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A grammar of Hamar : a South Omotic language of Ethiopia

Petrollino, S.

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Author: Petrollino, S.

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7 Basic syntax

This chapter describes word order at clause level (7.1) and at noun phrase level (7.2); section 7.3 deals with the pragmatic and discourse related functions of gender and number. The discussion continues with grammatical relations and core cases (7.4): Hamar has an accusative alignment, but nouns inflected for feminine gender distinguish subject case from non-subject case: such a system is analysed as a type of differential object marking. More details on the noun phrase structure can be found in chapter 8.

7.1 Word order at clause level

The dominant word order in Hamar is SOV (1) in both independent and dependent clauses (2). Word-order correlations are predominantly consistent with verb-final languages, thus dependent clauses precedes main clauses (2), (3), and affixes are generally suffixes.

- (1) **ukulí shuđí is-idí**
 donkey grass eat-PF
 Donkey ate some grass
- (2) **wó = ɗan deesá-ise, wongá tiá ki = ti-é**
 1PL = ACC kill-CNV1 cow:PL take 3 = take-PRES
 after killing us, he will take the cows
- (3) **éna kin = niʔ-énka, kidí párdan baʔá-ise**
 past 3 = come-CNV2 3 horse-F.OBL bring-CNV1
ki = niʔá-de
 3 = come = PFV
 when they came in the past, they came bringing horses

In (2) and (3) above the dependent clauses containing subordinate verb forms precede main final verbs. The morphology of independent and dependent verb forms is treated in chapters 9 and 10.

Case marking in Hamar is dependent on constituent order and on nouns' role in the argument structure. Altered word orders are pragmatically motivated and they are always signaled by accusative marking and/or masculine gender on constituents (see 7.3 and 7.4). OSV word order for instance is usually possible, but fronted objects are obligatorily marked by the accusative case *-ɗan*. OSV word order indicates the topicalization of the object:

- (4a) **shóqo yí=mal bash-idí birré-n-dan shóqo ti-idí**
 tick REFL=INTF win-PF birr-F.OBL-ACC tick take-PF
 Tick alone won, (and) the money, Tick took it
- (4b) **murá-n-dan kéda t'álian ba?á-ise**
 gun-F.OBL-ACC then Italians bring-CNV1
 the weapons, when the Italians brought them [...]

O and S can only exceptionally occur after the verb, as afterthoughts and preceded by a pause. A constituent occurring after the verb is marked by M gender, see section 7.3 on pragmatic and discourse-related functions of gender marking.

7.2 Word order at noun phrase level

Word order at the noun phrase level deviates from head-final order: apart from the genitival modifier which precedes the head noun (see chapter 8, 8.3.1), modifiers generally follow their heads. Possessive pronouns, adjectives, numerals and relativized verbs are always postnominal. The preferred place for demonstratives is after the head noun, but they can precede it to mark contrast. If the head noun is modified by a demonstrative and an adjective, the demonstrative occurs preferably before the adjective:

- (5) **onnó koró geccó-no innó-ne**
 house:F.S DEM1.F old-F.S 1SG:F-COP
 this old house is mine

In extended noun phrases consisting of more than one modifying adjective, the demonstrative can either precede the head noun or follow the adjectives:

- (6a) **ɔɔnê likká haalê káa inté-ne**
 house:M small:M new:M DEM1.M 1SG:M-COP
 this small new house is mine
- (6b) **káa ɔɔnê likká haalê inté-ne**
 DEM1.M house:M small:M new:M 1SG:M-COP
 this small new house is mine

The genitival modifier precedes the head when it is marked by the genitive case and also when it is juxtaposed: a noun modifying another noun, for instance in noun-noun compounds, precedes the head noun, see chapter 8, section 8.3.2. The clitic pronoun used in kinship possession is cliticized before the possessed kinship term (chapter 8, section 8.3.4), but possessive pronouns are generally postnominal. The table below sums up the position of modifiers.

Table 7.1: Position of modifiers

Modifier	Position
Demonstrative	[Head Dem]
Possessive pronoun	[Head Poss]
Adjective	[Head Adj]
Relativized verb	[Head Rel]
Numeral	[Head Num]
Genitival modifier	[Gen Head]
Modifying noun	[N Head]

With respect to the typological classification of constituent order types in African languages proposed by Heine (1976), Hamar belongs to subtype D2, i.e. verb-final languages in which the modifier-head order is inverted at the noun phrase level. Heine's D2 pattern is widespread in Nilo-Saharan languages and in Lowland East Cushitic, specifically in the Oromoid and Omo-Tana group and in the Dullay cluster (Dimmendaal 2008, *inter alia*). Omotic languages are generally SOV but differ with respect to word order in noun phrases and rigidity of constituent order, see Azeb (2012a) for an overview. Aari (Bender 1991) and Dime (Mulugeta 2008) allow both prenominal and postnominal adjectives and relative clauses.

7.3 Pragmatic functions of gender and number

In chapter 3 it was shown that gender is not an intrinsic property of nouns, and the semantic functions of gender and number, including the association of gender with size and evaluative meanings, were discussed in detail. In addition to the various semantic values described in chapter 3, gender and number play a crucial role in the pragmatic organization of discourse. Hamar has grammaticalized the pragmatic categories of referentiality and identifiability by means of gender and number markers: the use of gender as a definiteness-marking device is illustrated in section 7.3.1, and the discourse-related functions such as prominence and reference-tracking are discussed in 7.3.2. Section 7.3.3 is dedicated to the pragmatic use of plural marking. As will become clear in this section, the discourse pragmatics of gender and number can account for the recurrent distribution of feminine inflected nouns.

7.3.1 Definiteness

Different from the close relatives Dime (Mulugeta 2008:42-43) and Aari (Hayward 1990:442), Hamar does not have a dedicated suffix that overtly marks definiteness. The general form of nouns has non-definite reference, and the only strategy to make nouns definite is to inflect them for gender. In some Omotic languages such as Anfillo (Goshu and Demeke 2005, in Azeb 2012a:442) demonstratives can modify non-definite nouns and make them definite. This is not possible in Hamar, since the

general uninflected form cannot be modified by demonstratives (cf. chapter 4): the uninflected form *ooní* ‘house’ in (7d) cannot be followed by a demonstrative.

(7a) **ɔɔnê káa**
house:M DEM1.M
this house (M)

(7b) **onnó koró**
house:F.S DEM1.F
this house (F)

(7c) **onná kirá**
house:PL DEM1.PL
these houses (PL)

(7d) ***ooní ?**

Gender can be used to indicate the mental representation of discourse referents, and this is particularly visible when gender does not encode the sex of the referent (that is, when it is used on non-animate nouns). Gender marks two degrees of definiteness: feminine gender is used for definite and identifiable referents, whereas masculine gender marks definite, specific and individuated referents.

The general form, which is not committal for gender and number, is used in contexts in which the referent is not established as identifiable in the discourse. General, uninflected forms are often found in general truth statements expressed by means of the General Declarative (see chapter 9, section 9.1.2) and in proverbs. The Hamar proverb in (8), contains only the general forms of *cheetah*, *eye*, and *oribi* because reference is made to mental objects which do not need to be identified. A zero (0) next to the noun in the English translation indicates that the noun is uninflected, as opposed to (M), (F) and (PL) for masculine, feminine and plural marking:

(8) **sháu áapi aajadá-isaxa, gumí da-belbat-é**
cheetah eye be.sick-PAST.PF oribi IPFV-snort-PRES
when the eyes (0) of the cheetah (0) are sick, oribis (0) will snort

When a noun is introduced for the first time in the discourse and it is non-definite (i.e. it refer to a non-yet-identifiable and established referent), it occurs in the uninflected general form. Any subsequent mention is generally inflected for feminine gender, since once a noun has been introduced, it becomes definite and identifiable, cf. *kánki* vs. *kánkin* in (9) and *baití* vs. *baín* in (10):

- (9) **qáski, kánki ni?-ína, kánki-n-dan alá~alá**
 dog car come-COND car-F.OBL-ACC chase~chase
 if a car (0) comes, Dog will chase the car (F)

- (10) **goín kin = yi?-énka baití-dan ki = aafá-de.**
 way.F.OBL 3 = go-CNV2 river-ACC 3 = see-PFV
baín aafá-ḡ hayá-ise
 river.F.OBL see-NARR do-CNV1
 when they went along the road (F), they saw a river (0). After they saw
 the river (F) [...]

In the previous examples the oblique feminine case (glossed as F.OBL) is used (*kánkin* and *baín*). Nouns in the oblique case trigger feminine agreement on modifiers and on verbs: the syntactic properties of these nouns and the difference between subject feminine nouns (glossed as F.S) and oblique feminine nouns (glossed as F.OBL) are discussed in 7.4.

As shown in (9) and (10) above, feminine gender marks definite constituents. Feminine gender is used as well when an entity is considered explicit enough for the speaker's purpose, or when a referent is obvious from the context. This can be noticed especially in procedural texts, where nouns referring to the ingredients or the tools necessary for a recipe are always inflected for feminine gender. In the excerpt below for instance the nouns for *water*, *sorghum*, *stone*, *flour* (highlighted by a surrounding border), are inflected for feminine gender because the speaker expects the listener to be able to identify the referent of those nouns in that particular speech situation. Nouns modified by numerals, such as *róoro* 'day' in (11b) are discussed in 7.3.3.

- (11a)

noqó-n-sa water-F.OBL-GEN
haí-n-dar sun-F.OBL-ALL1

íi-rra bulá-ise,
 stomach-ABL take.out-CNV1
apá~apadá
 unfold~unfold:PASS
 after taking it out from the water (F), it is stretched in the sun (F)

- (11b)

haí-n-dar sun-F.OBL-ALL1
isínno sorghum:F.S

róoro lámá, makkán, oidí,
 day two three four
woccá = ko wocc-é
 be.hard = 3F be.hard-PRES
 two, three, four days (0) in the sun (F), the sorghum (F) will become
 hard

- (11c) **wocc-idí** **kónna** **kéda** **agá-rra** **desá~desadá**
 be.hard-PF 3F:OPT then DEM2.M-ABL grind~grind:PASS
 if it becomes hard, then it is grinded

- (11d) **seení-n-dar** **desá-ise,** **pər** **dílo** **ogoró**
 stone-F.OBL-ALL1 grind-CNV1 again flour:F.S DEM2.F
mottá~mottadá
 mix~mix:PASS
 after grinding on the stone (F), that flour (F) is mixed again

As will become clear in this section, feminine gender is functionally the unmarked gender since it represents the default strategy to encode definiteness. Masculine gender, on the other hand, is distributionally more rare than feminine gender because it is associated with discourse prominence and cognitive salience.

Masculine gender marks definite nouns, but different from feminine gender, it helps identifying and individuating specific and referential entities which are considered salient for the speaker.

The excerpt below is taken from a folk tale in which Dog is slaughtering Donkey under the order of Hyena. Dog wants to trick Hyena and secretly eat the most precious part, the heart, thinking that Hyena will not ask for it. The first mention of ‘heart’ in (12a) is treated as definite and thus it is inflected for feminine gender:

- (12a) “**kidí** **wáa-n** **wul** **ḡocá** **ki = ḡoc-é,**
 3 meat-F.OBL all think 3 = think-PRES
weilá-n-dan **ḡoc-é,** **gudiri** **ḡoc-é”**
 heart-F.OBL-ACC think-PRES.NEG.3 hyena think-PRES.NEG.3
 “he will think of all the meat (F), but he won’t think about the heart (F),
 Hyena does not think”

In the succeeding sentence the noun for ‘heart’ gets masculine gender: different from the feminine definite noun in (12a), the masculine noun in (12b) is specific and individuated, and it becomes prominent in the discourse stage:

- (12b) **weilamâ** **bishê** **bulá-tte** **gaʔá-ḡ**
 heart:M only:M take.out-SE bite-NARR
 so he took out only the heart (M) and ate it

Masculine gender can be used also as an indicator of discourse referentiality and continuity. The folktale excerpt below tells the story of a race between Tick and Squirrel. Tick is going to cheat and win the race by attaching to Squirrel’s leg. The first mention of the leg of the squirrel in (13a) is marked by masculine gender because that element is going to be crucial for the understanding of the trick, and of

the whole story. The speaker uses masculine gender to signal that the constituent must be traced through the evolving narrative. The following mentions of the squirrel's leg in the rest of the story are inflected for feminine gender (13b):

- (13a) **shóqo** **put** **yin** **ham-énka,** **kóopini-sa**
 tick IDEO.out so say-CNV2 squirrel-GEN
 rɔɔ-tá-xal **t'eezí** **dorq-idí**
 leg-M-AFF near sit-PF
 After Tick replied so, he stood next to the leg (M) of Squirrel

- (13b) **kínka** **gobá-n** **kin = jammar-énka,** **shóqo**
 together run-F.OBL 3 = start-CNV2 tick
 gobá-ise **róo-n-dar** **sag-idí**
 run-CNV1 leg-F.OBL-ALL1 attach-PF
 when they started racing, Tick attached to the leg (F) while running

The use of masculine gender for specificity and referentiality correlates with the pragmatic use of gender for salience and contrast (7.3.2). In this sense masculine gender is functionally the marked gender when compared to feminine gender.

7.3.2 Discourse prominence

Masculine gender is often found on prominent constituents. In the examples below, the copula after the perfect suffix on the verb indicates that the clause is pragmatically marked (cf. chapter 9, section 9.1.4). Additionally, masculine gender is used to indicate assertive focus:

- (14) **walé-sa** **rɔɔ-tâ** **ai-idí-ne**
 Walé-GEN leg-M be.broken-PF-COP
 Wale's leg (M) is broken
- (15) **anqasê** **í = sa** **kárc'a-n** **gaʔ-idí-ne**
 bee:M 1SG = GEN cheek-F.OBL bite-PF-COP
 the bee (M) bit me on my cheek

Example (14) and (15) were uttered by speakers who believed that the interlocutor had no knowledge of the information provided (i.e. that the leg of Walé was broken, and that the bee had bit the speaker). Focused constituents marked by masculine gender can be prosodically louder than the rest of the sentence.

As it was mentioned in 7.1, post-verbal constituents are marked by masculine gender and are preceded by a pause. Masculine gender is found on post-verbal subjects and objects occurring as afterthoughts:

- (16) **kánki-n-ďan al-idí, [...] qaskê**
 car-F.OBL-ACC chase-PF dog:M
 he chased the car ... the dog (M)
- (17) **tittá-ise kéda goshá~goshadá, [...] aizé-ďan**
 soak-CNV1 then pull.out~pull.out:PASS goat.hide:M-ACC
 after soaking it, it is stretched ... the goat hide (M)

If a speaker makes a mistake, masculine gender is used for reference-tracking. In example (18) for instance the speaker skips a step in a procedural text and uses masculine gender for discourse recoverability. In (18a), after the dependent clause [*desá desá hayáise, kéda*] she begins a new sentence with the feminine noun *dáa* ‘pot’ functioning as direct object and marked by the accusative case. When the speaker realizes that she has skipped one step, she interrupts the utterance and re-formulates a new sentence (18b) in which the noun for pot functions as indirect object. The noun in (18b) is inflected for masculine gender and it is marked by the allative case:

- (18a) **desá~desá hayá-ise, kéda, dáa-n-ďan [...]**
 grind~grind do-CNV1 then pot-F.OBL-ACC
 after grinding, then, the pot (F) [...]
- (18b) **beráise, daa-tá-dar saskínna da = arsaď-é**
 first pot-M-ALL1 branch:PL IPFV = enter:PASS-PRES
 first of all, some branches will be inserted in the pot (M)

A similar use of gender and number markers is reported for the geographically not-so-distant Nilo-Saharan (Koman) language Komo (Otero 2015). In Zargulla (East Ometo), the morphemes *-(t)ta* and *-(t)te* which are used respectively as feminine and masculine copula markers, can also be used to indicate discourse-pragmatic information (Azeb 2010).

7.3.3 Pragmatic use of number

As it was mentioned in chapter 3, the plural inflection *-na* encodes paucal and distributive values, and it renders mass nouns countable. In this section it is shown that plural marking is used on pragmatic basis as well. The plural suffix *-na* is not obligatory, and nouns modified by numerals and quantifiers occur in the general uninflected form:

- (19a) **kí = sa máa lamá dáa-ne**
 3 = GEN woman two exist-COP
 he has two wives (0)

- (19b) **éedi-l gebí gidí-r di-idí**
 person-INCL a.lot middle-IN die-PF
 a lot of people (0) died in it as well

Nouns modified by numerals and quantifiers can be inflected if the speaker wants to emphasize the collective (F) or the paucal (PL) value. In (20) below for instance, feminine gender is used to highlight the large amount of buffaloes (20a) and meat (20b): cf. (20a) with (19b).

- (20a) **in = add-énka méeki-no gebí dáa**
 1SG = give.birth:PASS-CNV2 buffalo-F.S a.lot exist
 when I was born there were many buffaloes (F)

- (20b) **wáa-no pac'-íne**
 meat-F.S a.lot-COP
 it is a lot of meat (F)

The example (19a) above for instance can be uttered as well as (21a) if the noun phrase ‘two wives’ is focused. Compared to (21a) below, example (19a) is pragmatically unmarked:

- (21a) **kí = sa máa-na lamá dáa-ne**
 3 = GEN woman-PL two exist-COP
 he has two wives (PL)

- (21b) **ínta zóbo-na makkán isá-de!**
 1SG lion-PL three eat-PFV
 I ate three lions!

The plural marker is used only if plurality, which in Hamar corresponds to paucal and distributive values (cf. chapter 3), is communicatively relevant in a specific context. In (22) below for instance, plural marking on the noun *shárqa* ‘calabash’ reinforces the distributive meaning given by the verb *kashá* ‘distribute’:

- (22) **éen-na shárqa-na-dar baadá-n-dan kashá-tte**
 people.F.OBL-DAT calabash-PL-ALL1 food-F.OBL-ACC distribute-SE
 distributing the food for the people in (different) calabashes (PL) [...]

In (23), plural agreement on the relativized verb *desadána* ‘what was known’ emphasizes the paucity of the known objects. This meaning is further accentuated by the adverbial *bish* ‘only’:

- (23) **kéda éna desad-ána, sóqo-be**
 then in.the.past know:PASS-REL.PAST.PL salt-COM
barbará bish, yer ab qoléi
 berberé only thing another exist.not
 in the past what was known (PL) was only salt and *berberé*, other things did not exist

7.3.4 Conclusions

The pragmatic and discourse-related functions of gender and number may overlap with the lexical and semantic values described in chapter 3. Table 7.2 sums up some of the semantic and pragmatic functions described so far.

Table 7.2: Semantic and pragmatic functions of gender and number

	Semantics	Pragmatics
General form	neutral for gender and number	non-definite, non-identifiable
Feminine	F, augmentative, collective	definite, identifiable
Masculine	M, diminutive	specific, individuated, focus
Plural	paucal/distributive	focused paucal/distributive

The functions of gender apply to different levels of the information structure: gender plays a role in signaling the mental representation of discourse referents but at the same time it is used to encode information structural relations such as new information vs. given/known information.

For the non-native speaker of Hamar it is not always clear whether a particular nominal inflection is being used with lexical or with pragmatic functions. Semantic values such as diminution and augmentation, however, can be expressed attributively by means of modifying adjectives, thus if diminution and focus are expressed simultaneously, masculine gender is used for prominence:

- (24) **kankê likká-xa wó=da yi?-é**
 car:M small:M-INS 1PL=IPFV go-PRES
 we go with the small car (M)

7.4 Grammatical relations and core cases

Linear order and subject-cross reference on the verb play an equal role in the encoding of grammatical relations. Additionally, case marking helps disambiguating equivocal syntactic contexts and objects can be marked by the phrasal case affix *-dan* in the syntactic contexts described in 7.4.1.

General, uninflected forms and nouns inflected for masculine gender or plural number do not correspond to a case form and can function indifferently as A (the agent-like argument of transitive verbs), S (the only argument of intransitive verbs) and O (the patient of proto-typical transitive verbs).

The syntactic properties of nouns inflected for feminine gender are different, and feminine nouns can be seen as part of a separate system which encodes grammatical relations by means of inflectional cases (7.4.3). The feminine inflections *-no* and *-tóno* mark the subject case of feminine nouns. If a noun is inflected for feminine gender and does not function as S, it is marked by the oblique case *-n*. In section 7.4.3 it will be shown that nouns marked by the oblique case *-n* (glossed as F.OBL) trigger feminine agreement on verbs and modifiers, and they also have feminine semantic interpretation.

Two types of case suffixes can be distinguished in Hamar: phrasal case suffixes and inflectional cases. Phrasal case suffixes operate at NP level: case is encoded only once and it attaches to the rightmost element of the NP, including the modifiers of the head. The accusative case (7.4.1) and the non-core cases discussed in chapter 8 are phrasal case suffixes. Inflectional cases on the other hand are a property of the noun, which can be inflected for gender (including feminine subject case *-no* and the non-subject case *-n*) or for number. The oblique case *-n* is different from phrasal case affixes because it is marked on both the head and the modifier of a feminine NP and it obligatorily precedes any other phrasal case suffix. The morpheme *-n* occurs also in other domains and it functions as a marker of nominal dependency relations (7.4.4). Feminine subject case and oblique case play an important role in distinguishing passive from impersonal passive constructions when the single argument of the verb is feminine (7.4.5).

7.4.1 Accusative case

Accusative marking is not obligatory but object NPs can be marked by means of the accusative case *-dan*. Case suffixes, including the accusative *-dan*, attach to the rightmost element of the NP. The presence of the accusative marker does not code the definiteness of the object. The pronominal system of Hamar matches the pattern of accusative languages: object pronouns are derived from subject pronouns by the accusative marker *-dan*. The patient semantic role is the proto-typical role of the accusative case.

General forms and nouns inflected for M gender or PL number can function as A, S and O. In the examples below, the inflected masculine noun *sentâ* (general form: *seenî*) functions as O (25a), S (25b) and A (25c):

- (25a) **ínta sentâ pax-idí-ne**
 1SG stone:M throw-PF-COP
 I have thrown the stone (M)

- (25b) **sentâ pax-ađ-idí-ne**
 stone:M throw-PASS-PF-COP
 the stone (M) has been thrown

- (25c) **sentâ í = ḍan qan-idí-ne**
 stone:M 1SG = ACC hit-PF-COP
 the stone (M) has hit me

In (25a) there is no need to mark *sentâ* with the accusative case since A is expressed by the pronominal subject form and O is occupying the object slot before the verb. In (26) below O is distinguished only by SOV constituent order. Note that the general forms *gibáre* and *háqa* in (26) can be also substituted with inflected forms, depending on the choice of expression of the speaker.

- (26) **gibáre háqa qunt'-idí-ne**
 wind tree break-PF-COP
 wind (0) has broken trees (0)

General forms, M nouns and PL nouns functioning as O can be additionally marked by the accusative marker *-ḍan*. The accusative marker is used to disambiguate grammatical relations in equivocal syntactic contexts and for discourse recoverability.

The accusative suffix *-ḍan* for instance is fundamental in complex clauses headed by uninflected verb forms which do not cross-reference the subject. This is particularly useful in clause-chaining since the syntactic subject of a clause may be expressed only once at the beginning of a long sequence of independent verb forms preceding the main verb. In the following example, the subject *bainó garró* 'the big river (F)' is expressed a couple of clauses before in an excerpt which is not included here. Since there is no subject cross-referencing on both the dependent (*baʔátte*) and independent (*yiʔidí*) verb form, the two NPs in the clause need to be marked by the accusative case, otherwise the sentence would have a completely different interpretation.

- (27) **éedi-ḍan kánki-ḍan baʔá-tte yiʔ-idí**
 person-ACC car-ACC bring-SE go-PF
 (the big river) washed out people (0) and cars (0)

Without accusative marking the general form *éedi* 'person' would function as S and the general form *kánki* would be the O on the basis of constituent word-order, thus the example would mean 'a man brought a car and went away'.

Accusative marking in Hamar is not correlated with definiteness as shown in (27) above: the general forms *éedi* and *kánki*, which are uninflected and non-definite, are in fact marked by the accusative case. Impressionistically the accusative case occurs more frequently on definite (i.e. inflected for gender or number) NPs than on general forms, but this has to do with the overall occurrence in texts of non-definite

(uninflected) and definite (inflected) nouns, rather than the properties of accusative marking.

If an object NP is composed of a head plus more than one modifier, it is always marked by the accusative case:

- (28) **ínta saxá qullá sháaqa-na kirá-dan**
 1SG tomorrow goat:PL small-PL DEM1.PL-ACC
mashá = i = da mash-é
 slaughter = 1SG = IPFV slaughter-PRES
 tomorrow I will slaughter these small goats (PL)

The accusative case marks object constituents in clauses where the standard SOV word order has been altered, see (29) below and (4) in section 7.1.

- (29) **éé-na-dan kodí aash-idí**
 man-PL-ACC 3F hide-PF
 she hid the men (PL)

Accusative marking is also found in impersonal passive constructions, where the only argument of a passive verb is marked by *-dan*, see section 6.2.2 in chapter 6 and section 7.4.5 below.

Nouns inflected for F gender and functioning as O are marked by the oblique case (30), but they can be additionally marked by the accusative case (31):

- (30) **qullá shudí-n is-idí-ne**
 goat:PL grass-F.OBL bite-PF-COP
 a few goats (PL) ate the grass (F)
- (31) **isín-in-dan hámi-rra baská!**
 sorghum-F.OBL-ACC field-ABL carry.IMP.2SG
 carry the sorghum (F) from the field!

F nouns functioning as O occur always in the oblique case, regardless of whether the accusative case *-dan* is marked on the NP or not (cf. 7.4.3). This means that whenever the phrasal case suffix *-dan* is marked on a feminine NP, each noun in the feminine NP is marked by the oblique case *-n* as well.

The distribution of the accusative case *-dan* and the feminine oblique case *-n* reveals that Hamar employs differential object marking to distinguish objects with different pragmatic statuses and definiteness. The various morpho-syntactic strategies for object marking in Hamar are listed below and the order of presentation starts from the least functionally marked construction (32a) to the more marked one (32e).

The most unmarked construction occurs when the object is non-definite (i.e. uninflected nouns and noun phrases) and it is characterized by SOV word order and zero marking:

- (32a) **ínta borqotó qail-idí-ne**
 1SG headrest decorate-PF-COP
 I have decorated a headrest

The object in an SOV sentence can be feminine (32b) or masculine (32c) depending on pragmatic statuses: the default construction to mark definite objects consists in inflecting the object for feminine gender (-n), whereas masculine gender is used if the object is definite, specific and individuated:

- (32b) **ínta borqotó-n qail-idí-ne**
 1SG headrest-F.OBL decorate-PF-COP
 I have decorated the headrest

- (32c) **ínta ḅorqoṭ̰ qail-idí-ne**
 1SG headrest:M decorate-PF-COP
 I have decorated the headrest (i.e. this specific headrest we are talking about, the aforementioned headrest)

Contrastive focus on the object is signaled by the accusative marker *-dan* in a construction similar to (32c) and consisting of SOV order and masculine gender:

- (32d) **ínta ḅorqoṭ̰-dan qail-idí-ne**
 1SG headrest:M-ACC decorate-PF-COP
 I have decorated the aforementioned headrest (not something else)

Inverting the SOV order and fronting the object is a very marked construction. Moving the subject to the rhematic position just before the verb is used to mark contrastive focus on the subject:

- (32e) **ḅorqoṭ̰-dan ínta qail-idí-ne**
 headrest:M-ACC 1SG decorate-PF-COP
 I have decorated the aforementioned headrest (not somebody else)

The objects in (32e) can be substituted by a feminine inflected noun marked by the accusative case (*borqotó-n-dan*) if the pragmatic status of the object is only definite (instead of specific and individuated). The present analysis can provide only a partial overview of object marking, and further investigation is needed in order to determine how this type of differential object marking interacts with other

pragmatic principles such as animacy and whether the system is based on categorical vs.thetic contrast (Sasse 1987). The latter is a widespread feature in Nilo-Saharan languages (Dimmendaal 2010). The data suggest that the marker *-n* is the default marker for definite non-animate objects in unmarked constructions (32b); the accusative case *-dan* is instead used in marked constructions, in altered word orders, for focus coding and for discourse recoverability in ambiguous syntactic contexts. The accusative marker *-dan* does not code definiteness of the object since it can be found on both uninflected and inflected nouns (cf. example 27 above), whereas the marker *-n* marks definiteness (F=definite, cf. 7.3.1). The accusative marker *-dan* is suffixed to the NP (similar to other case suffixes it is suffixed only once to the rightmost element of the NP), whereas the oblique marker *-n* is an inflectional suffix that attaches to each element of the object NP, being a property of the noun.

7.4.2 Derivation of oblique feminine forms

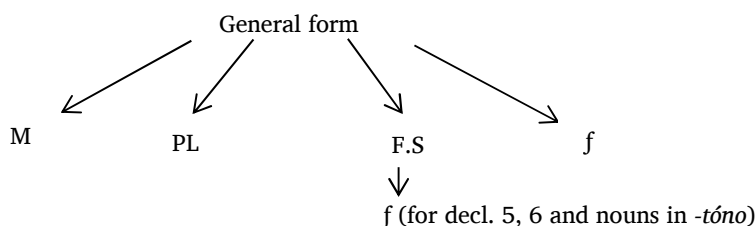
The oblique case *-n* is affixed to the general form of the noun. For feminine nouns belonging to declension 1, 4, 5, and some nouns of declension 6, the oblique form can be seen as the result of the elision of the vowel *-o* of the F.S suffix *-no*. However, declension 2 and 3, and some nouns of declension 6 do not fit in this pattern since the oblique case *-n* is clearly suffixed to the general form (cf. table 7.3 on the next page). The other option is to consider the feminine oblique form derived from the general form by suffixation of *-n*: this applies to declensions 1, 2, 3, 4, and some nouns of declension 6 (in bold in the table) but it does not work for declension 5 and 6 where the oblique form is derived from the feminine subject form.

Table 7.3: F subject form and F oblique form of nouns

Declension	General form	F.S (-no, -tóno)	F.OBL (-n)
1	meté 'head'	meténo	meté-n
2	ooní 'house'	onnó	ooní-n
3	panáq 'frog'	panánqo	panáq-in
4	ii 'stomach'	íino	ii-n
5	goití 'way' yáati 'sheep'	goinó yaatóno	goín yaatón
6	waakí 'cattle' éedi 'person'	wóngo woxóno éeno	wong-ín ~ waakí-n woxón éen ~ éen-in

Apart from the F nouns *wongín* and *éenín* where the oblique case is suffixed to the F.S form (when *-n* is suffixed to consonant ending nouns, a prosthetic vowel *-i* is inserted, cf. P3), in other nouns from declension 5 and 6 it is the final vowel *-o* of the F.S that is clearly elided, as in *woxón* <o> and *yaatón* <o>. Feminine nouns ending in *-tóno* are found across all the declensions and in the oblique case they all

undergo deletion of the final vowel *-o*. Nouns belonging to declension 5 and 6 are less than ten items. The morpheme *-n* exists independently of feminine subject nouns, and it can occur outside of the nominal domain, for instance it is found on verbs (see 7.4.4). For this reason, oblique feminine forms are analysed as derived by means of suffixation of *-n* to the general form.



Nouns belonging to declension 5 and 6 are analysed as exceptionally derived from feminine subject forms by deletion of the final vowel⁴² or suffixation of *-n*. Declension 6 nouns can be irregular, as illustrated in the following examples. In (33) the noun *waakí* ‘cow’ from declension 6 is inflected for F gender and covers S and O functions: S in (33a), O in (33b), (33c). The oblique form of the feminine noun for ‘cow’ can be either derived from the general form by suffixation of *-n* (33c), or it can be obtained from the subject feminine form *wóngo* (33b).

- (33a) **wóngo niʔ-idí-ne**
 cow:F.S come-PF-COP
 The cow (F) has come back

- (33b) **ínta wong-ín t’a-idí-ne**
 1SG cow.F-F.OBL milk-PF-COP
 I have milked the cow (F)

- (33c) **ínta waakí-n t’a-idí-ne**
 1SG cow-F.OBL milk-PF-COP
 I have milked the cow (F)

7.4.3 Feminine subject case and feminine oblique case

Nouns inflected for feminine gender by means of the inflections *-no* and *-tóno* can only function as A and S, including the S of copula clauses and S (patient) of passive verbs. Example (34) shows the difference between the feminine subject case (34a)

⁴² Vowel elision is attested also for the relative feminine suffix *-óno* when the relative clause functions as object (see MP3), (see chapter 8 on relative clauses), and whenever feminine demonstratives (*koró*, *ogoró*, *ogó*) are part of a NP which does not function as subject (see 7.4.3).

and the feminine non-subject case (or oblique) (34b) of the noun *édi* (general form, ‘person’). The noun *édi* has animate reference and it has two feminine forms, one for the female specimen (*ésono* ‘woman’), the other for the collective (*éeno* ‘people’), cf. chapter 3. In (34b) the feminine-collective noun functions as direct object thus it cannot be inflected as *éeno*, but it occurs in the oblique form *een*:

- (34a) **éeno gabá-n-te ko = dáa-de**
 people:F.S market-F.OBL-LOC 3F = exist-PFV
 the people (F) are in the market

- (34b) **édi éen c’aq-idí-ne**
 person people.F.OBL evil.eye-PF-COP
 somebody (O) has cast the evil eye on the people (F)

Similarly in (35) below, the general form *uurí* ‘fight’ can be the feminine complement of the verb *gará* ‘stop’ only if it is in the oblique form. The subject feminine form *urró* cannot function as O (35b). The masculine form *uurê* instead has no restrictions and it can function as O (35c):

- (35a) **uurí-n gará**
 fight-F.OBL stop.IMP.2SG
 stop the war (F)!

- (35b) ***urró gará**
 fight:F.S stop.IMP.2SG

- (35c) **uurê gará**
 fight:M stop.IMP.2SG
 stop the fight (M)!

The oblique case marks feminine NPs functioning as direct or indirect object and it is suffixed to both the head and the modifiers of a NP. In (36) below the feminine-collective noun *woxóno* ‘herd of cows’ (derived from the general form *waakí*) functions as S in (36a) and as O in (36b). The feminine object NP in (36b) has the oblique case on both the head (*woxón*) and the following demonstrative (*ogón*).⁴³

- (36a) **woxóno ogoró ímba-sa-ne**
 herd.of.cows:F.S DEM2.F my.dad-GEN-COP
 that herd (F) is my dad’s

⁴³ The feminine distal demonstrative *ogó* is the shortened variant of *ogoró*, cf. table 4.6 in chapter 4.

- (36b) **woxón** **ogó-n** **gě-tte** **mée** **baré-xa**
 herd.of.cows.F.OBL DEM2.F-F.OBL herd-SE down bare-INS
ko = anshá-de
 3F = descend-PFV
 they drove that herd (F) and descended down through Baré

Both the head and the modifier of feminine NPs marked by phrasal case suffixes are marked for oblique case: this is the reason why the oblique case seems to ‘link’ feminine NPs to case suffixes. Phrasal case markers can be normally suffixed to M and PL inflected nouns and to the uninflected general form, see chapter 8 for an overview. Example (37) below shows the noun *pée* ‘land’ inflected for feminine subject case in (37a) and for feminine oblique case in (37b). In both examples, the feminine noun is modified by a possessive pronoun, however in (37a) the possessive NP ‘their land’ functions as S, whereas in (37b) the possessive NP ‘your land’ is embedded in a locative phrase, thus the oblique case is marked on both the head and possessive modifier:

- (37a) **pée-no** **kinnó** **agá-ne**
 land-F.S 3:F DEM2.M-COP
 their land (F) is that one
- (37b) **yáa** **maatá-ise** **pée-n** **hannó-n-te** **ardá**
 2SG turn-CNV1 land-F.OBL 2SG:F-F.OBL-LOC enter.IMP.2SG
 you turn and go back to your country (F)!

Similarly, the general form *ooní* ‘house’ is inflected for F subject case in (38a), where it functions as feminine S and as feminine nominal predicate; in (38b) the feminine NP ‘big house’ is nested in a phrase marked by the locative case *-te*, thus the whole NP is marked by the oblique case on both the head and the modifier. Example (38c) shows that nouns inflected for M gender are not affected by case suffixes, thus the M noun *ɔɔnɛ* in (38c) is not marked by the oblique case *-n*, but it is directly marked by the locative case:

- (38a) **onnó** **hamɓ-áino** **onnó** **garró-ne**
 house:F.S be.called-REL.PRES.F house:F.S big:F.S-COP
 what is called the F house, is the big house (F)
- (38b) **éedi** **ooní-n** **gaarí-n-te** **dáa-ne**
 person house-F.OBL big-F.OBL-LOC exist-COP
 there is somebody in the big house (F)

- (38c) **ɔɔné-te** **éedi** **dáa-ne**
 house:M-LOC person exist-COP
 there is somebody in the house (M)

The examples in (39) show the general form *goiti* ‘road’ inflected for F gender. In (39a) the F noun functions as S and it controls agreement on the relativized verb; in (39b) and (39c) the F noun occurs as complement of the verb and the locative case, respectively, thus it occurs in the oblique form.

- (39a) **kánki-n** **goínó** **dimeká-rra** **laili** **lála-xa**
 car-F.OBL way:F.S Dimeka-ABL IDEO.far Lala-INS
 yi?-áino
 go-REL.PRES.F
 the car-road (F) that goes (F) all the way from Dimeka through Lala
- (39b) **gáya** **iní** **won = ni?-énka** **goín** **dorqá-ise**
 baboon earlier 1PL = come-CNV2 way.F.OBL sit-CNV1
 dáa-ne
 exist-COP
 when we came earlier, Baboon was there sitting on the way (F)
- (39c) **gudirí** **darán** **goín-te** **ni?á-ɓ**
 hyena 3.ALL way.F.OBL-LOC come-NARR
 Hyena approached him on the way (F)

Other phrasal case suffixes such as the dative case in (40) below are suffixed to the oblique form of feminine nouns. In (40), the noun *panáq* ‘frog’ is inflected for feminine gender since it is used with collective reference (‘all the frogs’). The feminine subject case of *panáq* is *panánqo*, however in the example below the oblique form *panaqín* is used because of the dative case:

- (40) **panaqâ** **kalâ,** **panaq-ín-na** **párho-n** **giá-ɓ**
 frog:M one:M frog-F.OBL-DAT message-F.OBL tell-NARR
 one frog (M) passed on the message to all the frogs (F)

In (41) the noun *óolo* ‘hole’ is first marked by the locative case *-te* and then by the instrumental case *-ka*. In the first locative phrase the noun is inflected for M gender, in the second instrumental/perlative phrase it is inflected for F gender. The fact that the general form *óolo* ‘hole’ is inflected first for M gender and then for F gender is a choice of expression of the speaker, and the noun marked by the oblique case has feminine semantic interpretation:

- (41) **guní ɔɔlɔ́-te ardá-ise óolo-n-ka ki = utá-de**
 snake hole:M-LOC enter-CNV1 hole-F.OBL-INS 3 = go.out-PFV
 Snake entering in the small hole (M) came out from the big hole (F)

The instrumental phrase ‘with my hand/s’ in (42) is composed of the noun *áan* ‘arm’ inflected for F gender in (42a), for M gender in (42b) and for PL number in (42c). The examples are extracted from the same folktale. In (42b) and (42c) masculine gender and plural number are used on pragmatic basis. The oblique case is used only with the feminine, definite, NP in (42a), and the fact that the noun marked by the oblique case has F gender can be seen also in the agreement with the following possessive pronoun:

- (42a) **áan-in innó-n-ka i = ti-idi-ánna**
 arm-F.OBL 1SG:F-F.OBL-INS 1SG = take-PF-OPT
 if I take with my hand (F)[...]
- (42b) **an-tâ inté-xa i = dum-idi-ánna**
 arm-M 1SG:M-INS 1SG = grab-PF-OPT
 if I grab with my hand (M) [...]
- (42c) **ánna inná-xa i = há = na dum-é**
 arm:PL 1SG:PL-INS 1SG = 2SG = DAT grab-PRES
 let me grab (it) for you with my hands (PL)
- (42d) ***ánno innó-ka, *ánno-n innó-ka**
 arm:F.S 1SG:F-INS arm:F.S-F.OBL 1SG:F-INS

As illustrated by the ungrammatical example in (42d), nouns and NPs inflected for feminine subject case cannot be marked by case suffixes. In this section it was illustrated that the oblique case suffix *-n* (and the oblique nominal forms for the irregular nouns described in 7.4.2) functions as non-subject marker for nouns and noun phrases inflected for feminine gender. The non-subject case *-n* (F.OBL) contrasts with the subject case *-no* (F.S), and in this context it can be analysed as an agreement marker (F). However, another morpheme *-n* (glossed as R) with slightly different functions is attested in other domains and it is not necessarily linked to feminine gender. This is discussed in the next section.

7.4.4 Nominal dependency relations

The morpheme *-n* (R) is homophonous to the feminine oblique case. Since it marks nominal dependency relations, regardless of the gender specification and the subject/non-subject function of the constituents on which it occurs, it is labelled ‘relational marker’. The discussion on dependency relations in this section includes

NPs marked by the comitative case, noun-noun compounds, arguments within relative clauses and complement clauses. These topics are discussed also in the pertinent sections of the book. The sub-set of clitic pronouns called ‘short form II’ in chapter 4 is also re-discussed here, since these pronouns contain the formative *-n* which can be analysed as relational marker.

The comitative case is suffixed to coordinated NPs as in the examples provided below (see chapter 8 for further details on the meaning and functions of the comitative case). The comitative case *-be* is directly suffixed to nouns inflected for masculine gender, whereas for feminine nouns, the oblique case *-n* is interposed between the noun and the comitative case. The morpheme *-n* gets assimilated to the following bilabial consonant:

- (43a) **imbá-be** **aaká-m-be** **óo** **yi?á-ise**
 father:M-COM grandmother-F.OBL-COM DST go-CNV1
 while the father (M) and the grandmother (F) go there [...]
- (43b) **ḍúká-be** **ḍúka-m-be** **hamḍ-é-sa**
 hill:M-COM hill-F.OBL-COM say:PASS-REL.PRES.M
wána~wána **wo = da-gi-é**
 different~different 1PL = IPFV-tell-PRES
 we will tell the difference between saying ‘M hill’ and ‘F mountain’

Despite the fact that the coordinated NPs function as the subject of the sentences in (43), the nouns inflected for F gender (*aaká-n* and *ḍúka-n*) occurs in the oblique case. These examples represent a bridging context that links the feminine non-subject function of the morpheme *-n* (glossed as F.OBL) to the more general function of dependency relation marker (glossed as R). In (43) the subject function is overruled by the syntactic restriction imposed by the comitative case on feminine nouns. Nouns and noun phrases inflected for F gender and marked by the comitative case can only occur in the oblique case, whereas the comitative case is suffixed directly to the M or PL inflected nouns and to uninflected general forms. However, when the comitative case is suffixed to personal pronouns (44a), the short form II of the pronominal clitic is used (cf. table 4.1 in chapter 4). Short form II clitic pronouns contain the morpheme *-n*: *i-n=*; *ha-n=*; *ki-n=*; *ko-n=*; *wo-n=*; *ye-n=*. Besides comitative pronouns, short form II are used to form possessive pronouns (45a), and to mark subject agreement on relativized verbs (46a) and on the different-subject converb *-énka* (47a) (see chapter 10 for subordinate clauses). Short form II pronouns can be re-analysed as short form I pronouns marked by the relational marker *-n* (44-45-46-47b):

- | | | | | | |
|-------|---|-----------------------------|-------|--|--------------------------------|
| (44a) | kím = be
3 = COM
he and she | kóm = be
3F = COM | (44b) | kí = m-be
3 = R-COM
he and she | kó = m-be
3F = R-COM |
| (45a) | geshō
husband:M
my (M) husband | inté
1SG:M | (45b) | geshō
husband:M
my (M) husband | i = n-té
1SG = R-M |
| (46a) | kin = gi-â
3 = say-REL.PAST.M
what (M) he said | | (46b) | ki = n = gi-â
3 = R = say-REL.PAST.M
what (M) he said | |
| (47a) | kin = gi-énka
3 = say-CNV2
when he said | | (47b) | ki = n = gi-énka
3 = R = say-CNV2
when he said | |

Apart from possessive pronouns and comitative pronouns, short form II pronouns are not used with other case suffixes, which are instead suffixed to short form I clitic pronouns (cf. chapter 4). Similarly, short form I clitic pronouns are used as subject markers on other dependent verb forms (chapter 10). The examples from (44) to (47) are the only instances of clitic pronouns marked by *-n*. In this context and in those illustrated in the following examples, the suffix *-n* does not function as feminine oblique case *-n* (F.OBL) and it is not associated with feminine gender.

The relational marker *-n* (R) is found on the first component of inflected noun-noun compounds (cf. also chapter 8, 8.3.2). The general form of noun-noun compounds has no marking, but when the compound is inflected, the relational marker links the first component to the following, inflected one:

- | | | |
|------|---------------|---|
| (48) | General form: | dará ukulí ‘zebra’ (lit. lowland donkey) |
| | M: | dará-n ukultâ |
| | F: | dará-n ukultóno |
| | PL: | dará-n ukullá |

Complement clauses which are not marked by subordinative verb suffixes (chapter 10, section 10.1.7), are marked by the relational marker *-n*. The relational marker *-n* functions as a nominalizer of the verbal complement. The verbal complement of the verb *gará* ‘stop’ for instance is always marked by the relational marker *-n*:

- | | | | | |
|-------|--|--------------------------|--|---|
| (49a) | dabí-ďan
wild.animal-ACC
if we stop | deesá-n
kill-R | wo = gar-ánna
1PL = stop-OPT | payá-ne
good-COP
animals is good |
|-------|--|--------------------------|--|---|

- (49b) **yáa oolá-n gará!**
 2SG bray-R stop.IMP.2SG
 don't you bray! (lit. stop braying)

The subject and the object arguments in the relative clause (section 7.7) are also marked by the relational marker *-n*: this explains why the clitic pronouns marking subject agreement on the relativized verb get the suffix *-n*, (cf. 50) with (46) above.

- (50) **qultâ otólo-n shan-â gob-idí-ne**
 goat:M Otólo-R buy-REL.PAST.M run-PF-COP
 the goat (M) that Otolo bought (M) has run away

The suffix *-n* is analysed as a polysemous morpheme which marks non-subject functions for feminine nouns and nominal dependency relations in other contexts. The bridging context that links the two functions can be observed on NPs marked by the comitative case, where the morpheme *-n* still works as a feminine agreement marker, but instead of marking oblique case, it marks the dependency relation between the feminine noun and the comitative case. The morpheme has a dedicated function for nominal dependency relations when it is found in the short form II clitic pronouns, in noun-noun compounds, in verb complementation and when it occurs on the arguments in the relative clause. In these contexts the morpheme loses its connection with feminine gender.

7.4.5 Impersonal passive constructions

As anticipated in chapter 6, passive derivation is used for passive and impersonal passive constructions. Different from true passive constructions, the patient of the derived passive verb is not promoted to subject but it remains in object function. Subject agreement on the verb is that of 3rd person feminine (if the verb paradigm requires pronominal subject marking, cf. chapter 6). Accusative case marking is obligatory on M and PL nouns since masculine and plural inflections do not encode subject/object functions. Feminine nouns occurring as the patient of an impersonal passive construction are always in the oblique case, and additionally, the accusative case can be suffixed to disambiguate equivocal interpretations.

Since nouns inflected for F gender are distributionally more frequent than other inflected and uninflected nouns (cf. 7.3 on feminine gender as the default strategy to encode definiteness), feminine subject case and feminine oblique case are crucial to distinguish passives from impersonal passives.

The following excerpt offers an overview of the functions covered by the feminine subject case as the single argument of a passive construction (51a) and the feminine oblique case as the single argument of an impersonal passive (51b). The oblique case marks also the object of the transitive verb in (51a):

- (51a) **noqó-no** **kaďá=ko** **kaď-é,**
 water-F.S pour:PASS = 3F pour:PASS-PRES
noqó-n **kaá-ise**
 water-F.OBL pour-CNV1
 the water will be poured, after pouring the water [...]

- (51b) **saskínna** **arsá-ise,**
 branches:PL insert-CNV1
noqó-n-ďan **kaďá=ko** **kaď-é**
 water-F.OBL-ACC pour:PASS = 3F pour:PASS-PRES
 after inserting some branches, the water will be poured

The feminine argument of impersonal passive constructions occurs either in the oblique case (52) or in the oblique case plus the accusative case as shown in (51b) above.

- (52) **parsí-no** **róoro** **kála** **ko = haaq-ína**
 beer-F.S day one 3F = stay-COND
aapó-n **galt'á** **galt'adá**
 mouth-F.OBL seal seal:PASS
 if the *parsí* rests for one day, the opening (lit. the mouth of the container) is sealed

The accusative case cannot be a cue to differentiate the O argument of a transitive verb from the O argument of an impersonal passive because its function is related to discourse recoverability and word order.

In (53) below for instance, the general form *naasí* 'young boy/girl' is inflected for feminine gender ('young girl') and it occurs in an impersonal passive construction (53a) and (53c), wherein it is marked only by the oblique case. In (53b) the same noun functions as direct O of a transitive verb and it is additionally marked by the accusative case. The accusative is necessary because of altered word-order: a periphrastic noun phrase marked by the instrumental case occurs after the verb.

- (53a) **imbá** **kí=na** **qánte** **naan** **oisadá-isaxa [...]**
 father 3 = DAT DAT girl.F.OBL ask:PASS-PAST.PF
 after the girl has been asked to the father himself [...]

- (53b) **náan-ďan** **oisá** **kénna** **koolí-n-ka**
 girl.F.OBL-ACC ask 3:OPT stick-F.OBL-INS
 if they ask the girl with the *koolí* stick

- (53c) **náan im6-idi-ánna [...]**
 girl.F.OBL give:PASS-PF-OPT
 and if the girl is given [...]

General forms of nouns functioning as the single argument of impersonal passives have not been attested so far; this gap is probably related to the fact that accusative marking on uninflected general forms is more rare. Nouns inflected for M gender or PL number are always marked by the accusative case when they function as the core argument of impersonal passives, see examples in chapter 6 (section 6.2.2) and below.

- (54a) **kéda aizé-ɗan ɗaxá = ko ɗaxaɗ-é**
 then goat.hide:M-ACC tie = 3F tie:PASS-PRES
 then the goat hide will be worn
- (54b) **aizê káa ká-te ɗaxá = ki ɗaxaɗ-é**
 goat.hide:M DEM1.M PRX.SP-LOC tie = 3 tie:PASS-PRES
 this goat hide will be tied exactly here

In (54a) and (55) accusative marking on the masculine arguments and 3F agreement on the verb are the cues for the impersonal passive construction.

- (55) **kéda waqaté-ɗan íi-rra káli-n-ka**
 then butter:M-ACC stomach-ABL spoon-F.OBL-INS
masá = ko masad-é
 separate = 3F separate:PASS-PRES
 then the butter will be separated (from the milk) from the inside (of the calabash) with a spoon

7.4.6 Conclusions

The aim of this section was to explore grammatical relations and the encoding of core cases. The alignment system of Hamar is accusative: the pronominal system matches the pattern of accusative languages (chapter 4), and NPs functioning as O can be marked by the accusative case *-ɗan*, independently on whether they are inflected or not. Feminine marking implies a distinction between a subject case (*-no*, *-tóno*) and a non-subject case or oblique (*-n*); such distinction is not available for general forms, masculine nouns and plural nouns. If only feminine nouns are taken into consideration, the organization of grammatical relations resembles a marked-nominative of the type in which both nominative and accusative are morphologically marked (König 2006, 2008a & b). In fact, in line with marked-nominative languages, the nominative form of feminine nouns is functionally marked, whereas the oblique case, which encodes O as well, is functionally

unmarked since it is used with the widest range of functions. This is due to the fact that feminine gender is the default strategy to mark definiteness, as opposed to masculine and plural nominal inflections, which encode various semantic values and degrees of discourse prominence (7.3). In marked-nominative languages, however, the nominative is derived from the accusative and the accusative corresponds to the ‘citation form’, or ‘absolute case’. This is not the case for Hamar feminine nouns because the subject case and the oblique case in Hamar are both derived from uninflected general forms (except for the special cases discussed in 7.4.2).

The table below summarizes the organization of grammatical relations:

Table 7.4: Grammatical relations of inflected and uninflected nouns

	gen.	M	PL	F
O (and oblique)	✓	✓	✓	✓ + n ± <i>dan</i>
S (active)	✓	✓	✓	✓ + no\ + <i>tóno</i>
S (passive)	✓	✓	✓	✓ + no\ + <i>tóno</i>
O (impersonal passive)	-	✓ + <i>dan</i>	✓ + <i>dan</i>	✓ + n ± <i>dan</i>

A check mark ✓ signals that an inflected or uninflected noun can function in a specific syntactic role and it is further indicated whether accusative (*-dan*) or oblique (*-n*) case are obligatorily (+) or optionally (±) marked.