



## Expressing future time reference in Kambaata

Yvonne Treis

### ► To cite this version:

Yvonne Treis. Expressing future time reference in Kambaata. Nordic Journal of African studies, 2012, 20 (2), pp.132-149. hal-00719319

**HAL Id: hal-00719319**

**<https://hal.science/hal-00719319>**

Submitted on 19 Jul 2012

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

# Expressing Future Time Reference in Kambaata

Yvonne Treis (CNRS-LLACAN)

**Abstract:** Kambaata (Highland East Cushitic) is an aspect-marking language with a prominent opposition between perfective and imperfective aspect. The absolute location of an event in time (tense) is expressed by devices other than verbal inflection or inferred from the aspectual value of a verb. The present article discusses the devices that are applied to encode future in Kambaata. Firstly, imperfective verb forms can be interpreted as expressing future reference. Secondly, the language has grammaticalised two purpose constructions into imminent and/or intentional future constructions. Furthermore, certain converb forms can be used to express that events in subordinate clauses are later in time than events expressed in the matrix clause. A comparison with related languages shows that Kambaata is a typical Highland East Cushitic language, as far as the means used to encode future time reference are concerned.

**Keywords:** Cushitic, Aspect, Tense, Future, Purpose clause

## 1. Introduction

The Highland East Cushitic language Kambaata is primarily an aspect-marking language. The opposition between perfective and imperfective aspect is not only indicated by inflectional morphology on main (= final) verbs but also on various subordinate (= non-final) verb forms. This does not mean that tense marking is entirely absent from Kambaata utterances but the absolute location of an event in time is expressed by devices other than verbal inflection or inferred from the aspectual value of a verb. This article attempts to determine the means of expressing future in Kambaata. In the following section (§2), the essentials of Kambaata verbal morphology and the aspect system are summarised. This equips us with the necessary background knowledge for the section on the use of the imperfective (§3) and the use of purpose constructions (§4) for the expression of future. Section 5 addresses briefly how relative future is encoded in converb clauses. The results are recapitulated in section 6 and viewed from a comparative Highland East Cushitic perspective.

For a quicker understanding of the examples presented below, readers should keep in mind that Kambaata is a consistently head-final language, i.e. the main verb (or copula) is the last constituent of a sentence and subordinate clauses precede main clauses. The only notable ex-

ceptions to this rule are cleft sentences, in which the predicate (marked by a copula) may precede the subject of the sentence.

## 2. Overview of verbal morphology

Kambaata is an exclusively suffixing language and all inflectional morphemes are located after the verbal stem. A sketch of the morpheme structure of a (declarative affirmative) main verb is given in Table 1, an example is provided in (1).<sup>1</sup>

Stem: Root (+ Derivation)	I n f l e c t i o n			(Object Suffix)	(íkke)
	Subject Agreement	Aspect	Subject Agreement		
	1s: -∅ 2s: - <i>t</i> 3m: -∅ 3f/p: - <i>t</i> 3hon: - <i>een</i> 1p: - <i>n</i> 2p/hon: - <i>teen</i>	IPV: - <i>a(a)</i> PVE: - <i>e(e)</i> PVO: - <i>o(o)</i> PROG: - <i>ayyoo</i>	1s: - <i>m(m)</i> 2s: - <i>nt</i> 3m: var. 3f/pl: (-'V) 3hon: var. 1p: - <i>m(m)</i> 2p: - <i>nta(a'u)</i>		

**Table 1. Structure of a declarative affirmative main verb**

- (1) *sazános íkke* < *saz-∅-á-no-s<sup>2</sup>* *íkke*  
advise-3m-IPV-3m-3mO INACT

‘He used to advise him.’

The verbal stem consists of the root and derivational morphemes. Each affirmative declarative main verb has two subject agreement markers. The first agreement slot is occupied by the inherited Afroasiatic subject morphemes; the second slot contains agreement morphemes that

<sup>1</sup> Some negative and non-declarative main verbs have a different structure: Non-imperfective negative verbs and jussive-imperative verbs lack the second subject agreement morpheme (cf. Treis forthcoming a).

<sup>2</sup> In some persons, the discontinuous subject agreement morphemes and the inserted aspect markers have merged so that the boundaries between them are blurred. From a synchronic point of view, it is, therefore, often more appropriate to analyse the three components as constituting one complex portmanteau morpheme of person, gender, number, honorificity and aspect. In the following examples, inflectional morphemes are not broken up in the glosses.

were probably grammaticalised in the more recent HEC history (Tosco 1996, Crass forthcoming). Aspect morphemes are placed in the slot between the subject agreement positions. Four aspectual values are distinguished in main verb paradigms: (i) imperfective (IPV), (ii) perfective with a characteristic *e*-vowel (PVE), (iii) perfective with a characteristic *o*-vowel (PVO) and (iv) progressive (PROG). The functions of these aspect morphemes can be briefly described as follows: The imperfective marks an event as non-completed, either because the event is habitual, a general truth, on-going or expected to happen in the future (more details are given in §3). The two perfective verb forms mark events as being completed. The exact functional differences between the two perfectives are not yet understood and require further investigation. The two paradigms overlap in certain persons and verbal conjugations. If a distinction can be made between an *e*- and an *o*-form, it is the *o*-form that is used in sequential narratives, for events in the recent past and in certain adverbial clauses (e.g. conditional clauses).<sup>3</sup> See the use of the *o*-perfective main verb at the end of (2), taken from a sequential narrative; note also the perfective aspect marking on the converbs preceding the main verb.

- (2) *Kabar-íi*                      *hittig-únta*                      *roshsh-á*                      *min-íichch*  
today-mOBL.CRD like\_this-fACC<n> study-fGEN house-mABL  
*wáall*                      *roshsh-a-sí*                      *od-áata*                      *qakkíchch-uta-n-s*  
**come.1s/3mPCO** study-fGEN-3mPOSS things-fACC tiny-fOBL-J-3mPOSS  
*ma'nn-á*    *al-í*                      *torr-í*                      *ir-i-ssá*                      *aaz-í*  
bed-fGEN top-mACC **throw-1s/3mPCO** farm-mGEN-3pPOSS inside-mACC  
*zah-íi*                      *fúll-o*  
walk\_around-mDAT **go\_out-3mPVO**  
‘On that day, too, he came home from school, threw his exercise books onto his tiny bed and went out to their farm to walk around.’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 8.19)

The progressive is a verb form that has been grammaticalised very recently (it is not shared with the most closely related languages (dialects) Alaaba and K’abeena) from a periphrastic construction consisting of an imperfective converb and an existential verb (*yoo*- ‘be (located)’). The progressive marks a durative event as being in the process of happening at the reference time (which is the event time of the narrative in (3)).

---

<sup>3</sup> In the literature on HEC related languages, cognate and/or functional equivalent paradigms are labelled “perfect” or “present perfect” (see e.g. Crass forthcoming).

- (3) [...] *gag-tiha-n-sa* *it-táa=r-a* *bajig-óon*  
 self-mDAT-J-3pPOSS eat-3fIPV=NMZp-mACC happiness-fLOC

***hacc-itáyyoo'u***  
**search.MID-3fPROG**

(When observing birds, the protagonist of a story watches the following on-going event:) '[...] they were happily searching for food for themselves.' (Kambaatissata 1989: 8.19f)

Progressive marking encodes iteration (*ub-áyyoo'u* 'he keeps on falling') with punctual verbs (e.g. *ub-* 'fall') and an incipient change of state (*qeree'rr-áyyoo'u* 'he growing tall') with inchoative-stative verbs (*geraa'rr-* 'be(come) tall').

As Table 1 shows, the morpheme *ikke* is a tense particle found at the right edge of the verb; it is used to mark an event as situated in the past and no longer relevant to or no longer actual for the present situation (4);<sup>4</sup> it is glossed INACT.

- (4) *mát-o* *qeráa'rr-ua* *sut-ichch-í* *al-éen* *yóo* ***ikké***  
 one-mOBL tall-mOBL tree\_sp-SG-mGEN top-mLOC COP1.3 INACT.REL  
*handár-ch-ut*  
 dove-SG-fNOM

(Speaking about a dove flying towards the protagonist:) 'a dove that had been on a high *suta*-tree' (Kambaatissata 1989: 8.21)

The morpheme *ikke* also marks situations as counterfactual (5), irrespective of whether the hypothetical situation does not hold at the speech time or did not hold at some time prior to the speech time.<sup>5</sup>

- (5) [...] *gūr-at* *yóo-ba'* *ikkeeráan* *man-ch-í* *beet-í*  
 fire-fNOM COP1.3-NEG HYP.COND people-SG-mGEN child-mGEN  
*héechch-at* *makk-áta* *ik-káa-ba'a* ***ikke***  
 life-fNOM comfortable-fACC become-3fIPV-NEG INACT

'If there was no fire, the life of human beings would not be comfortable.' (Kambaatissata 1989: 4.55)

Aspect marking is considered primary and tense marking secondary in Kambaata because the latter is not marked inflectionally and superimposed on aspect marking. The verb form to which *ikke* is attached can be marked for any aspectual value. Among the aspectual categories, the distinction between imperfective and perfective is considered primary due to the

<sup>4</sup> For more information on languages that have a past tense that "suggests that a situation that once held is no longer actual" see Timberlake (2007: 307).

<sup>5</sup> According to Timberlake (2007: 322), it is common for languages to correlate past tense and counterfactuality modality.

following reasons: (i) the two perfective paradigms are functionally similar and formally overlapping; (ii) in negative main verb forms, only a two-way distinction between imperfective and non-imperfective forms is made (cf. Treis forthcoming a); (iii) the progressive is diachronically based on the imperfective (converb) form; (iv) for some verbs, imperfective/progressive and *e*-/*o*-perfective are based on different stems; and (v) converbs make only a two-way distinction between perfective and imperfective forms. All this shows that the opposition between imperfective and perfective is more entrenched in the verbal system and that the distinction between imperfective and progressive and between *e*- and *o*-perfective is subordinate.

Before moving on to the discussion of the expression of future time reference, Table 2 gives an overview of all independent and dependent verb types that are distinguished in Kambaata. The table may serve as a reference point for the following sections. The verbs are arranged from left to right on a scale of decreasing finiteness, or said differently, on a scale of decreasing inflectional potential. All grammatical categories that are obligatorily marked on the respective verbs and all category values are listed.

	MAIN VERBS		RELATIVE VERBS		CONVERBS		PURPOSIVES		VERBAL NOUNS
SUBJECT AGREEMENT	1s 2s 3m 3f/p 3hon	1p  2p/hon	1s 2s 3m 3f/p 3hon	1p  2p/hon	1s/3m 2s/3f/p 3hon	1p 2p/hon	1s/3m 2s/3f/p 3hon	1p 2p/hon	-
ASPECT	Imperfective Progressive <i>e</i> -Perfective <i>o</i> -Perfective		Imperfective Progressive <i>e</i> -Perfective <i>o</i> -Perfective		Imperfective  Perfective		-		-
MOOD	Indicative Imperative/Jussive Preventive		-		-		-		-
SWITCH REFERENCE	-		-		+		+		-

**Table 2. Inflectional categories on main verbs and dependent verbs in Kambaata**

Main verbs, relative verbs and converbs can still be marked for negation.

### 3. Imperfective aspect as expressing future time reference

The imperfective aspect can evoke future time reference. However, the Kambaata imperfective is best described more generally as encoding events that are not completed at the reference time. It is used, for instance, for general truths (6), habitual events (7) and (non-durative) events carried out at the speech time (8).

- (6) *Mánn-u min-i-sí am-áta*  
men-mNOM house-mGEN-3mPOSS mother-fACC  
*sharr-anó=g-ánka handar-itíi sharr-itáa'-indo?*  
**chase\_away-3mIPV.REL=SIM-mACC<n> dove-fNOM.CRD chase\_away-3fIPV-Q**  
‘Do doves chase away (their children) like men chase away their wife(s) (lit. “mother(s) of the house”)?’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 8.20)
- (7) *Mexx-ú bar-iháa hoog-íshsh-o-nne*  
single-mACC day-mACC.CRD become\_tired-CS1-3mPVO-1pO  
*y-ít nunnur-táa-ba'a*  
say-2s/3fPCO **complain-3fIPV-NEG**  
‘They don’t complain a single day that they are tired (lit. “complain saying ‘it made us tired”)’.’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 3.97)
- (8) [...] *alúud-iin baa'yyaat-amm-ó bar-í boorajj-áan-ta-s*  
above-mICP mention-PS-3mPVO.REL day-mACC training-mLOC-J-DEF  
*dag-an-téenunta qaag-insáam*  
find-PS-2pPURP<sub>DS</sub> **remember-CS1.1pIPV**  
‘We remind you to attend the training on the date mentioned above [...].’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 8.28)

The imperfective verb form also marks an event as happening in the future, i.e. at a point later in time than the speech event. In (9) the imperfective verb form is used in the apodosis of a conditional clause. In (10), the imperfective form of ‘meet’ is found in the quoted direct speech of a protagonist.

- (9) *Ta ichch-áta xoophph-úmb-o=dda zákk-o*  
DDEM1.fACC food-fACC finish.MID-1sNREL-mOBL=COND after-mOBL  
*górr-u af-áno-'e*  
hunger-mNOM **seize-3mIPV-1sO**  
‘If I don’t finish this food, I will be hungry (lit. “hunger will seize me”) later.’

- (10) *Aayíchch* “*daqqan-teenánta*” *y-itáa-’e* *bagáan*  
 Mum.fNOM **meet-2pIPV** say-3fIPV-1sO CONTRAST

*kú’nn* *daqqam-mu’nnáan* *kabar-ée* *iill-inéemm*  
 see! meet-1pNCO today-mDAT reach-1pPVE

‘Mum used to say to me “you will meet (one day)”, but - see! – up until today we haven’t met (lit. “we have reached even today without meeting”).’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 8.21)

The imperfective can mark future events irrespective of the temporal distance between the time of the speech event and the time of its (expected) realisation. In (10) the future event is in the distant future whereas it is in the immediate future in (11). Holding a knife in his hands, the speaker of (11) announces an action that is going to be carried out in a moment.

- (11) *Xon-é* *fayy-á* *ciil-á* *uurishsh-áta* *qixx-ú*  
 aforementioned-fGEN healthy-mACC infant-mACC length-fACC equal-mACC  
*lam-ú=bb-a* *á’nn* *béen* *lam-éenta-’nne-n*  
 two-mACC=PLACE-mACC do.1pPCO divide.1pPCO two-fDAT<n>-2pPOSS-n  
*aass-ináan-ki’nne* [...] **give-1pIPV-2pO**

‘[...] we are going to divide that healthy child lengthwise into two equal parts and give (one part) to each of you.’

The Kambaata imperfective is not only used to encode events that are non-completed at the speech time but also at a reference time *prior* to the speech time, i.e. the imperfective can mark habitual events in the past; cf. (12) below and *yitáa’e* ‘she used to say to me’ in (10) above.

- (12) [...] *ir-í* *aaz-éen* *cír* *y-ú* *abbíshshee-t*  
 farm-mGEN inside-mLOC stroll say-mACC exceed.1s/3mPCO.VV-COP3  
*iitt-anóo-hu*  
**love-3mIPV.NMZ1-mNOM**

(Utterance about a daily activity of the protagonist:) ‘[...] he loved it very much to stroll across the farm (lit. “[...] it is exceedingly that he loved to stroll across the farm”).’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 8.19)

Accordingly, an event that is future relative to the time of a past reference event is also marked by imperfective aspect. In (13), the event of worrying (main clause) is prior to the speech time; the event of going is also prior to the speech time but seen from the reference time it is in the future and thus marked by the imperfective.



- (13) *Ga'aasíga inq-ó haakiim-í min-í mar-anó=tannée*  
 next\_day teeth-fGEN doctor-mGEN house-mACC go-3mIPV.REL=REAS  
*haww-áyyoo-haa ikke*  
 be\_worried-3mPROG.REL-mCOP2 INACT  
 'He was worried because he would go to the dentist the next day.'

The imperfective is the most common verb form in utterances about the future; future constructions with a more restricted use are discussed in the following.

## 4. Purpose clause-based future constructions

### 4.1. Future constructions based on purposive verbs

Kambaata has two paradigms of subordinate verb forms that are specialised in encoding purpose meaning and are thus labelled “purposives” (cf. the purposive column in Table 2): the purposive verb ending in *-ó-ta* is used to encode that the purpose and the matrix clause share one subject (SS: same subject) (14), whereas the purposive verb ending in *-un-ta* indicates that the subjects of the purpose clause and the matrix clause are different (DS: different subject) (15).<sup>6</sup>

- (14) *Zammar-tóta af-óo-se fan-tóo=da [...]*  
 sing-2s/3fPURP<sub>SS</sub> mouth-mACC-3fPOSS open-3fPVO.REL=COND  
 'When (the bird) opened its beak to sing [...].'
- (15) *Lál-u meqqeerr-áta da'll-í úujj-unta*  
 cows-mNOM afterbirth-fACC do\_fast-3mPCO drop-1s/3mPURP<sub>DS</sub>  
*qeegill-éeta it-is-éenno*  
 enset\_type-fACC eat-CS1-3honIPV  
 'One feeds *qeegillee*-enset to cows so that they drop the[ir] afterbirth quickly.'

The full paradigms of the SS and DS subject purposives are given in Table 3. The purposive endings consist of three separable morphemes, none of which is an aspect morpheme.<sup>7</sup> The first morphemes mark subject agreement, the middle morpheme is the actual purposive marker and the last morpheme (*-ta*) is a subordinator diachronically related to a demonstrative.

<sup>6</sup> Please consult Treis (forthcoming b: section 3.1) for details on the morphology, syntax and use of the Kambaata purposive verbs.

<sup>7</sup> The morphemes are usually not broken up in the glosses.

		SS PURPOSIVE	DS PURPOSIVE
1s	3m	-Ø-ó-ta	'-Ø-un-ta
2s	3f/p	-t-ó-ta	'-t-un-ta
3hon		-een-ó-ta	-éen-un-ta
1p		-n-ó-ta	'-n-un-ta
2p/hon		-teen-ó-ta	-téen-un-ta

**Table 3. Kambaata purposive paradigms**

DS purposives can never function as main verbs of a sentence. SS purposives, however, can be used as the main verb in one context, i.e. questions about one's intentions or plans; cf. (16)-(17).

- (16) *M-á at-tóta?*  
 what-mACC do-2s/3fPURP<sub>SS</sub>

'What do you intend to do? / What are going to do?'

- (17) *Āā wol-ú maláx!*  
 yes other-mACC cheat.2sIMP

*Káan xooff-oommí-da ammóo*  
 IDEM1mACC finish-1sPVO.REL-COND however

*wol-íta huj-íta aass-ito-'é-ta?*  
 other-fACC work-fACC give-2s/3fPURP<sub>SS</sub>-1sO-2s/3fPURP<sub>SS</sub>

'Come on, cheat someone else (but not me)! When I have finished this (task) you want / are going to give me another job?!' (Kambaatissata 1989: 3.97)

Purpose clauses encode "that one verbal situation, that of the matrix clause, is performed with the intention of bringing about another situation, that of the purpose clause" (Schmidtke-Bode 2009: 20). The motivating event expressed in a purpose clause is unrealised at the time of the event in the matrix clause and, as such, purpose clauses are inherently future-oriented. It is the inherent future orientation of purpose clauses that facilitated the interpretation of purpose constructions as constructions expressing future. As purposive verbs alone are not used as main verbs outside questions, it is purpose cleft constructions that grammaticalised into constructions encoding imminent or intended future events in Kambaata. Purposive clauses (like all other constituents in a Kambaata sentence) can be focused by clefting. In cleft sentences, a copula is suffixed to the focused constituent, which becomes the non-verbal predicate, while the remainder of the sentence is relativised and nominalised and thus becomes the subject of the sentence. In (18), line (a), the SS purpose clause is the non-verbal predicate (note the copula) while the main clause in line (b) is relativised and turned into the subject of the cleft sentence. (A DS purposive clause would be focused accordingly.)

- (18) a {*Káan-in* *xa'mm-itótaa-n-ti-bala*}<sub>PREDICATE OF CLEFT SENTENCE</sub>  
 IDEM1.mACC-n ask-2s/3fPURP<sub>SS</sub>.VV-n-COP3-DISBELIEF
- b {*das-soontfi-hu*}<sub>SUBJECT OF CLEFT SENTENCE</sub>  
 be\_late-2sPVO.REL.NMZ1-mNOM
- ‘Unbelievable, it took you such a long time *to ask this [simple question]?*’ (Lit. ‘Unbelievable, it is to ask this that you were so late?’)

SS purpose-cleft constructions with an empty subject position (‘(it) is to V’, ‘(it) is in order to V’) have come to be used to encode imminent or intentional future (‘(Subject) is going to V / is about to V / plans to V’). While some examples, given an appropriate context, might still allow a purposive cleft interpretation, only an imminent or intentional future interpretation is plausible for utterances such as (19)-(20).

- (19) *Xeen-á* *ub-ótaa-t*  
 rain-mACC fall-1/3mPURP<sub>SS</sub>.VV-COP3  
 [Context: There are black clouds in the sky.] ‘It is going to rain.’
- (20) *Téma* *aansh-ótaa-t*  
 just\_now wash-1s/3mPURP<sub>SS</sub>.VV-COP3  
 [Context: A mother asks her daughter whether she has finished the washing that she was supposed to do. The daughter answers:] ‘I am going to wash it immediately.’

The purposive-based future constructions are also used for scheduled events in the near or later future (see the quote from an invitation letter in (21)) or for events judged to be inevitable by the speaker (22).

- (21) *Shaashshig-í* *16ch* *18 iillán qaxée* *yóo* *jeechch-óon* [...]  
 April-mGEN 16mABL 18 until COP1.3 time-fLOC  
*boorájj-u* *aass-am-ótaa-t*  
 training-mNOM give-PS-1s/3mPURP<sub>SS</sub>.VV-COP3  
 ‘In the time from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> of April [...] training will be held (lit. “given”).’  
 (Kambaatissata 1989: 8.28)
- (22) *Bollochch-áan* *birs-éen* *gizz-á* *báat-u*  
 wedding-mLOC precede-3honPCO money-mACC pay-mNOM  
*he'-ótaa-t*  
 exist-1s/3mPURP<sub>SS</sub>.VV-COP3  
 [The numbers of guests coming just to eat but without contributing to the gift is steadily increasing:] ‘Advance payment will (surely) be established (soon) at weddings.’

Intentional future in the past is marked by the morpheme *ikke* INACT:

- (23) *Ayyaan-o-’óon-in*      *alaphph-úi*      *mar-ótaa-t*      *íkke*  
 A.-mGEN-ASSOCmICP-n    play-mDAT    go-1s/3mPURP<sub>SS</sub>.VV-COP3    INACT  
 ‘I was just about to go and play with Ayyaano and his friends.’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 3.96)

Only purposive clefts based on the SS verb (but not the DS verb) can be used to express imminent or intentional future.

## 4.2. Future constructions based on dative-marked verbal nouns

Kambaata is a case-marking language which distinguishes between nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, instrumental-comitative-perlative, ablative, locative and oblique case (Treis 2008: §7.2). Every noun in a sentence has to be marked by case suffixes; the nominal stem is never used in isolation and only a concept of the linguistic analysis.

Verbal nouns are bare of any verbal inflectional morphology (cf. Table 2) but, like other nouns, they are marked for case; see the verbal noun forms based on *ag-* ‘drink’: *ag-ú* ‘drinking’ (mACC), *ág-u* ‘drinking’ (mNOM), *ag-í* ‘of drinking’ (mGEN), *ag-úi(ha)* ‘for drinking’ (mDAT), *ag-úin* ‘by drinking’ (mICP), *ag-úichch* ‘from drinking’ (mABL), *ag-óon* ‘on drinking’, *ág-o* ‘by, on drinking’ (mOBL).

The dative-marked verbal noun is used as the head of SS purpose clauses, as seen in (24). In most contexts, the dative-marked verbal noun is functionally equivalent to the SS purposive form that has been discussed in §4.1 (cf. Treis forthcoming b: §3.2). In DS contexts, purposive constructions with dative-marked verbal nouns are ungrammatical.

- (24) *Áachch*      *wix-áta*      *wiit-isiis-úha*      *wiitim-í*      *min-í*  
 mum.fNOM    grain-fACC    grind-CS2-mDAT    mill-mGEN    house-mACC  
*mar-éemmaa’u*  
 go-3honPVE  
 ‘Mum went to the mill to have the grain ground.’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 3.96)

Another striking parallel between the SS purposive and the dative-marked verbal noun concerns the grammaticalisation path that both verb forms have taken. Like the purposive, the dative-marked verbal noun, in combination with a copula, has developed into a construction expressing imminent or intentional future. Dative-marked verbal nouns combine with copulas in focus constructions, see (25), and it is the inherent future orientation of dative verbal noun clauses that has given rise to the future interpretation of these cleft constructions.

- (25) [...] {*muchch-î*                      *batinn-íta*                      ***barg-ûhaa-t***} PREDICATE OF CLEFT  
           enset\_dish-mDAT    amount-fACC            add-mDAT.VV-COP3

[Answer to the question why vegetables are sometimes added to a certain dish:] ‘[...] (it) is to increase the amount of (lit. “add amount to”) the *muchchu*-dish.’

Given the context in which (26) is made, the utterance can definitely not be interpreted as expressing purpose but only as expressing future time reference.

- (26) *Ku*                      *adab-óo*                      *zákk-o*                      ***gaabb-ûhaa-t***  
       DDEM1mNOM    boy-mNOM    after-mOBL            regret-mDAT.VV-COP3

[Prediction made when watching a misbehaving child:] ‘This boy will regret (his deeds) soon.’ (Lit. “It is so that this boy regrets (his deeds) soon.”)

Dative verbal noun-based constructions are less frequent than purposive-based ones (§4.1). The functional differences between the two future constructions are not yet clear and remain to be investigated in the future. Crass & Meyer (2008: 240f) discuss the grammaticalisation of future constructions in some Ethiosemitic and East Cushitic languages. One of the languages dealt with is K’abeena, a close relative of Kambaata. K’abeena is said to use a verbal noun-based construction for imminent future and a purposive-based construction for intentional future. This division of labour between the constructions is not observed in Kambaata. We have seen in §4.1 that the purposive-based construction of Kambaata covers both functions. However, since I have no examples in which the verbal noun-based future construction is used for intentional future in Kambaata, I cannot exclude that it is also restricted to imminent future as in K’abeena.

Generalisations are very difficult to make, because the dative verbal-noun based future constructions are only attested in elicited data.<sup>8</sup> The possibility that the elicited, verbal noun-based future constructions are calques from the Ethiopian lingua franca Amharic cannot be excluded altogether.

---

<sup>8</sup> The purpose-cleft constructions commonly found in the corpus of oral and written texts all have a purpose focus interpretation (as e.g. (25)).

## 5. Relative future in converb clauses

Converbs are dependent, non-final verb forms that are morphologically distinct from main verbs, purposive verbs and relative verbs (cf. Table 2). They are used in adverbial function, in clause chains or in verbal compounds. Kambaata distinguishes between perfective, imperfective and negative converbs. Imperfective converbs (ICO) express events that are simultaneous to the event expressed by the next following verb (27).

- (27) *Án wodar-ú fiil-áni-yan*  
 1sNOM cord-mACC **split-1sICO-DS**  
*íse qaanc-á meer-táyyoo ikke*  
 3fNOM fibres-mACC twist-3fPROG INACT  
 ‘While I was splitting cords, she was twisting fibres.’

The semantic relation between the perfective converb clause (PCO) and the subsequent clause is vague, though often interpreted as expressing anteriority or manner; see, for instance, (2) and (15).

The negative converb expresses, firstly, that the event in the matrix clause is done ‘without VERB-ing’ (28).

- (28) [...] *ann-ánka-s* *ikko ann-i-sí* *ar-íta*  
 father-fACC<n>-3mPOSS or father-mGEN-3mPOSS wife-fACC  
*xa’mm-ú’нна* [...] *Sarar-á mar-íiha mat-ú gabbanch-ú*  
**ask-1s/3mNCO** S.-mACC go-mDAT one-mACC short-mACC  
*qudd-á áff* [...] *ask-1s/3mNCO*  
 staff-mACC take.1s/3mPCO  
 ‘[...] without asking his father or his father’s wife, he took a short staff in order to go to Sarara [...].’ (Kambaatissata 1989: 8.22)

Secondly, they are used to encode that the event is posterior to the event in the matrix clause (‘before VERB-ing’) (29).

- (29) *Hiz-óo-s* *waal-ú’нна* *min-íichch* *fúll-ee’u*  
 brother-mNOM-3mPOSS **come-1s/3mNCO** house-mABL go\_out-3m.PVE  
 ‘He left the house before his brother came.’

‘Not VERB-ing’ at the time of the event of the matrix clause can thus have two interpretations, namely that (i) the event is not realised at all (28) or that (ii) it is just not realised at the time of the reference event but carried out later in time (i.e., seen from the point of the matrix clause, in the future) (29).

## 6. Conclusion

In Kambaata, a predominantly aspect-marking language, future is not an inflectional category. Instead, future time reference is expressed by the imperfective verb form, irrespective of whether the reference time of the future event is the speech time or the event time, and irrespective of the time distance between the reference event and the future event. Furthermore, purpose cleft constructions based on the same subject purposive verb plus a copula or based on a dative-marked verbal noun plus a copula have been grammaticalised into constructions expressing imminent or intentional future. In converb clauses, the negative converb can express that an event is later in time than the event in the matrix clause, i.e. they encode relative future in complex sentences.

With regard to the encoding of future, Kambaata is a typical Highland East Cushitic language (cf. Figure 1), as far as we can tell from the description of closely related languages: the imperfective aspect is also used for habitual and future events in K'abeena (Crass 2005: 165), Alaaba (2007: 216-20), Sidaama (Kawachi 2007: 124f, 792) and Hadiyya (Sim 1989: 142; Perrett 2000: 56f, 65); the use of purpose clefts for imminent and intentional future is attested in K'abeena (cf. Crass (2005: 272) on “prospective aspect”), Alaaba (cf. Schneider-Blum (2007: 237ff) on “immediate/near future”) and Sidaama (cf. Kawachi (2007: 423, 787) on the “be about to”-construction); and negative converb clauses used for the expression of posteriority (future) in complex sentences are also known to exist in K'abeena (Crass 2005: 186), Alaaba (Schneider-Blum 2007: 266ff) and Hadiyya (Sim 1989: 312).

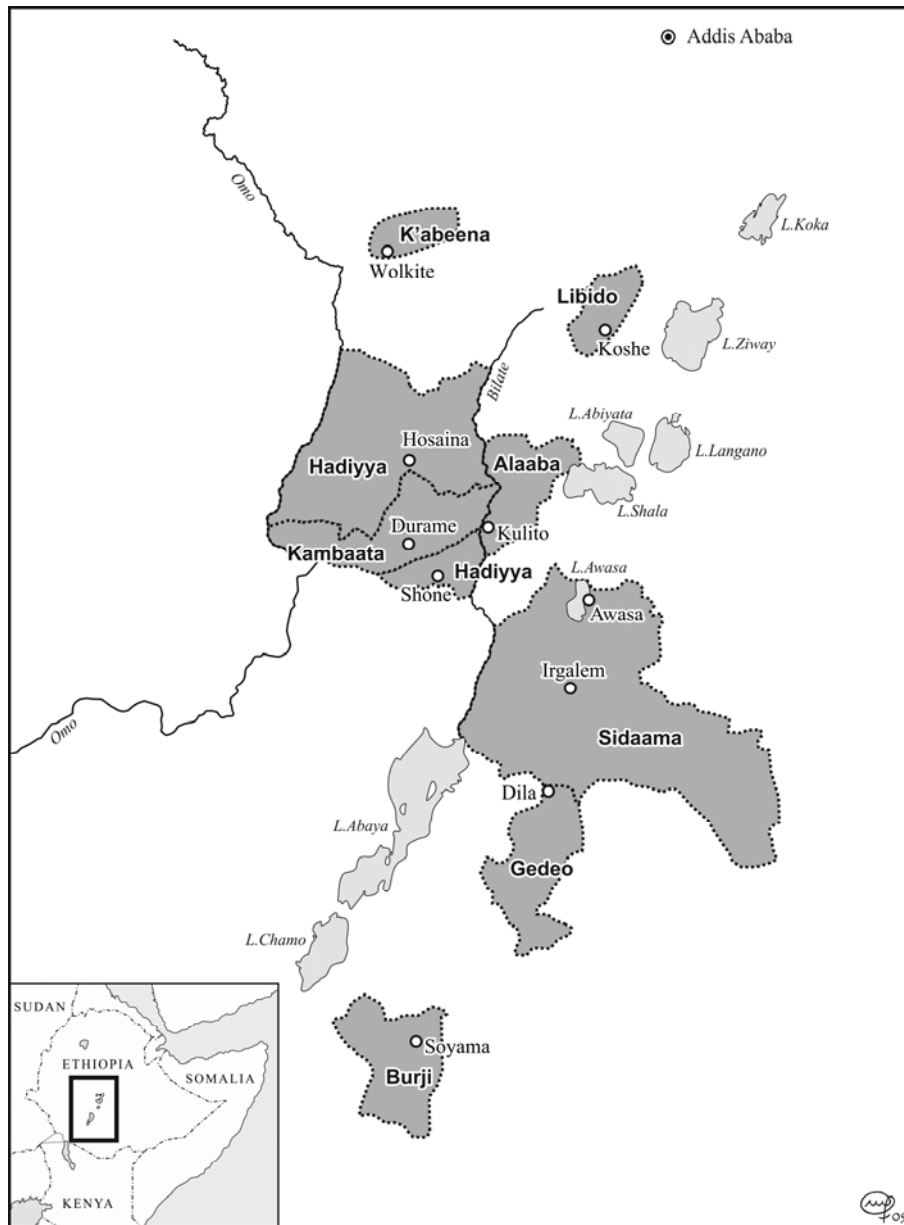


Figure 1. Highland East Cushitic languages

## Acknowledgments

Research for this paper was supported in part by the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (2002-2007), a La Trobe Post-doctoral Research Fellowship (2008-2011) and a *Research in Paris*-Postdoctoral Fellowship of the Paris City Administration (2011); this support is gratefully acknowledged. I am indebted to Deginet Wotango, Tessema Handiso, Filiphos Phaulos, Mathewos Shagana and all other Kambaata speakers that I have been working with in the past years. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the *Atelier sur le future (Opération "Le temps dans les langues africaines")*, CNRS-LLACAN Villejuif, 19-20 May 2011.



## Orthography

The Kambaata data is written in the official orthography (to which I added accents to indicate the position of phonemic stress; furthermore, I marked all word-medial and word-final glottal stops overtly) (Maatewoos 1992 E.C.). The following graphemes are not in accordance with the IPA conventions: <ph> = /p'/, <x> = /t'/, <q> = /k'/, <j> = /dʒ/, <c> = /tʃ/, <ch> = /tʃ/, <sh> = /ʃ/, <y> = /j/ and <'> = /ʔ/. Length is indicated by double letters, e.g. <aa> = /a:/, <bb> = /b:/, and <shsh> = /ʃ:/. The second consonant of a glottal stop-sonorant cluster is generally written as double, although the cluster only consists of two phonemes, e.g. <'mm> = /ʔm/; this convention helps to distinguish these clusters from glottalised sonorants, which are written <'r> and <'l>. Word-final unstressed /i/ does not occur orthographically, irrespective of its phonological status.

## Abbreviations

ABL = ablative; ACC = accusative; COND = conditional; COP1 = *yoo*-copula; COP = *-ha/-ta*-copula; COP3 = *-t*-copula; CRD = coordination; CS1 = simple causative; CS2 = double causative; DAT = dative; DDEM = determining demonstrative; DEF = definite; DS = different subject; f = feminine; GEN = genitive; hon = honorific, impersonal; HYP = hypothetical; ICO = imperfective converb; ICP = instrumental-comitative-perlative; IDEM = independent demonstrative pronoun; IMP = imperative; INACT = inactual (past, irrealis); IPV = imperfective; J = juncture; LOC = locative; m = masculine; MID = middle; n = unanalysed pragmatically determined morpheme; NCO = negative converb; NEG = negation; NMZ1 = nominalisation (by vowel lengthening); NMZ2 = nominalisation (by enclitic demonstrative pronoun); NMZp = plural nominalisation (with enclitic =r-); NOM = nominative; NREL = negative relative; O = object; p = plural; OBL = oblique; PCO = perfective converb; POSS = possessive; PROG = progressive; PS = passive; PURP = purposive verb; PVE = *e*-perfective; PVO = *o*-perfective; REAS = reason; REL = relative; s = singular; SG = singulative; SS = same subject; var. = various forms; VV = long vowel

## References

**Crass, J. 2005.**

*Das K'abeena. Deskriptive Grammatik einer hochlandostkuschitischen Sprache.* Cologne: Köppe.

**forthcoming.**

Some remarks about the compound suffix conjugation in Highland East Cushitic languages. In: *Selected papers of the 5th International Conference on Cushitic and Omotic Languages, Paris, 16-18 April 2008*, M.-C. Simeone-Senelle & M. Vanhove (eds.). Cologne: Köppe.

**Crass, J. & R. Meyer 2008.**

Ethiopia. In: *A linguistic geography of Africa*, B. Heine & D. Nurse (eds.), pp. 228-249. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Kawachi, K. 2007.**

*A grammar of Sidaama (Sidamo), a Cushitic language of Ethiopia.* PhD thesis, University at Buffalo, State University of New York.

**Kambaatissata. Rosaanchi Maxaafa. [Kambaata Language. School Book.] 1989 E.C.**

Grade 1-8. Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples Regional State: Education Bureau.

**Maatewoos Shagana 1992 E.C.**

*Kambaatissa xifati seerrata.* Ed. by Liiranso Wotango & Tiitoos Heegana. Duuraame: Educational Department of the Kambaata-Alaaba-Xambaaro Zone.

**Perrett, D. L. 2000.**

*The dynamics of tense construal in Hadiyya*, PhD thesis, University of London.

**Schmidtke-Bode, K. 2009.**

*A typology of purpose clauses.* Amsterdam, Philadelphia: Benjamins.

**Schneider-Blum, G. 2007.**

*A grammar of Alaaba, a Highland East Cushitic language of Ethiopia.* Cologne: Köppe.

**Sim, R. J. 1989.**

*Predicate conjoining in Hadiyya. A Head-Driven PS grammar.* PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh.

**Timberlake, A. 2007.**

Aspect, tense, mood. In: *Language typology and syntactic description*. Vol. 3: *Grammatical categories and the lexicon*, T. Shopen (ed.), pp. 280-333. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Tosco, M. 1996.**

The Northern Highland East Cushitic verb in an areal perspective. In: *Cushitic and Omotic languages: Proceedings of the Third International Symposium Berlin, March 17-19, 1994*, C. Griefenow-Mewis & R. M. Voigt (eds.), pp. 71-99. Cologne: Köppe.

**Treis, Y. 2008.**

*A grammar of Kambaata. Part 1: Phonology, morphology, and non-verbal predication*. Cologne: Köppe.

**forthcoming a.**

Negation in Highland East Cushitic. Zuckermann, Ghil'ad (ed.). *Issues in Afro-Asiatic Linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

**forthcoming b.**

Purpose-encoding strategies in Kambaata. *Afrika und Übersee* 91.