The Copula in the Oromo Language (Oromic)

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Abstract:
Not much attention is paid to the concept of copula in the Oromo grammar. Even among those few who incidentally raise it, there is little agreement on its existence or what represents it. The case of copula that attracts attention is the one in the simple present tense. Many authors consider particles like dha, ti and tu as well as null (ø) and also miti ‘not’ in some cases, while few consider the flying low tone on the final vowel on the prepausal nominals. In this article I argue that, whether we call it a copula or a predicative case, its representation is neither by the particles nor by the low flying tone but by the short vowel at the end of a predicative nominal. I further argue that some of the components or some of the particles considered as copulas are only epenthetic added to introduce the actual representation of copula which is a short vowel that cannot directly be added to an existing vowel at the end of the nominal. I disagree with those who consider tu or miti ‘not’ as copula.

Keywords: Copula, oromo grammar, flying low tone, copula particles, epenthetic

One of the unsettled issues in the Oromo language (Oromic) grammar is that of what constitutes a copula, “a word linking the noun/subject and modifier/predicate” (Grande, 2013, p.1); or what Banti (1988) calls a predicative case. The currently glaring difference lies between those on one hand who claim certain particles -- albeit with no agreement on the number of such particles -- constitute the copula, like Gragg (1976); Owens (1985); Bender (1986, 99); Stroomer (1987); Kebede (1988); Ali & Zaborski (1990); Mewis (2001); Crass, Demeke, Meyer, & Wetter, (2004), and on the other Lloret (1988), Banti (1988), and Janko who opt for a low tone on the final syllable.

Banti rightly argues that since there is no ‘word’ in Oromo to represent copula as such Oromic does not have a true copula but a predicative case. He also agrees that whether it is marked by copula or a case marker the phrase has the same function. Since the focus in this paper is on what signals that function, I will continue using the term copula.

The above authors who argue that the Oromic copula consists of particles agree that it is represented by the particle [dha] /ḍa/ when the predicate nominal ends in long vowel and by the particle [ti] in the genitive case, while null [ø] represents the copula on the short vowel final nominal in the predicate phrase. The first group also agrees that there is a negative copula miti ‘not’, with which Lloret (1988) also basically agrees when she wrote miti as suffixes while others prefer writing them disjunctively, and I am with the latter group.

Coming to the copula markers, I start with the position held by the above authors who consider it to be segmentally represented. In 1) below ḏa was used because the adjective deeraa ‘tall’ is long vowel final. In 2) the copula is assumed to be indicated by ‘null’ since gurraacha ‘black’ is short vowel final. In 3) k’oontar ‘lentils’, which is actually a consonant /r/ final is assumed to be /i/ final which they consider is optionally left out and hence ends in short vowel. Therefore, the copula in 2) and 3) is considered ‘null’. In 4) ti is assumed to be a version of ḏa to represent the genitive case. Kebede (1988) alone adds tu to this list of particles to represent copula as in 5).

1) ḏa
boy/son NOM  ḏa. n deer-aa
the boy is tall.

2) ḏa
boy/son NOM  ḏa. n gurraa- cha.
the boy is black.
3) **kun missir-ì**.  
This M lentils **is**.  

4) **man- a (i)saan-ii ti**  
home ABS they of **is**.  

it is their home.  

5)  

a. **Fajjisaa-tu dufe.**  
Fajjisaa + it is + came**vi**  
it is Fajjisa who came.  

b. **Fajjisaa-tu muc’aa k’aba.**  
Fajjisaa + it is + child + has  
It is Fajjisa who has a child.  
(I. Kebede, 1989, p. 86).  

On the other hand, Lloret and Janko’s as well as in part Banti’s argument says that it is the low tone that is marked on the final vowels of the particles dà, ti, and on the final short vowels of the other nominals. Banti (1988) differentiates cases where both tone and segments represent the case (pp. 27-28). Copying the above examples with the low tones marked appears as follows.  

1. **Gurbaan deeraa dà:**  
2. **Gurbaan gurraachà.**  
3. **Kuni missirì.**  
4. **Mana isaanì tì**  

As for the stated negative copula, here are the two examples that Lloret (1988) cited:  

6)  

a. **inni gurbaa mitì + ’/**  
he boy not COP  
‘he is not a boy’  

b. **iseeni intala mitì + ’/**  
she girl not COP  
‘she is not a girl’  
(p. 86)  

In this paper I argue that the copula or the predicative case as defined earlier is represented by the final short vowel. I partially agree with Lloret (1988) in that it bears low tone alone. However, this is not enough to say that the copula is represented by a low tone because there are other cases that have low tone final vowels. Additionally, in contrast to Lloret who wrote “I will refer to the Da [dà] particle as an epenthetic morph, because it does not have any specific meaning per se but rather occurs to overtly mark certain elements (1988, 122)”, I will argue that not dà, the syllable, but the phoneme /d/ is an epenthetic that fulfills certain functions. I also argue that in the cases of ti which many see as a copula itself and hi which seems not to have been noticed except by Owens (1985, p. 80), the /t/ and /h/ are also epenthetics. Finally, I disagree with all who consider mitì ‘not’ as a sort of copula and with Kebede (1988) who considers particle tu as a copula.  

Oromic is an agglutinating language with dependent roots that can hardly stand alone. Banti (1988:47) writes “No Oromo noun can exist [?] in its bare root.” Gragg (1976) observed of Oromic nouns that “Basic nouns, apart from a few which end in -n ...all have a stem formative, which usually consists of a vowel: -a, -aa, -ee, -ii, -uu, -oo” (p. 194). Lloret (1988, p. 99) further extended this, writing, “[l]ong final vowels, whatever the vowel quality, are pronounced in pre-pausal position as medium length with final glottal stop” including the base nouns. Hence most of the words we see are complex ones. Therefore, all nouns and hence nominals can have many forms. We need to select the form we use as a base for citation. Banti (1988) specified the citation form of Oromic nouns as being “the absolutive forms that occur before imperative or negative verb forms” (p. 26).  

The base of the nominals considered in this paper, therefore, will be the absolutive case. Building on Gragg’s findings, I add that the final sound of any word can be non obstruents (excluding the implosive /ɗ/ but including the ejectives), a short vowel or a long vowel. There are words like qarraf ‘a wild animal’, daamaankillic’ ‘a type of bird’, k’oont’ar ‘lentils’, flik’ ‘a river in the east’, ees ‘oats’, Ingliz ‘English’, sagal ‘nine’, ſantam ‘fifty’.  

Even though the shortening of long vowels of the nominals in prepausal position that Lloret (above) observed is difficult to generalize, the observation that they are of /f/ final is well taken. This is clearly audible in the base form and vocative for nouns and adjectives. The shortening has completely different applications that I will discuss later. It is also related to dialect.  

There are certain morphophonological requirements in inflection or derivation of nouns when composing a statement. The accusative case, for example, requires the nominal to be a short or no vowel final. If the nominal base is
already long vowel final, something has to be done to obtain this short vowel final. Otherwise there will be ambiguities since length is strictly phonemic in Oromic. We cannot simply delete one of the vowels from a long vowel final or directly add a third one. As 7) shows malaa ‘method’ is already short vowel final so no need to change. However, malaa ‘pus’ is a long vowel final. So, we need a way to get it a short vowel final. Here is one of the places where /d/ comes in as an epenthetic.

7) a. mal-a na a Dw- e.
   method ACC me LongV DAT devise AGR.
   [he] devised a way out for me.

   b. malaalah a- a na- rr- a haq- e.
   pus EPEN ACC me on from clean AGR.
   [he] cleaned pus from me.

There is dialect variation in the case of /d/, especially in this case and the word ኣቷወ ‘say’. In the east, as well as in parts of the centre and northwest, it is totally substituted by /f/ ix The southeast also shares the substitution of the epenthetic /d/ by /f/ and shorten the preceding vowel. Thus in 7) instead of saying malaad they say malaa.xBanti (1988, p. 31) observed that “[a]ll D2 nouns [whose absolutive case are VV final] end in –VV where D1 nouns [whose absolute case final is –/a/] have inflectional endings in –aa. The genitive of gurba is thus gurbawaa, of illili, is illili etc.” This apparently is where Lloret (1988) observed the shortening of the long vowel before /f/.

There are many factors that require lengthening the final vowel of a nominal inflection including some suffixes and some clitics. Table 1 gives a good summary of these elements 1 and some clitics. Table 1 gives a good summary of these

| Phoneme | Gloss              | Example        |
|---------|--------------------|----------------|
| 1       | ---                | isa ‘he’ ABS (base). |
| achi    | beyond, there, LOC | isaa achi ‘beyond him’ |
| 2       | as                 | isaa as ‘closer than him’ |
| 3       | gad                | isaa gad ‘down from him’ |
| 4       | ol                 | isaa ol ‘from him up’ |
| 5       | -f                 | isaaf kenni ‘give him’ |
| 6       | huu                | isaa huu fide ‘I/he brought even him’ |
| 7       | -m                 | kun isaam! ‘this is him you know!’ |
| 8       | miti               | kun isaa miti ‘this is not him’ |
| 9       | -n                 | isaan barbaada ‘I want him’xii |
| 0       | -n                 | isaan gudate ‘he grew by him’xiii |
| 1       | -tvw               | akka V-n akka ciiseen du?e ‘he died as he lied down’ |
| 2       | ree                | isaa re? ‘is it really him?’ |
| 3       | -s                 | isaa jaami ‘call him as well’ |
| 4       | sa                 | isaa sa? ‘is that him?’ |
| 5       | --                 | kitaaba isaa/jalaa ‘his book/the book under’ |
| 6       | tiw                | c’iiseen ti rafe ‘he lay down and slept’ |
| 7       | tu                 | isaa tu du?e ‘it is HE who died’ |

Table 1: Elements That Require Lengthening Of the Preceding Nominal Finals

As can be seen from the examples, the absolutive case isa ‘him’ has to have the final –/a/ lengthened before the elements 1-17 [11 and 16 bases are verbs], whether the elements are suffixed or disjoined.

Accordingly, if we substitute isa ‘he/him’ with isi ‘she/her’ we will have to insert daa between isi and the following morpheme. Thus row 1, in the table above will be isi daa achi ‘beyond her’. Since isi is already a long vowel [ii] final, we cannot directly add achi. To use word analogy, we see minimal pairs if we write the following sentences:

8) a. isi she/her ABS achi take geess- i. IMP 2s
take her there.

   b. isi she/her ABS achi take geess- i. IMP 2s
take beyond her.
This distinction between “she” as the beginning point of a location and “she” as a direct object is shown by the epenthetic /ɗ/ to make way for the additional long vowel. This shows that ɗa is far from being a copula. The finding of Lloret (1988, p. 122) quoted above that ɗa is ‘an epenthetic morph’ is a big step forward except that she considered the morph [ɗa], but with no meaning, not the phoneme /ɗ/ as an epenthetic. This cannot explain why we have ɗa and ɗaa, used to obtain short or long vowel final on an already long vowel final nominals.

Thus, epenthesising /ɗ/ is needed when a nominal is required to be short vowel final, like the accusative case, and the nominal happens to be inherently long vowel final. Ablee ‘knife’ is a long vowel final while waraana ‘spear’ is a short vowel final. Thus, answering the question “what does he do?”

9) a. inni [is+ni] alee ɗ’ar- a.
   he NOM knife EP Short V sharpen AG
   he sharpens a knife.

   b. inni waraana k’ar- a.
   he spear sharpen AGR
   he sharpens a spear.

There are suffixed morphemes, postpositions in this case, that require shortening the base nominal. One of such morphemes that requires shortening the preceding long vowel is the allative marker suffix –tti ‘at, towards’. This can alternatively be dropped and compensated by the gmination of the initial consonant of the following verb. Even in the case of its dropping, the epenthesised /ɗ/ and the short vowel will persist. Thus

10) a. isii ɗ- a- tti k’enn- i.
   she EPEN Short V to give IMP 2s.
   give to her.

   b. isa- tti k’enn- i.
   he to give IMP 2s.
   give to him.

The other morpheme that requires to be preceded by a short vowel is –rra’xvi ‘on, over’ which can directly be substituted in place of –tti in 10 above. Thus, in both cases of shortening or lengthening the preceding vowels by the morpho-phonological rules, /ɗ/ is epenthesised and the long or short /a/ is added as required.

The other particle considered to be a copula is [ti]. This one follows possessor nominal which is predicated. Like the other ti’s lined above in Table 1, it lengthens the preceding vowel. Its case is the same as ɗa, with /t/ being the epenthetic, as will be demonstrated later. If the nominal is consonant final a ling /i/ will be epenthesised.

As stated in the table above, there are three homophonic [ti]’s. One is a strict suffix that is attached to a short vowel final base noun to denote the feminine subject xvii. The nominative case of a long vowel final, which is phonetically /ɬ/ final, is denoted by /n/ for both gender, and by [a] on consonant final xviii, and by [–ni] on short vowel /a/ final preceded by a single consonant, and by /i/ if preceded by a double consonant in the absolutive case for masculine. The final short /a/ is dropped before adding these markers as the case is now.

11) a. [nama] → nam- ni raf- e.
   [the] man/human slept.
   man NOMm sleep AGR

   b. [intala] → intal- ti raf- te.
   [the] girl slept.
   girl NOMf sleep AGR

   c. [galma] → galm- i jigg- e.
   the hall fell.
   hall NOM fall AGR

   d. ees goggog-e.
   oats dry AGR
   oats dried.

The other [ti] shows chain of action or conjunction of actions similar to ‘and’, like:
12) a. deem- e- ti fid- e.
he went and brought.

This [ti] can be dropped but the preceding long vowel is maintained while the initial consonant of the following word will be geminated. Since the phonotactics of the language do not allow geminate consonant either word initially or finally, the two words are conjoined at least in speech. Thus 12) a. becomes;

b. deeme -ffide.

This ti is represented by too in a central dialect.

c. kaa- ne- e too wan- ni geeddar- ru- u- f...
get up 1p LongV CON cause NOM change 1p AGR for the reason why we get up and change.

In c. above ka ‘get up, start’ conjugated as kaane ‘we got up’ is considered as a full verb and geeddar- ‘change’ is a second verb. The two verbs are connected by too like the ti in 12) a. where the two verbs of deem- ‘go’ and fid- ‘bring’ are connected.

The other ti is the focus marker for the genitive case nominal in the accusative. It also bears a high tone ti. The absolutive case of such a nominal is marked by lengthening the final vowel of the possessor nominal. Thus:

13) a. miila nama. → miila nam- aa dik'- an.
they washed a human leg.

b. miila hoolaa. → miila hoolaa d'- aa dik'- an.
they washed a sheep’s leg.

With added emphasis or focus, the statements in 12 a. b. above become:

c. miila nam- aa ti dik'- an.
they washed a human leg.

d. miila hoolaa d'- aa ti dik'- an.
they washed a sheep’s leg.

Like the verbal conjunctive ti, this one also can be dropped with the same phonological consequence as in 12) b. The fact that we cannot say *miila namaa ti dik’i but only miila namaa dik’i shows that ti is not the genitive marker but only adds focus here.

Authors so far have referred to ti only as a genitive marker, except Lloret (1988) who claimed “that ti is part of the source marker, not just part of the genitive marker (P.131). The function of source is taken from certain areas in western Oromo dialect where the source suffix –irraa and an epenthesised /h/ for a copula in 16) a. and 19) c. and d. are switched with /t/. It is therefore acceptable to say as in 14) in the west contrasted with 16) in other regions.

14) a. in- ni Finfinnee ti- i daf- e.
he NOM Finfinnee from LOC come AGR

he came from Finfinnee.

b. in- ni Finfinnee- rra- a daf- e.
he NOM Finfinnee on LOC come AGR

he came from Finfinnee.

The other particle considered by at least one author, Kebede (1988), to represent a copula is tu, a position which I think no one has shared so far. The fact that it requires the preceding vowel to be long may make it look like da and ti which are considered by others to be copulae. It is easy to find out that tu is not a copula from the following example. Assuming there cannot be two copulae in one simple sentence, would disallow:
a. hark- hand NOM is- he GEN deer- long m EPEN COP.

his hand is long.

b. hark- hand ACC is- he GEN tú deer- long m EPEN COP.

it is his hand that is long.

However,

c. hark- hand ACC is- he GEN ti deer- long m EPEN COP;

This sentence is not acceptable because two copular markers cannot coexist in one sentence. The fact that ti may be acceptable with other copula shows that they are homophones as shown earlier. It can also be left out without making any change in the meaning.

Now I turn to another element that the majority of the authors have not so far recognized as a copula. This is hi. It is clearly audible in the eastern dialect. Mohammad (1994) puts it as a suffix. It is a focus particle like tu and ti in the sense of 15) above if followed by a regular verb. When a predicate is composed of the ablative then it serves as a copula. It also serves as such in some rare cases without following the ablative, as in 16).

16)   a. kan as jir- u nu hi. which here exist AGR us COP.

who are here is us. The ones here are ourselves.

b. nu- ti as jir- ra. we NOM here exist AGR.

we are here.

It is also very likely possible that nu 'we', underlyingly being nuh and the /h/ shows up as in the following case.

17)   a. kan as jir- u sadih- i. which here exist AGR three COP.

what is here is three.

b. as sadih- i- i tu jir- a. here three ABS LongV FOC exist AGR.

here are three or what is here is three.

However, if we substitute nu in 16) b. it reads nuu tu as jira, not nuh i tu as jira which shows that the /h/ after nu 'Ip' is an epenthetic unlike the one in sadih 'three' which is part of the word.

Another point for the underlying nuh case is the copula formation for consonant-final base nominals. They only add -/i/ at the end. Thus;

18)   a. kun this funnaan- nose COP.

this is a nose.

b. sun sagal- that nine COP.

that is nine.

c. kan jala jir- u ees- i. which, m under exist AGR oats COP.

the one that is under is oats.

In the case of ablative predicates however, /h/ can only be considered as an epenthesis to connect the final -/i/ as /d/ is to connect the final short or long /a/. It is important to note that the ablative locative base suffix –rra 'on' can be omitted and the long vowel, that actually represents the ablative case, remains. Other locatives like bira, ‘near’, jala, ‘under’, gubbaa, ‘on top’, dura ‘front’, duuba ‘behind’ cannot be omitted.
she came from Dadar.  

b. isii- n  Dadar- i^ii  duf- te.  
she came from Dadar.  

c. isii- n  Dadar- i- rra- a hi.  
she is from Dadar.  

d. t'alayaa- n  isaan  bira- a hi.  
the paper/letter is from them.  

In the case of ablative hi can also be used to focus. Thus 19 a.-d. can optionally be

a. isii Dadarirraa [hi]dutfe.  
b. isii Dadarii [hi] dutfe.  
c. isii Dadarirraa hi [dufte].  
d. t'alayaan isaan  biraa hi [dutfte].  

Either hi, as in a-b, or the main verb duf-, as in c-d, can be left out without any effect on the meaning. However, when used as a focus marker the hi has to bear a high tone like tu.

The other hi that is around is the justification indicator, why something happened. This one follows a verbal, the action which is the cause for or the excuse for the following action where the final vowel of the verb is lengthened to indicate continuation. Here again hi bears a high tone.

20)  
a. ni sodaa- te- e hi  hin  raf- in- i.  
FOC fear AGR LongV REAS not sleep NEG COP  
it is because he was scared that he did not sleep.  

The other way to convey this same message is;

b. waan sodaa- tee- f hin  raf- in- i.  
which fear AGR for not sleep NEG COP  
it is because he was scared that he did not fall asleep.  

This shows that hi, like ti, has more than one function besides acting like a homophone. This should not be confused with hii which shows quotation. When conveying an inquisitive message of someone, which ends in long vowel on the final verb, the conveyor adds hii with the inquisitive tone.

c. bor(u) ni duf- taa hii?xxii  
“Are you coming tomorrow?” [Someone asked]  

This same statement in 20) c. conveys a direct question with emphasis in a central dialect, but with H tone on hii. This same emphasis is conveyed in the eastern dialect by substituting sa for hii. Thus;

d. bor(u) ni duf- taa hii?  [Centre]  
bor ni duf- taa sa?  [East]  
are you coming tomorrow?  

e. gaaffii- n  bor ni duf- taa hii da.  
the question is “are you coming tomorrow”.  

One more element that has been considered as copula by many authors is Ø. Lloret (1988, p. 97) quoting Gragg (1976) and Owens (1985) stated that “nothing is added and no change occurs when the non-verbal predicate ends in a short vowel.” The assumed non-verbal predicate is one of the nominals. The short vowel final case of the nominal must refer to the absolutive case referred to as “the base form of the words — what are often referred to as non-case or absolute form” Lloret (P. 95). This base form itself is considered to have already been inflected. This is so because as Banti (1988) quoted above noted “[n]o Oromo noun can exist in its bare root.” Thus, since that short /a/ is not part of the root it is an inflectional morpheme with different functions.
Owens (1985, p. 241) argues that there is not enough reason to regard the /a/ on arba ‘elephant’ and the /aa/ on xeesummaaxxi ‘guest’ as an extra morpheme. If a root is “[a] base that cannot be analysed any further into constituent morphemes” Haspelmath (2010, p. 21), arba is only an absolute and accusative case while arbi is the nominal form showing that arba can be analysed as arbi+a. Similarly, for keessummaa the plural is keessumm+oota and the singulative form is keessumm+icha (m) and keessumm+ittii (f). This shows that keessummaa can be analysed as kessum+aa. Therefore, I think there is enough reason to consider the root is C. Accordingly that short vowel /a/ represents the copula as well. Therefore, the copula is not null.

Lloret’s argument that “the copula in Oromo is a floating low tone /’/ does not exclusively explain the copula. All the main verbs and non-predicate nominals also can carry the low tone in prepausal positions, depending on the emphasis. In 21 a), intal ‘girl, daughter’ has a low final tone, unmarked. But it is not a copula. In b) it has H tone final showing emphasis on the final vowel as intald. The copular one had H tone on the antepenultimate syllable. Thus, the low tone does not guarantee the copular nature of a nominal. It is true that all the short vowels I suggested bear low tone when they are in copular function while their tone changes with the other functions.

Now I want to come to what I think constitutes copula in Oromic. From my observation I think copular function in Oromic is represented by a short vowel, generally /a/ or /aa/ on the nominalssee. Regular verbs can end in consonant final inflection like in 2P and 3P bar-tan ‘you learned’ and bar-an ‘they learned’ or long vowel final as in the 2P imperative case bar-aa ‘you p learn’.

The arguments so far show that the short vowel /a/ at the end of nominal base, which also represents the accusative case and the absolutive, also serves as a copula. I can safely hypothesize that the only short vowel that can be at a base final is /a/. All the other ones are long. It is to attain this short /a/ that /d/ is epenthised as shown in 7) b., when the predicative nominal ends in long vowel. Thus in 22) a., we do not need d epenthesis because the adjective dardara is short vowel final while the other two guuddaa and guddoo are long vowel final requiring the epenthesis /d/:

22)

a. gurbáa- n dardár- a COP
the son is adolescent.

b. gurbáa- n gudd- a EPEN COP
the son is big.

c. intal- ti gudd- oo EPEN COP
the girl is big.

The next short vowel to serve as a copula is /i/ added on consonant final nominals. Example 18) is the best case for this. Just as /d/ epenthesis is needed to introduce a short /a/, also epenthetic /h/ or /t/ are needed to introduce short /i/ after the long vowel final of the nominals. The length could be dàa added on inherently long ones like mataa ‘head’ or short /a/ final base lengthened by some morphophonological rules like genitive, ablative, dative and similar cases. In 23 a, miila, which is a short vowel, final base is lengthened by the requirement of the genitive case. The rule requires that a short vowel added on this case is /i/ with /t/ epenthetic not /a/ with /d/ epenthetic.

In 23 b, gama ‘beyond’ is a locative and when indicating a source, the final vowel is lengthened. A short vowel is needed to introduce copular construction which again is a short /i/. The rule here requires epenthesis /h/, not /t/epenthetic.

23)

a. k’eensa k’ubá nail finger miila- a t- i EPEN COP
foot GEN EPEN COP
it is a toe nail. [Lit: it is the nail of a foot finger]

b.  isáan laga gáma- a h- i they river beyond ABL EPEN COP
they are from beyond the river.

One further case to support the rule that the copula in Oromic is a short vowel is that of the short vowel final personal names. These names are usually derived from the time of the day the person is born or analogous to the names of certain material or event. Consequently, the name Baríiso, is from baríiso ‘dawn’ while Halángo is from halánga ‘whip’ and Wadaaγo is from wadaaγa ‘feast’. Unlike consonant final nouns where /i/ is suffixed, or da or ?, mutatis mutandis, is suffixed to the long vowel final ones for copular predicate, nothing is added to these short vowel final names. Thus:

24)  

a.  tan reefu ðuf- t- e Halángo who f just come f AGR Halango+COP
who just came is Halango.

b.  kan amma deem- e Baríiso who m now leave/go AGR Baríiso+COP
who left right now is Baríiso.

In conclusion it is important to notice that copula is limited in Oromic to the simple present tense while the other cases are explained by ordinary conjugated verbs. However, many people taking the syllable da as a copula marker and comparing it with the English verb ‘to be’ or the Amharic na‘is’ try to introduce da in many inappropriate positions. Considering the phoneme /d/ as an epenthesis for lengthening or shortening an already long vowel final as shown in this article will clarify many issues. Similarly considering the /t/ in ti and the /h/ in hi in the copular construction of the genitive and ablative cases respectively as epenthetic will clarify many more issues. As shown in the article these particles, da, ti, and hi also have homophones either as suffixes in the case of ti or otherwise. In any case where these particles are involved, the copula is the short vowel /a/ or /i/ which cannot directly be suffixed to the preceding nominal because of the phonotactical requirement of the language that does not allow diphthongs or more than two consecutive segments.

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\*Quoted by Lloret (1988, p. 98)
\* Professor Giorgio Banti, personal correspondence. Sep. 25, 2017.
\* Since IPA uses /c/ for the ejective affricate I prefer /c/ and /j/ instead of ligatures /ʧ/ and /ʤ/ respectively for the voiceless and voiced counterparts.
\* I converted the consonants in the original text to IPA.
\* Note the different glossing formats under both 5) and 6) which are direct quotations.
\* There is no agreement on whether to write ‘da’ conjunctively or disjunctively with the preceding nominal.
\* Since the corresponding nasal /ŋ/ and the ejective /c'/ are represented by a single grapheme, I prefer to use /c/ and /j/ for the voiceless and voiced stops instead of the ligature ʧ and ʤ respectively.
In this case of jed, however, the vowels are also harmonised so that the vowel before ? will match with the vowel after ?.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{jede} & \rightarrow \text{je\text{\text{\text{"}}}e}; \\
\text{jedi} & \rightarrow \text{ji\text{\text{\text{"}}}i}; \\
\text{jedaa} & \rightarrow \text{ja\text{\text{\text{"}}}a}; \\
\text{jedu} & \rightarrow \text{ja\text{\text{\text{"}}}u}
\end{align*}
\]

\[\text{so on.}\]

\[\text{The final /a/ in this word is so short that one could easily hear only mala?}. \text{However, malaa? is also another form.}\]

\[\text{This is not the case in the Ituu version of the eastern part and Tuulama version of the centre where the suffixes and the clitics are directly added on the absolutive. Thus, isaa+f \rightarrow isaaf as in the other parts of Oromia.}\]

\[\text{This does not apply to the southeastern dialect where the /n/ is omitted, hence no change.}\]

\[\text{To stress /i/ can be added on this /n/ but not on the other ones.}\]

\[\text{These homophonic /n/’s should not be confused with the subject marker one added on an already long vowel final nominal as in: gurbaan duf’e ‘the boy came’ with different allomorphs depending on the final phoneme of the subject. } \text{b. Yes} \text{No question is also formed by lengthening the final vowel. isaa? ‘is it he?’}.\]

\[\text{These [ti] should not be confused with the feminine short vowel final subject marker suffix like intala ‘girl’ ABS intalti ‘girl’ NOM.}\]

\[\text{Both –rra and –tti have a disjunctively written version irra and itti with different meaning.}\]

\[\text{Some short vowel final proper nouns, where the vowel is part of the root, like Ganamo M, Halango F, Gololle F Bariiso M, Bidu M, Iggu M, do not take any, for both gender. Short vowel, /e i o u / final nominals are extremely rare.}\]

\[\text{All consonant final nominals, like afaan ‘mouth’, ?ees ‘oats’, koont’ar ‘lentils’ have masculine grammatical gender.}\]

\[\text{It can also be argued that the ti is there but omitted since the high tone is preserved on the long vowel. If the high tone is moved to the first syllable of the following verb it indicates the omission of –f (Tble 1, 5) meaning ‘for the benefit of’}.\]

\[\text{This /i/ is needed because more than 2 consonant clusters are not allowed.}\]

\[\text{Whenever a vowel is needed after a consonant it is /i/ and lengthening is also /ii/}.\]

\[\text{This should be distinguished from the interrogative formation in the absence of interrogative pronouns by lengthening the final short vowel of the copula and the regular verbs and raising the tone of the last two syllables. Thus isarraa hi ‘it is from him’ will be ‘isárráahíi ‘is it from him?’; inni duf’e ‘he came’ will be inní dufée? ‘did he come?’}\]

\[\text{Note that Owens uses [x] as a phoneme while it is in complementary distribution with [k].}\]

\[\text{It is true that regular verbs also have short or no vowel sentence finally. This has to be distinguished from copularconstruction which never takes consonant final.}\]

\[\text{See notes, 14 and 18 above.}\]