Copula Construction in Dime[*]

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Abstract

In this paper we treat copula construction in Dime. We made also some reviews of other Omotic languages. We made a few comparisons with copula clauses in Hamar and Ari, which are much closed to Dime. Moreover, we made also comparison with Maale and Basketo, neighboring languages and other Omotic language such as Koorete to get further information of copula construction in Omotic Languages. The tenseles, past and future copula clauses in Dime is also treated. The equative and attributive copula clauses are tense-less which are marked by the copula **–éé** or **dán**. These are used alternatively without any apparent meaning difference. We also discuss the copula clauses in negative and interrogative constructions. The past copula clause is expressed by **déén-ká** except for first person which employs **déébdéé**. The future tense Copula clause is expressed by the morpheme **–tub**. The same morpheme is used for expressing future or imperfective in verbal clauses specifically with first person pronouns. In copula constructions **–tub** expresses future tense with all subjects, irrespective of the person value of the subject. Interestingly in Dime copula has a number of functions, in nominal as well as in verbal constructions, for instance, the copula following main verb expresses aspects and some focusing structure in the language. The negative nominal clause is headed by the negative copula **yi-** and the negative marker **–káy**. The equative, attributive, existential and locative as

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well as the possessive copula clauses are expressed by **yi-kay**. The interrogative marker in copula clause is **–áá** for second person both in perfective and imperfective aspect. For the other persons, the interrogative in copulal clauses indicated prosodically, through a high tone on the final vowel of the aspect markers.

1   Introduction

Dime is an endangered Omotic language which is spoken in the southern region of Ethiopia by a population of 5,400 (1994 census). Siebert (2002) also estimates the population to be 5,000. Surprisingly, the 2007 National Census reports that the population of Dime is 895. Comparing to other pastoralist communities in the area the Dime are constant settlers and horticulturalists. The Dime language and cultures is not exhaustively documented. The main source of information concerning Dime is the work of Fleming (1990) and Mulugeta (2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2009a, 2009b, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013). There are two mutually intelligible dialects in Dime, *Us'a* and *Gerfa*. Data in this paper are mainly from the *Us'a* dialect.

The paper is organized as follows: in section (2) some reviews on copula constructions in related languages. In section (3) copula construction in Dime is discussed. The tenseles copula clause, past copula clause, future copula clause, negative and interrogative form in copula clauses of Dime will be examined, respectively. Finally, the conclusion and references are treated.

2   Some Reviews on Copula Constructions in Related Languages

Mulugeta (2008a: 131-139) discussed nominal clauses in Dime. In his work some of the tense, negative and interrogative features of copula have been treated. In this, paper detail analysis, some comparative issues of Copula in related languages such as Hamer and Ari and also other Omotic languages is consulted and well discussed. More references are reviewed. In contrast to Dime, in related Omotic languages such as Maale, a distinction of the present/tenseless and past copula constructions is not attested. Consider the following example from Maale: **ʔizi   temaare-ke** 'He is/was a student' (Azeb 2001: 226). In this example, it is

clearly shown that affirmative non-verbal two adjacent nominal's expressing copula construction by suffixing a morpheme **–ke** to a nominal category.

According to Abebe (2002: 8) in Basketo there is no special copula, in this language zero copula and independent lexemes are used to represent negative or past copula constructions as shown below:

(1a) **ʔizi** **tamare**
  she student
  'She is a student.'

(1b) **ʔizi** **tamare** **base**
  she student   not
  'She is not a student.'

Moreover, Biniyam (2008: 115) argues that copula constructions in Koorete appear in the present habitual and past habitual. According to his arguments the copula subject and copula complement occur in sequence devoid of any verbal element and they are inflected for nominative and focus marker in affirmative form, respectively, as in example below.

(2a) **es-i**   **kaiso-ko**
  he-NOM thief-AFOC:DEC
  'He is a THIEF.'

Biniyam (2008) further discussed that copula constructions in the past and in negative constructions make use of the verb **maak'** - 'be/become'. Consider the following example.

(2b) **es-i**   **kaiso-ko**   **maak'-i-tsha**
  He-NOM thief-AFOC:DEC be/become-EPN-PAii
  'He was a THIEF/He used to be a THIEF.'

According to his explanation the above copula sentences appear in the past habitual. The past morpheme **–tsha** is added to the copula verb following the epenthetic vowel **–i**. The focus morphemes are added to the copula complements. The past habitual sentences in (2b), as shown in the gloss, are ambiguous between a 'be' and 'become' reading of the verb **maak'** - 'be/become'. Thus, in Koorete Copula a construction is simply show a two-way distinction: present and

past in contrast to Dime future copula clauses. Biniyam (2008: 16) mentioned that in Koorete the two separate existential verbs such as the affirmative verb **yes-** 'exist/live' and the negative verb **ba-** 'not exist/disappear' may create some ambiguities in the interpretation.

Furthermore, Hamer is one of much closed languages to Dime. Biniyam and Moges (2014: 74-79) pointed out that in Hamar copular constructions are expressed through non-verbal sentences as of Curnow (1999: 3) categorization of copula construction. Biniyam and Moges (2014) argued that Hamar typologically employs the 'zero' verb copula strategy. According to their Hamar data, it is interesting that the declarative, the negative and the interrogative markers are suffixed to the copular complement as shown below:

(3a) **ʔinta   hamar-ne**

      I   Hamar-DECL

      'I am Hamar.'

(3b) **ʔinta   hamar-u**

      I   Hamar-INT

      'Am I Hamar?'

(3c) **ʔinta   hamar-te**

      I   Hamar-NEG

      'I am not Hamar.'

As we have discussed so far all the above Dime related languages have their own copula construction strategy which is a bit different from Dime.

However, Aari, which is closely related to Dime, has copula constructions that are much similar to Dime. Daniel (1993:39) pointed out that the language uses the morpheme **–ye** for present tense copula, as in example (3a) and (3b). For existential clauses the verb of existence daye is used as in example (4c).

(4a) **kona   gabre   ey-ye**

      this   gebre   house-be

      'This is Gebre's house.'

(4b)   **yints-ina   rotimi-ye**
　　　boy-M-DEF   tall-be
　　　'The boy is tall.'

(4c)   **kaʒi gaʔaiʃənda   daye-e**
　　　cold   big   exist-past
　　　'There is a severe cold.'

Furthermore, Daniel (1993:39) also discussed that the negative copula is marked by **dak-aye** as shown below:

(4d)   **laqmi dak-ay-e**
　　　good   be-not-past
　　　'It is not good.'

As it is observed in Ari, the copula costruction is much similar to Dime. For instance, The Ari declarative, existence, and Negative copula form – **ye**, **daye**, **dakaye**, can be respectively corresponding to the Dime **dan**/**–ee**, **deen-ka** and **yi-kay**, in some extent.

3   Copula clauses in Dime

In this section we treat tense-less, past and future copula clauses. We also discuss the nominal clauses in negative and interrogative constructions. The copula may or may not be overt. In the following table, we present overview of the affixes that mark the attributive/equative and existential/possessive copula clauses.

Table 1: Copula and Tenses

Copula	Tense-less	Past	Future	Negative non Past	Negative Past	Negative Future
Equative/ Attributive	**-éé** **-dán**	**déébdéé** **déén-ká**	**déét-tub**	**yi-káy**	**yi-ká-déé**	**yi-ká-déé-tub**
Existential/Possessive	**déén**	**dédéén-ká**				

3.1   Tense-less Copula Clause

The equative and attributive copula clauses are tenseless. They are marked by the copula **–éé** or **dán**. These copulas are used alternatively at predicate positions

without any apparent meaning difference. Consider the following equative constructions:

(5) **maikró   ʔis-kó   wutun-ub   ʔišim-éé**
    maikro   1MS OBJ-GEN   old-M   brother-COP
    'Maikro is my eldest brother'

(6) **maikró   ʔis-kó   wutun-ub   ʔišim   dán**
    maikro   1MS-OBJ-GEN   old-M   brother   COP
    'Maikro is my eldest brother'

In example (5), the subject of the clause Maikro is the referent that is equated to the nominal predication 'my eldest brother'. Payne (1997: 114) states "that equative clauses are those, which assert that a particular entity (the subject of a clause) is identical to the entity specified in the nominal predicate. Equative clauses make a close connection between one referent and other referents".

(7) **k'alób gabar-éé**
    k'alób farmer-COP
    'K'alób is a farmer.'

(8) **k'alób gabar dán**
    k'alób farmer COP
    'K'alób is a farmer.'

In this construction gabar 'farmer' is in the predicative position and it is used to identify the subject as belonging to a group.

In the examples in (9) and (10) the copula expresses the property that is associated with the subject.

(9) **zób-is   wolk'a-b   kúf-ó-b-éé**
    lion-DEF   strong-M   wild-LOC-M-COP
    'The lion is a strong animal.'

(10) **zób-is   wolk'á-b   kúf-ó-b   dán**
     lion-DEF   strong-M   wild-LOC-M COP
     'The lion is a strong animal'

In Dime copula clauses can be constructed in three ways: either by a zero copula without employing any marker as in example (11)[1] or using the copula as in (12) and (13). Thus the copula is optional in equative and attributive clauses.

(11)   nú   níts   ʔah-ó-b

       3MS.SUBJ   child   good-LOC-M

       'He is a good child'

(12)   **nú**   **níts**   **ʔah-ó-b-éé**

       3MS.SUBJ   child   good-LOC-M-COP

       'He is a good child'

(13)   **nú**   **níts**   **ʔah-ó-b**   **dán**

       3MS.SUBJ   child   good-LOC-M COP

       'He is a good child'

Attributive clauses qualify the subject in terms of property, colour, etc., such as 'beautiful' and 'hot' in examples (14a-16c):

(14a)   **ná**   **lí-líŋt'-end-éé**

       3FS.SUBJ   RDP:beauty-F-COP

       'She is beautiful'

(14b)   **ná**   **lí-líŋt'-end**   **dán**

       3FS.SUBJ   RDP:beauty-F   COP

       'She is beautiful'

(14c)   **ná**   **lí-líŋt'-end**

       3FS.SUBJ   RDP:beauty-F

       'She is beautiful'

(15a)   **náʁ-is**   **sulum-ub-éé**

       water-DEF   hot-M-COP

       'The water is hot'

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[1] In Ethiopian languages zero copula construction is a common phenomenon, which is attested in Tigre and Ge'ez (Crass, Demeke, Meyer and Watter, 2005). Omotic Basketo can also be mentioned as an example (Abebe, 2002).

(15b) **náʁ-is**   **sulum-ub**   **dán**

water-DEF   hot-M   COP

'The water is hot'

(15c) **náʁ-is**   **sulum-ub**

water-DEF   hot-M

'The water is hot'

(16a) **ʔakim**   **zú-ub-éé**

calabash   red-M-COP

'The calabash is red'

(16b) **ʔakim**   **zú-ub**   **dán**

calabash   red-M   COP

'The calabash is red'

(16c) **akim**   **zú-ub**

calabash   red-M

'The calabash is red'

In existential and possessive copula clauses, even in non-tensed forms, the copula is obligatory. If the existential verb is missing, the construction becomes ungrammatical. Example:

(17)   **níts-ís**   **déén**

child-DEF   exist

'There is a child'

The possessive construction is a special form of the existential construction in which the possessor is expressed with a genitive case suffix and the possessed is the subject of the existential verb **déén**. Compare the possessive construction in (18a) with the locative one in (18b):

(18a) **ʔis-ko**   **níts**   **ʔah-ó-b**   **déén**

1MS-OBJ-GEN   child   good-LOC-M   exist

'I have a good child'

(18b) **kɛ́ní**   **ʔéh-ó**   **déén**

dog   house-LOC   exist

'There is a dog in the house.'

The copula verb is not inflected for person. For example, if the possessive clause is inflected for person, e.g., by first person marker **–t**, the construction is ungrammatical as in (19).

(19) ***ʔis-ko**   **níts** **ʔah-ó-b**   **déét**

1MS.OBJ-GEN   child good-LOC-M   exist

'I have a good child'

The tense of the copula clause is marked only in the past tense. Below, we discuss tense-aspect of equative, existential and possessive constructions in negative and interrogative clauses.

3.2   Past Tense Copula Clause

The past copula clause is expressed by **déén-ká**, which comprises the existential verb **déén** and the perfective marker **–ká**. This form applies to the past tense of attributive/equative calsuses (The past tense of locative/possessive form is different, see below) Compare the (20a) and (20b) examples below:

(20a) **nú**   **nɩ́ts** **déén-ká**

3MS.SUBJ   child exist-PF

'He was a child'

(20b) **nú**   **nɩ́ts** **dan**

3MS.SUBJ   child COP

'He is a child'

(21a) **yá**   **ʔstemare**   **déén-ká**

2S.SUBJ   treacher   exist-PF

'You were a teacher'

(21b) **yá**   **ʔstemare**   **dan**

2S.SUBJ   teacher   COP

'You are a teacher'

(22a) **níts   déén-ká**

child   Exist-PF

'There was a child'

(22b) **níts   déén**

child   Exist

'There is a child'

Both the existential and equative clauses illustrated above, use the past tense copula **déén-ká** for second and third person. The existential clause has only copula verb and complement, while the equative one has a subject, a complement noun and a copula verb.

The suffix **–déé** is used as an imperfective marker in verbal clauses, as we have shown earlier. Surprisingly, in the non-verbal clauses it serves as a perfective aspect marker in combination with a distinct existential verb **dééb**. This combination, i.e., **dééb-déé** is used only when the subject is first person as in (23a), whereas in the second and the third person, the form **déén-ká** is used (20-22, above). The unacceptable sentence in (23c) illustrates that **déén-ka** cannot be used with first person subject.

(23a) **ʔaté   níts   dééb-déé**

1S.SUBJ   child   exist-PF

'I was a child'

(23b) **ʔaté   níts   dan**

1S.SUBJ   child   COP

'I am a child'

(23c) *****ʔaté   níts   déén-ká**

1S.SUBJ   child   exist-PF

'I was a child'

The past tense of equative/attributive and existential-locative nominal clauses are similar in that all of these use the copula **déén-ka**. The past possessive however, requires reduplication of the first CV of the verb **déén-ká** as in (24a). The present existential form is given in (24b) for comparison.

(24a) **kó-kó**   **níts**   **ʔah-ó-b**   **dé-déén-ká**

3FS.OBJ-GEN   child   good-LOC-M   RDP-exist-PF

'She had a good child'

(24b) **kó-kó**   **níts**   **ʔah-ó-b**   **déén**

3FS.OBJ-GEN   child   good-LOC-M   exist

'She has a good child'

If the copula in (24a) is replaced by déén-ká for these examples, the structure becomes ungrammatical as in (25) below:

(25) ***kó-kó**   **níts**   **ʔah-o-b**   **déén-ká**

3FS.OBJ-GEN   child   good-LOC-M   exist-PF

'She had a good child'

The past tense copula verb **déén-ká** is also used in combination with main verbs to indicate the past continuous tense, in which case the main verb is reduplicated before **déén-ká**.

3.3 Future Tense Copula Clause

The future tense copula clause is expressed by the morpheme **–tub**. The same morpheme is used for expressing future or imperfective in verbal clauses specifically with first person pronouns. In non-verbal constructions **–tub** expresses future tense with all subjects, irrespective of the person value of the subject. This is illustrated by the following examples comparing the equative, existential, and possessive future nominal clauses (26), (27), and (28) or (29), respectively. Due to the assimilation process the existential verb **déén** changes to **déét**. [2]

(26) **ná**   **ʔámze**   **déét-túb**

3FS.SUBJ   woman   Exist-FUT

'She will be a woman'

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[2] The final consonant **–n** in **déén** may assimilitted to **–t** the sound that is following it (**deen-tub** > **deettub**).

(27) **wúdúr-af   déét-tub**

girl-PL   Exist-FUT

'There will be girls'

(28) **kí-ko   mesaf déét-tub**

3MS.OBJ-GEN   book   Exist-FUT

'He will have a book'

(29) **ʔis-ko   mesaf déét-tub**

1S.OBJ-GEN   book   Exist-FUT

'I will have a book'

As can be demonstrated in the above equative examples (26, 27, 28, and 29) are equative, existential, possessive and possessive, respectively. In verbal constructions **–tub** occurs as an alternative form of **déét**. In copula clauses however **–tub** is directly affixed to **déét** as in examples (26-29).

3.4 Negative Copula Clause

The negative copula clause is headed by the negative copula **yi–** and the negative marker **–káy**. The equative, attributive, existential, locative as well as the possessive copula clauses use **yi-kay**. In example (30-32) the present negative copula clause is illustrated:

(30) **nú   kɛ́ní   yi-káy**

3MS.SUBJ   dog   COP-NEG

'It is not a dog.'

(31) **kɛ́ní   yi-káy**

dog   COP-NEG

'There is no dog'

(32) **ʔaté   kɛ́ní   yi-káy**

1S.SUBJ   dog   COP-NEG

I have no dog'

As mentioned earlier, in verbal constructions too, the negative marker **–káy** is added to the main verb as shown in (33).

(33) **kɛ́ní-is**   **ʔád-káy**

dog-DEF   come-NEG

'The dog doesn't come.'

The past negative copula clause is expressed by the element **yi-ká-déé** as shown below for equative, locative and possessive copula clauses.

(34) **nú**   **kɛ́ní**   **yi-ká-déé**

3MS.SUBJ   dog   COP-NEG-PF

'It was not a dog'

(35a) **kɛ́ní**   **yi-ká-déé**

dog   COP-NEG-PF

'There was no dog'

(35b) **kɛ́ní**   **yi-ká-déé-tub**

dog   COP-NEG-(PF)-FUT

'There will be no dog'

(36) **nú**   **kɛ́ní'**   **yi-ká-déé**

3MS.SUBJ   dog   COP-NEG-PF

'He had no dog.'

In connection to the past negative form illustrated in (34-36), two important points should be noted: first, the morpheme **–déé**, is used as a perfective aspect marker following the negative marker in negative copula clauses, as in (36). Secondly, preceding the perfective marker **–déé** in negative copula clauses the negative marker is realised as **–ká** instead of **–káy**. The **–ká** in this context can be confused with the perfective aspect marker in affirmative past copula clauses, i.e., **déén-ká**. However, this is not the case because normally the negative marker **–káy** is reduced to **–ká** in medial position.

There is no zero copula in negative nominal clauses. The copula is also obligatorily expressed in tensed nominal clauses in contrast to non-tensed ones.

3.5   The Interrogatives in Copula Clause

The interrogative marker in copula clauses is **–áá** for second person both in perfective and imperfective aspect. For the other persons, the interrogative is in

copula clauses is indicated prosodically, through a high tone on the final vowel of the aspect markers. Here we will provide a few examples of copula interrogative clauses.

A glide is inserted between the copula and the interrogative marker **–áá** and the aspect marker **–i** as in (37-39).

(37) **yá**   **ʔastemar-éé-y-áá**
    2S.SUBJ   teacher-COP-y-Q
    'Are you a teacher?'

(38a) **ʔiyyé**   **ʔéh-ó**   **déé-y-í**
    person   house-LOC   COP-y-PF:Q
    'Was there a man in the house?'

(38b) **ʔiyyé**   **ʔéh-ó**   **déé-**
    person   house-LOC   COP:Q
    'Is there a man in the house?'

(39) **kó-ko**   **kané déé-y-í**
    3FS.OBJ-GEN   sister COP-y-PF:Q
    'Did she have a sister?'

(40) **yá**   **wúdúr**   **dán-áá**
    you   girl   COP-Q:2S
    'Are you a girl?'

(41) **nú**   **ʔay**   **dá-déé**
    he   who   COP-IPF:Q
    'Who is he?'

(42) **yín-ko**   **kané déé-y-í**
    you-GEN   sister COP-y-PF:Q
    'Did you have a sister?'

The morpheme **–i** is an aspect marker which is used in first and third persons for both singular and plural (38a), while the vocalic element **–áá** is interrogative marker as the second person both in affirmative and negative interrogative clause.

The following table shows the summary of forms that employs in nominal clauses.

Table 2: Summary of Dime Copulas

		Tenseless	PAST	FUTURE
Copula	Equative/Attributive	**dán -éé**	**déén-ká, déébdéé**	**déét-tub**
	Possessive	**déén déét**	**déébdée dédéén-ká**	**déét-tub**
	Existential/Locative	**déén**	**déén-ká déébdéé**	**déét-tub**
	Negative	**yi-káy**	**yi-ká-déé**	**yi-ká-déé-tub**
Verbal–IPF	**-déé**		**déén-ká -i**	**-tub**

4   Summary and Conclusion

In Dime zero copula, tenseles, past and future, negative and interrogative copula constructions are employed. The zero copula construction has only copula subject and copula complement, which has no copula or verbal construction. The equative and attributive copula clauses are tense-less which marked by the copula **–éé** or **dán**. These are used alternatively without any apparent meaning difference. There are also. The past copula clause is expressed by **déén-ká** except for first person which employs **déébdéé**. The future tense Copula clause is expressed by the morpheme **–tub**. The same morpheme is used for expressing future or imperfective in verbal clauses specifically with first person pronouns. In copula constructions **–tub** expresses future tense with all subjects, irrespective of the person value of the subject.

There are also copula clauses in negative and interrogative constructions. Interestingly in Dime copula has a number of functions, in nominal as well as in verbal constructions, for instance, the copula following main verb expresses aspects and some focusing structure in the language. The negative nominal clause is headed by the negative copula yi- and the negative marker **–káy**. The equative, attributive, existential and locative as well as the possessive copula clauses are expressed by **yi-kay**. The interrogative marker in copula clause is **–áá** for second person both in perfective and imperfective aspect. For the other persons, the interrogative in copulal clauses indicated prosodically, through a high tone on the final vowel of the aspect markers. From the discussion so far

we can conclude that Dime seems to employ mixed strategy for copula construction.

N.B. Abbreviations used in this paper.

1S	first person singular	2S	second person singular
INST	instrumental	FUT	future
3MS	third person masculine singular	PL	plural
3FS	third person feminine singular	SUBJ	subject
1PL	first person plural	OBJ	object
2Pl	second person plural	NOM	nominative
3PL	third person plural	ABS	absolutive
IPF	imperfective	PF	perfective
DEF	definite	NEG	negative
GEN	genitive	LOC	locative
COP	Copula	M	male
F	female	RDP	reduplication
Q	question		

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