclitics, whenever some element other than the verb carries focus (glossing as in the source):

- (28) doro woon-gu-w-a-d-i-ko
 sheep buy-IMPERV-PRES-not.exist-PERV-PER-AFF:FOC:DEC
 e yetsha
 3SM exist-PAST
 ‘he used to *not* buy sheep’

- (29) ketiya ketiya-ko ta wos'e
morning morning-AFOC:DEC 1SG run-PRES
‘every morning I run’

In a highly detailed analysis of Sheko, Hellenthal (2010: 433) shows that subject clitics and their place in the clause are strongly linked to information packaging. In this language, a pronoun encliticizes onto the verb stem with verbal predicative focus.

- (30) t'ùùs = ṅ-k-ə
know=1PL-REAL-STI
‘we (do) know it’

Alternatively, if the constituent does not carry focus, a proclitic subject marker is used:

- (31) ṅ = t'ùùs-k-ə
1PL=know-REAL-STI
‘we know it’

Such pronominal elements may also latch onto a medial verb as an enclitic or “[...] to another part of the clause if that part is highlighted; in other words, the clitic generally follows a salient part of the sentence” (Hellenthal 2010: 428). The constituent involved may be a question word, a non-subject NPS, an adverb or a negation marker. Hellenthal (2010: 435) further observes that these enclitics do not occur in the Jussive, Irrealis and Implicative in Sheko, whereas with the Optative the proclitic variant is absent.

A similar system is found in Dizi, which belongs to the same sub-branch as Sheko (i.e. Maji) but also in distantly related languages like Aari, as illustrated in examples (26) and (27) above. As Aari and Dizi are members of the Eastern and Western Omotic branches respectively (i.e. the two primary branches of Omotic), this alignment pattern for pronominal subjects or agents probably goes back to their latest common ancestor, Proto-Omotic. This is supported by evidence from other Western Omotic languages. Hellenthal (2010: 446) points out that pronominal subject marking in the Eastern Omoto language Zargulla shows remarkable similarities with Sheko. Here, the copular focus maker -tte is followed by a set of suffixes which co-vary for person, number and gender of the subject. Amha (2012: 495) gives the following contrastive examples from Zargulla:

- (32) ?ésí gutá gákk-ó-s-éne
 3M:SG_NOM tomorrow arrive-INT-3M:SG-FUT
 ‘will he arrive tomorrow?’
- (33) hoo, (?ésí) gutá gákk-ó-tte-s-éne
 yes, 3M:SG:NOM tomorrow arrive-OB-FOC-3M:SG-FUT
 ‘yes, he will arrive tomorrow’

Given the widespread nature of this phenomenon within Omotic, we are dealing presumably with an archaic property of this Afroasiatic branch. This leads us to the following historical scenario for pronominal alignment in Omotic:

Stage I: “Floating” (clitical) pronominal markers encliticized onto the constituent carrying focus within a clause (e.g. a verb, an auxiliary verb, an adverb or a question word) and formed a phonological word with the latter. This system has been retained in distantly related Omotic languages such as Sheko, Zargulla and Aari.

The pronominal subject markers themselves are clearly linked to independent pronouns in Omotic. It remains to be determined to what extent these alternative strategies for pronominal subject (agent) marking predate Omotic, i.e. to what extent they go back to earlier stages of Afroasiatic.⁴ For example, the first person singular marker in languages like Sheko (n) may be a reflex of a widespread Afroasiatic marker reconstructed as *ni by Hayward (2000), whereas the corresponding first person plural n may be a reflex of Proto-Afroasiatic *na. Similarly, the second person singular masculine form ha- may be a reflex of Proto-Afroasiatic *ka, whereas the third person plural marker íji is presumably a reflex of Protoafroasiatic *sun (as reconstructed in Hayward 2000).

Whenever the enclitic pronouns combined with an auxiliary verb (carrying focus), these frequently merged with the preceding verb, as argued by Hayward (1998). One of these archaic auxiliary verbs involves (reflexes of) a locative-existential verb *d, still found in Hamar, and “incorporated” into a main verb in other Omotic languages (Hayward 1998: 97). The following paradigms from the distantly related Omotic languages Gamo and Aari (Hayward 1998: 107) illustrate these cognate forms:

⁴ Furthermore, it needs to be determined whether there was an additional system of subject or agent marking involving prefixation or procliticization.

Table 2 Verb paradigms in Gamo and Aari

	Gamo perfect	Aari imperfect
1SG	gel-a-d-i-s	baʔbaʔ-d-i-t
2AG	gel-a-d-a-s-a	baʔbaʔ-d-a-y
3M:SG	gel-i-d-e-s	baʔbaʔ-d-e
3F: SG	gel-a-d-u-s	baʔbaʔ-d-e
1PL	gel-i-d-o-s	baʔbaʔ-d-o-t
2PL	gel-i-d-eta	baʔbaʔ-d-e-t
3PL	gel-i-d-a	baʔbaʔ-d-e-k

The encliticization of auxiliaries plus pronouns, as in Gamo and Aari, onto preceding dependent verb forms (converbs and / or medial verbs) appears to be part of a more general and permanent strategy in Omotic languages. The phenomenon itself may be related to prosodic principles of these languages, for example the avoidance of monosyllabic or monomoraic words.

The pragmatic status of such inflected main verbs, or dependent verb plus auxiliaries (syntactically functioning as main verbs), carrying focus appears to have been reinforced again and again in Declarative statements by adding copulas such as *-ne and other forms mentioned above. This latter feature is not restricted to Omotic languages in the area; it is also found in neighboring Cushitic languages. Crass et al. (2005: 34) make the following observation in this respect: “The use of identical morphemes as copulas and focus markers in all these languages is quite intriguing. It strongly suggests that language contact may be an explanation for the existence and partly similar function of these morphemes in the different languages.”⁵

The merger of these various phonological elements into one word frequently resulted in fusion. This next stage is attested in languages like Wolaitta (illustrated above):

⁵ Thilo C. Schadeberg (personal communication) has pointed towards a similar strategy in Kenyan Bantu languages such as Gikuyu. This typological influence consequently extends into these languages as well. Whether this is due to independent development or the reflex of shift-induced interference from Afroasiatic languages once spoken in the area remains to be investigated.

Stage II: Portmanteau morphemes as a result of the merger of tense-aspect (and negation) markers following the verb stem with subject enclitics following these elements in declarative / affirmative (but not in interrogative) sentences.

As a final stage, these portmanteau morphemes disappeared altogether, only leaving the constituent that was added last in a verbal complex, the Declarative marker (reinforcing a statement), as in Maale.

Stage III: Loss of number / person / gender marking on suffixes

5. Question marking and Interrogative mood in Omotic

It is common practice in the description of Omotic languages to render the Interrogative forms by way of deletion or subtraction rules. For example, Seyoum (2008: 162) in his description of Dime assumes the shorter Interrogative mood forms in this language to be the result of the dropping or deletion of subject agreement. But historically this approach appears to be wrong, as there probably never was such a deletion process with Interrogative mood in the first place. As argued above, there is good comparative evidence for the claims that the combination of predicative markers or copulas with Declarative verb forms was simply absent in corresponding interrogative utterances. Moreover, there is comparative evidence that questions were marked separately by sentence-final particles. In Eastern Omotic, one of the two primary branches of Omotic, there is a vocalic element attached as a clitical element to the final verb as a formal marker of polar interrogatives. As shown by Hayward (1990: 478-479), this is the system found in Aari, where a marker -o occurs. As further pointed out by the same author, “[i]n 3s forms, where this -o follows the vowel of the aspect or negative formatives, the latter undergo deletion.” For Hamar, Lydall (1976) describes a similar strategy. In this member of Eastern Omotic, a clitical element -u is attached to the clause-final verb in order to mark questions. For another member of this cluster, Dime, Seyoum (2008: 162) reports a high tone on the vowel of the aspect marker with first and third person subject forms, and a marker -aa with second person.

In Western Omotic languages, we also find both segmental and suprasegmental traces of a distinctive interrogative sentence marker, for example in one of its two primary branches, the Dizoid or Maji cluster. Hellenthal (2010: 411) observes that in the Guraferda variant of Sheko, one member of the Dizoid cluster, there are two segmental question markers, -à and -ne, and that it is possible that the falling intonation of the Sheko variants spoken in and around Sheko town is related to -à. Elsewhere within Western Omotic we find a similar pattern. For example, in one member of the Gongga cluster, Anfillo, there is a clause-final interrogative marker -a (Goshu 2007: 124). For Benchnon, Rapold

(2006: 252-253) reports a polar question marker -a. The author further contends (p. 253) that the longer forms (containing this marker) are reminiscent of the mirative and the reporting of one's own thought, which are reflected by mediative markers. Elsewhere (p. 257) a content interrogative marker -o is reported, as used with mediative forms in Benchnon. In her detailed description of the Dizoid language Sheko, Hellenthal (2010) shows how the interrogative marker in this language is part of a paradigm of stance markers indicating how the speaker relates to a particular utterance. Hellenthal (2010: 302) refers to the particle -o as an indirect stance marker, occurring only in interrogatives and vocatives. This marker is in paradigmatic contrast with an indirect stance marker -ə, and a direct stance marker (signalling the absence of distances) -ya / -a (Hellenthal 2010: 302-313). "When -o is suffixed, the falling intonation indicating interrogativeness is not present", as pointed out by Hellenthal (2009: 406). Alternatively, when the stance marker is absent, a falling intonation occurs on the last tone-bearing unit in Sheko (p. 407).

From this preliminary survey, it may be concluded that interrogatives in Omotic tend to be expressed either by a segmental marker encliticising on the clause-final constituent (the verb) or a tonal morpheme. The latter itself may constitute the reflex of a former tone-bearing segmental morpheme which left a tonal trace on the preceding element, once the segmental part was deleted historically. This prosodically weak element, lacking an initial consonant, may easily fuse with segments in the preceding morpheme.

6. *Grammaticalization theory and modality marking in Omotic*

In their catalogue of grammaticalization phenomena, Heine and Kuteva (2002) list several processes involving the development of verbal morphology, ranging from tense-aspect marking to derivational markers. Observations on the origin of mood or modality marking in their lexicon of grammaticalization are restricted to incidental observations, e.g. on the origin of hortative constructions deriving from verbs like 'come', 'go', 'leave'. Presumably, then, this is a poorly understood domain of historical linguistics.

Himmelmann (2004: 31) criticizes the element-based view on grammaticalization, and points out that "...[t]he unit to which grammaticization properly applies are *constructions*, not isolated lexical items." But one could even extend this criticism and point out that not only the syntagmatic but also the paradigmatic dimension is crucial for our understanding of grammaticalization processes. From the discussion above it should be obvious that the *paradigmatic* contrast between verbs has been central in the historical development of modality marking in Omotic. The use of affirmative markers in Declarative statements as against their absence in corresponding questions probably provides the best proof for this. Historically, it was presumably added in constructions in order to reinforce the correctness of a specific statement ('it is the case that ...'). In due course, such a statement apparently became more

strongly associated with the speaker's subjective attitude towards a proposition as a conversational implicature, i.e. with illocutionary force. Once a different marker came to be used as a copula (as in the Maale case discussed above), such a bound marker became fully grammaticalized as a modality marker, contrasting with its absence in corresponding interrogative sentences.

The functional linguist Halliday (1994: xxviii) has made an interesting observation in this respect:

“The basic opposition, in grammars of the second half of the twentieth century, is not that between ‘structuralist’ and ‘generative’ as set out in the public debates of the 1960s. There are many variables in the way grammars are written, and any clustering of these is bound to distort the picture; but the more fundamental opposition is between those that are primarily syntagmatic in orientation (by and large the formal grammars, with their roots in logic and philosophy), and those that are primarily paradigmatic (by and large the functional ones, with their roots in rhetoric and ethnography) [...] The latter interpret language as a network of relations, with structures coming in as the realization of these relationships; they tend to emphasize variables among different languages, to take semantics as the foundation (hence the grammar is natural), and so to be organized around the text, or discourse.”

Obviously, the present author's sympathy is with grammars in which paradigmatic oppositions are taken to be central notions, since this is what modality marking in Omotic tells us. Morphological coding may be left out where this is least needed for the hearer in order to decode a message. The application of such economy principles also would seem to be advantageous from a cognitive point of view, e.g. in terms of language processing or parsing.

7. The “black hole” of Omotic languages

Mood is frequently coded on verbs cross-linguistically, presumably because of the close interaction between the expression of the state of affairs through this syntactic category and the way this state of affairs is to be understood, i.e. the illocutionary force involved with a specific utterance. Additional marking for modality, frequently involving perlocutionary acts, is often expressed by way of separate particles, as shown above. Omotic languages are particularly interesting from a typological point of view in that the formal expression of the illocutionary *as well as* the perlocutionary dimensions conflate or converge on the verb, hence its characterization as a “black hole” in the present contribution.⁶ Hellenthal (2010), for example, shows for Sheko that the

⁶ This concept of course has been borrowed from astronomy, where the notion of a black hole is used for a centre of gravity formed by compact masses in the

verb-final slot is used to mark Irrealis, Realis, Optative, but also semantic notions like Viewpoint, Implicative, Imminence, or Obvious. 34 is an example of the latter (Hellenthal 2010: 311).

- (34) b̀̀̀̀ = á-kn
work=3M:SG-KNOWN
'it works'

Rapold (2006:256) points out with respect to the mediativity marker in Bench that it indicates some “distance” in the communicative process; more specifically, it marks reported speech, surprise (Mirativity), politeness or the fact that an utterance is addressed to somebody at a spatial distance. Moreover, and this is an important pragmatic feature, Mediative marking signals the end of a paragraph. More generally, modality concepts such as the Mirative (expressing how well a piece of information is integrated into the speaker’s store of previous knowledge) or the Informative (expressing a statement which the speaker thinks is completely new to the other speech participant) all tend to be expressed on the verb in Omotic languages. Consequently, mood is identified with clause-type in Omotic in an almost perfect manner.

One can also observe a perpetuation and expansion of paradigmatic oppositions through internal mechanism, in particular in the Omoto group, where there is an almost perfect link between sentence structure and illocutionary force. Here we may observe another instantiation of so-called *self-organising principles* in languages.⁷ It appears that once paradigmatic contrasts emerge between syntactic elements performing a role in terms of modality marking in a specific language, these potential contrasts become proliferated or elaborated upon, i.e. new markers may be added. The choice of a particular option is thus partly predetermined by its existing structure. This is what Aitchison (1987:19) has called “causation level two” (following “causation level one” which involves social factors).

A typological comparison with neighboring Nilo-Saharan languages shows that the “black hole” is unique to Omotic languages. Within Nilo-Saharan, one finds verb-final languages in an area ranging from Chad across Northern Sudan and into Ethiopia and Eritrea, which, in addition, share structural properties such as extensive case marking and the use of converbs or light verb plus coverb constructions with Omotic, Cushitic and Semitic languages (Dimmendaal 2008). But the same Nilo-Saharan languages differ

universe. Once a black hole has formed, it can continue to grow by absorbing additional matter.

⁷ Similar “self-organising” principles may be observed in other grammatical domains in Omotic (or elsewhere), e.g. the stability of case marking, or the perpetuation of verbal compounding (Amha and Dimmendaal 2006).

from Omotic in that illocutionary and perlocutionary force tends to be expressed by way of separate particles, rather than verbal morphology. As a matter of fact, within the Afroasiatic phylum Omotic appears to be unique in this respect, since no such tendency to mark mood and modality solely on the verb is attested for Ethiopian Semitic or Cushitic as far as present knowledge goes.

Table 3 Mood and modality marking Omotic and Nilo-Saharan

Typological properties	Omotic, in particular the Omoto cluster	(former) Nilo-Saharan extension of the “Ethiopian” convergence area along northern Sudan into Chad
Case marking	Yes, extensive	Yes, but not always as extensive as in Omotic
Verb-final	Yes	Yes
Converbs	Yes	Yes
Adverbial clauses	Precedes the main clause and is marked with a <i>clause-final</i> conjunction	Precedes or follows main clause, often with <i>clause-initial</i> conjunctions
Marking illocutionary force (attitude, evidentiality etc.)	Typically on final constituent (i.e. verb) of a clause	Usually marked with separate particles

Fur, a typical Nilo-Saharan representative of this typological zone in this respect, has a range of illocutionary particles (Waag 2010), some of which may also follow the verb. More often, however, these precede the verb (frequently occurring in second (“Wackernagel’s”) position.⁸

- (35) í’á wúo adda, zí bá lóó hóó-íí
that grandfather Abdu 2SG just place empty-3SG.be.IMPERV
ná 3-əlu
CONV 2SG-see.IMPERV
‘as for that there, grandfather Abdu, you are just seeing an empty place!’

⁸ Wackernagel (1892) was the first to point towards the placement of enclitic sentential particles in syntactic second position in Indo-European clauses.

Omotic languages are renowned for their extensive stacking of clauses with dependent verb forms (commonly referred to as converbs and / or medial verbs). In his detailed analysis of Bench, Rapold (2008) distinguishes between two types of dependent verbs, converbs and medial verbs. The latter are dependent, non-argumental and non-adnominal verb forms. Contrary to medial verbs, converbs do not carry person-sensitive markers (and thereby are also less finite than medial verbs); moreover, converbs are subordinate, whereas medial verbs are co-subordinate (see also Rapold 2008). But neither converbs nor medial verbs are marked for mood. As pointed out by Rapold (2008: 177), it is not possible to combine a clause containing a medial verb with a main clause containing a verb expressing interrogative mood (as in ‘Kargu sold his car, and what did he buy?’). A question which the present author has asked himself again and again is: When does a speaker of an Omotic language decide to start a new sentence? One answer now appears to be: “Whenever a distinct illocutionary force is involved.” Dependent verbs combined with main verbs (marked for mood) in a proto-typical Omotic language thus express macro-events involving an identical modality statement or illocutionary force.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ABL	= ablative
ABS	= absolutive
AFF	= affirmative
AS	= aspect
ATT	= attitude marker
CAUS	= causative
CONV	= converb
DAT	= dative
DEC	= declarative
DEF	= definitive
ELP	= elliptic
F	= feminine
FOC	= focus
FUT	= future
GEN	= genitive
IMP	= imperative
IMPERV	= imperfect

INF	= infinitive
INST	= instrument
INT	= intentional
INTERJ	=interjection
KNOWN	= known information
LOC	= locative
OPT	=optative
M	= masculine
MED	= mediative
MIR	= mirative
MP	= modal particle
NEG	= negative
NEW	= new information
NOM	= nominative
NFS	= non-factual stem
OPT	= optative
PA	= past
PASS	= passive
PER	= perfect
PERV	= perfective
PREP	= preposition
PRES	= present
PL	= plural
PREP	= preposition
Q	= question
REAL	= realis
REL	= relative
SG	= singular
STI	= stance marker (indirect)
SUBJ	= subjunctive
TEMP	= temporal
VER	= veridical

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