

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUBJECT CASE MARKING IN OMOTIC-MAO

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The Mao subgroup of the Omotic family shows various degrees of development of morphological subject case marking which results from largely internal, but very similar historical pathways across the group. These different patterns find their source in an older prenominal demonstrative + NP + bound postnominal form construction; in this construction the bound postnominal form of this construction is itself related to (and often reduced from) the corresponding prenominal demonstrative. Evidence of such a construction is found in each of the four Mao languages but in only three of the languages has the construction become clearly associated with marking grammatical subjects. The pathway toward subject case marking appears to have begun with the demonstrative construction becoming associated with topical referents in discourse. In three of the four Mao languages, the prenominal demonstrative then became associated with definiteness (a typologically common development from topic-marking devices); in those same three languages the frequent co-association between topics and grammatical subjects led to the postnominal form developing subject case marking status. The prenominal definite marker (the erstwhile demonstrative) eventually became emancipated from the postnominal case marker to various degrees across the Mao group. The degree to which subject-development and emancipation between the prenominal and postnominal portions of this demonstrative construction has become established in each of the languages has led to the diverse patterns across the subgroup.

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1. Introduction

The four Mao languages (Mawes Aas'e [myf], Seezo [sze], Hoozo [hoz], and Ganza [gza]) comprise the Mao subgroup of Omotic. The genetic affiliation of the Mao group as well as the larger Omotic family within Afroasiatic is a matter of some debate (cf. Amha 2012:425-434, for a detailed overview). While Zaborski (2004) has argued that the Mao group be classified as Nilo-Saharan (on the basis of the pronominal inventory), Bender argued for an Omotic lineage (2000 and 2003). One major issue with respect to classification of these languages is rooted in the fact that several of the subsystems of the Mao group show much internal diversity--sometimes argued to be the result of external influences (Bender 2000:184 and 2000:199) and at other times argued to be the result of inheritance (Zaborski 2004:180-181).

This paper examines the development of morphological subject case marking in three of the Mao languages—more specifically, the development of obligatory subject case marking in Mawes Aas'e and Seezo and the development of subject case marking interacting with definiteness in Hoozo. This examination also explores a structurally analogous construction in Ganza, the fourth Mao language: the prenominal demonstrative + postnominal form construction.¹ While the Mao

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subgroup of Omotic does not show a single, cognate subject case system, morphological subject case marking in the group does appear to be the result of (mostly) internal, but similar, developments. While Mawes Aas'e's /-ij/ (Ahland 2012:325) and Seezo's /-j/ (Mengistu 2015:128) obligatory subject case markers are clearly related, Hoozo exhibits subject case markers /-já/ and /-jé/, which agree with the masculine and feminine gender, respectively, of the preceding noun and which most frequently occur only when the noun is marked as definite (Kassa 2015:95-97).² Ganza, on the other hand, does not show any evidence of a grammaticalized morphological case marker for subjects. Ganza does, however, show an enclitic which follows nouns (in the same position as case markers in the other Mao languages) and appears to have derived via agreement with a pronominal demonstrative.³

The discussion begins with an overview of case-marking patterns across Omotic (section 2), moves on to the relevant data in each of the four Mao languages (section 3), proposes a historical trajectory by which these patterns developed (section 4), and ends with an extension of the argument to the development of other case markers/postpositions in the subgroup (section 5).

2. An overview of case-marking patterns in Omotic

In general, the Omotic languages exhibit nominative-accusative case-marking and alignment patterns (Amha 2012:45). According to Amha (2012), three subtypes can be identified. First, there are the languages which mark accusative case morphologically and do not mark the nominative case morphologically; these languages include the South Omotic languages and the North Omotic's Gongga group (Kaffa and Shinasha), Dizoid, and Yemsa (Hayward and Tsuge 1998:22; Amha 2012:450). Second, there are the languages which morphologically mark the nominative case and do not mark the accusative/absolute;⁴ these languages include Zayse, Chara, and Benchnon (Hayward and Tsuge 1998; König 2006:677; Rapold 2006:478). The third pattern is the morphologically marked-nominative vs. morphologically marked-absolute; these languages include the Aari, Gamo, Wolaitta, Maale, and Haro languages (Woldemariam 2003; König 2006:691; Amha 2012:450).⁵

In short, subjects in Omotic languages can be identified by morphological case-marking patterns (whether subjects are overtly marked or not), S/A P V (SOV) word order and, in a smaller subset of languages, by bound pronominal markers on verbs and/or reduced pronominal clitics which, in many languages, can attach to various elements in the clause, and switch reference systems

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² As is discussed and illustrated in section 3.3, there are instances where subject case marking in Hoozo does appear on indefinite NPs, contra Kassa's claim of obligatory co-occurrence (2015:95).

³ While grammars for Mawes Aas'e (also known as Northern Mao), Seezo and Hoozo have been produced, no grammar of Ganza (Gwami Nana) has been written. Available data include a short sketch written by Paris Reidhead (1947) based on two weeks of elicitation, an unpublished manuscript "How to Speak Ganza" written by Lorian Hofmeister, and two recent works by Josh Smolders: an in-depth phonological sketch and a detailed glossary—both published in 2015. The data in this paper are from Josh Smolders' fieldnotes and also from my own notes when I worked with two speakers in 2014. The tones on the nominals have been checked with Smolders' glossary to be sure of accuracy.

⁴ The term 'absolute' is used for the counterpart to the marked nominative category; the absolute form is the citation form and is functionally unmarked (cf. König 2006).

⁵ Amha's discussion of Omotic languages (2012) does not include the Mao group. This was perhaps due to the fact that no grammar of a Mao language had yet been produced.

in clause chains. In short, every language in the family exhibits a clear S/A category (cf. Comrie 1978) in coding and behavior, and these findings, as will be shown below, also obtain for the Mao group.⁶

3. The Mao Languages and the Morphological Marking of Subject Case

Given the distribution of nominative-accusative alignment across Omotic, the grammaticalization of subject as a category should be assumed to be an old feature of the family. That said, as mentioned above, three of the four Mao languages (Mawes Aas'e, Seezo, and Hoozo) show evidence of more recent morphological developments in subject case marking, giving newer expression to this older category.⁷ The new markers which have developed (and in some instances may still be developing) are related to a complex nest of inter-related forms including demonstratives, definite articles, pronouns, and clitics.

The Mao group, while internally inconsistent with respect to case marking, fits within the larger nominative-accusative pattern found elsewhere in Omotic. The discussion below illustrates the patterns attested in each of the Mao languages.⁸

3.1 Mawes Aas'e. Examples (1-2) illustrate the /-iʃ/ subject marker in Mawes Aas'e.⁹ This case marker is obligatory on all grammatical subjects—regardless of whether the subject is indefinite (1) or definite (2). Ex. (2) also illustrates object case marking with the /-na/ marker, which is obligatory on pronominals but non-obligatory on full NPs in canonical (SOV) order (Ahland 2012:325-327).¹⁰

- (1) es-iʃ ha-kí-^lá
 person-SBJ AFF-come-DECL
 'A person came.'
- (2) iʃ kan-iʃ jó:ʃ-na ha-pí-^lá
 DEF dog-SBJ snake-OBJ AFF-kill-DECL
 'The dog killed a snake.'

The subject case marker in Mawes Aas'e is notably similar to a distal demonstrative pronoun /iʃé/ (3-4), the definite article /iʃ/ (exs. 2 and 5.b), and the 3rd person pronoun /iʃè/ (6) (cf. Ahland 2012:287ff and Ahland 2016).

- (3) mùts'á màd-ét tí-p'íʃ-^lek'-á
 Mus'a Mado-LOC 1SG-give.birth-PASS-DECL

⁶ While Ganza does not show clear morphological subject case marking, word-order and verbal morphology does attest to a 'subject' category (e.g., typically rigid SOV order and a single set of bound pronominal subject markers which reference the S/A category, a la Comrie 1978).

⁷ As noted in footnote 6, above, Ganza does attest to a S/A subject category through word-order and the presence of subject markers on verbs, but it does not exhibit a morphological subject case marker.

⁸ The glossing conventions used for the data of the Mao languages have been standardized and updated to follow the Leipzig Glossing Rules and thus do not necessarily follow the conventions used in the original sources of the data.

⁹ The tone on suffixes and enclitics in Mawes Aas'e is derived from the host; there is a strong tendency for suffixes and enclitics to be toneless.

¹⁰ While object case marking is not the central theme of this paper, these data will be of secondary importance later (see example 7, below, and section 5).

íʃ-ét tí-kí-^lá
 DIST-LOC 1SG-come-DECL
 ‘I was born in Mus’a Mado. I come from there.’ (text 20.03)

The demonstrative /íʃé/ is not found in an adnominal function today, but its use as an anaphoric demonstrative pronoun is very common in discourse in (4). Here the demonstrative is referring to a ‘road’ (as a ‘way’ of preserving the language) a main topic of this speech.

- (4) pòmb-ìʃ bíʃ-^lá íʃ-ná k’ew-iŋk-ín
 road-SBJ EXIST-DECL DIST-OBJ hear-REFL-SS
 hàw-àld bíʃ-á àld-kját’-ètà
 2PL-know NPST:AUX-DECL know:INF-house-LOC
 ‘There is a way; You have heard that yourselves and know it from school.’ (text 20.26)

The /íʃ/ form can also function pre-nominally (in the first position in the NP) as a definite article, marking identifiability (5). Here, the NP ‘donkey’ is not definite when introduced (5.a), but it is marked with the definite article when it is mentioned the second time, three lines later (5b).

- (5.a) àlhásàn-ìʃ kí-in ʃündó:r-án kí-in
 AlHassan-SBJ come-SS donkey-INS come-SS
 ‘AlHassan came by donkey...’ (text 05.06)

[no mention of the donkey for three lines of text]

- (b) màw-és-ìʃ hí-kòb-t ku:l-èt
 Mao-person-SBJ 3SG-live-REL place-LOC
 íʃ ʃündo:r-ìʃ kí-in
 DEF donkey-SBJ come-SS
 ‘The donkey came (without AlHassan) to a place where a Mao person lived...’ (text 05.09)

Examples (6-7) illustrate the 3rd person pronoun, /íʃé/ ‘s/he’. The tone on this pronoun is HL (the low tone is realized on the following case marker), setting it apart from the demonstrative pronoun in (4) above.

- (6) tí-ʃ íʃ-nà tí-int’-á
 1SG-SBJ 3SG-OBJ 1SG-see-DECL
 ‘I saw him/her.’
 (7) íʃ-ìʃ nà kí:m-nà húp’-^lá
 3SG-SBJ PROX money-OBJ steal-DECL
 ‘S/he (emphasis) stole this money.’

Example (7) also shows the proximal demonstrative /nà/ ‘this’ which is remarkably similar to the object case marker /-na/--an observation that will be revisited in sections 4 and 5, below.¹¹

¹¹ There is also a /-té/ subject case marker in Mawes Aas’c; this form has very limited distribution, occurring only on plural pronouns, a 3rd singular pronoun and a small number of kinship terms (cf. Ahland 2012:238 and 326); this /-té/ form is relevant to the discussion in sections 3.5 and 4.2, below.

3.2 Seezo. Seezo, like Mawes Aas'e, marks all subjects with the form /-f/.¹² Subject case marking is required regardless of the definiteness status of the NP (compare 8 with 9-11).

- (8) ʔò:wwá-f jé-dù:l sú:ns'-té kw-á:
fox-SBJ DEF-hyena behind-LOC come-DECL
'A fox came after the hyena.' (Girma Mengistu 2015:127)
- (9) jé-má:-f hé: hé:-á:
DEF-man-SBJ sleeping sleep-DECL
'The man slept.' (Girma Mengistu 2015:153)
- (10) jé-má:-f ʔitiw-ne jé-ʔi:ns- tépp-á:
DEF-man-SBJ axe-INS DEF-tree cut-DECL
'The man cut the tree with an axe.' (Girma Mengistu 2015:137)
- (11) jé-má:-tú:-f ʔóss-à hél=k'ák-á
DEF-man-PAUC-SBJ meat-OBJ 3PL=eat-DECL
'The few men ate meat.' (Girma Mengistu 2015:129)

Again, as in Mawes Aas'e, subjects receive the same morphological case marking whether they are indefinite (as in 8) or definite (9-11). Thus, case marking for subjects is also observed on NPs where nouns are preceded by demonstratives as well (12-13).

- (12) hèt'=kàns-f há=há:ŋì Ø
PROX=granary-SBJ 1SG.POSS=GEN COP
'This granary is mine.' (Mengistu 2015:264)
- (13) hí=kàns-f há=há:ŋì Ø
MED=granary-SBJ 1SG.POSS=GEN COP
'That (medial) granary is mine.' (Mengistu 2015:264)

3.3. Hoozo In Hoozo (unlike in Mawes Aas'e and Seezo), morphological case marking on subjects and objects tends to be limited to NPs preceded by definite articles or demonstratives, as in 14, below) (Kassa 2015:95-97). Hoozo's subject and object case markers are sensitive to gender and are distinguished only by tone: /-já/ SBJ.M, /-jé/ SBJ.F, /-jà/ OBJ.M, and /-jè/ OBJ.F (Kassa 2015:95).

- (14) ʔá-gá mérì-já kwá-t-ì
PROX.ANA.M-DIST child-SBJ.M come-PFV-REAL
'The (that) child came.' (Kassa 2015:96)

Kassa notes that when a subject NP is not preceded by a definite article or demonstrative (e.g. 15), case marking is not observed (2015:95).¹³

¹² Alternatively, the allomorph [-fè] can also be used when the subject NP is found at the end of an utterance (cf. Mengistu 2015:128).

¹³ This claim also frequently holds for object NPs and object case marking (as in examples 16-17); that said, important counterexamples have been identified in Kassa's grammar with respect to the co-occurrence of definite article/demonstrative and subject and object case marking (see examples 23-25, below).

- (15) mérì kwá-t-ì
 child come-PFV-REAL
 ‘A child came.’ (Kassa 2015:96)

Examples (16-17) show that object NPs which are not preceded by definite articles or demonstratives, (such as /pútsì/, in 16, and /ʔíntì/, in 17) may also be unmarked for case.

- (16) bìlwá-n náá pútsì kwín-t'-ì
 blade-INS 1SG.POSS beard shave-PFV-REAL
 ‘I shaved my beard with a blade.’ (Kassa 2015:115)¹⁴
- (17) ʔá-gá móó-já k'óttó-n ʔíntì kó-péla-ʔit-ì
 PROX.ANA.M-DIST man-SBJ.M axe-INS wood PROG-split-PRS-REAL
 ‘The (that) man is splitting wood with an axe.’ (Kassa 2015:115)

On the other hand, when nouns are preceded by a definite article (as in 18 and 19) or a demonstrative (in 19-21), the subject and object NPs carry case marking.¹⁵

- (18) ʔá ʔínt-já ʔiʔép-ʔití
 DEF.M tree-SBJ.M HAB-bear.fruit-COP
 ‘The tree is fruity.’ (Kassa 2015:59)
- (19) SBJ OBJ
 ʔé fée-jé ʔá pú-jà ʔif-t-ì
 DEF.F woman-SBJ.F DEF.M ale-OBJ.M drink-PFV-REAL
 ‘The woman drank the ale.’ (Kassa 2015:101)

In (19), both the subject and object are marked for case. It’s important to note, as well, that the preceding DEF article and the postnominal case marker agree with the gender of the noun. Demonstratives, which also precede nouns, co-occur with the same case marking patterns as the definite articles (20-22).¹⁶

- (20) ʔá-gá mér-já kwá-t-ì
 PROX.ANA.M-DIST child-SBJ.M come-PFV-REAL
 ‘The/that child came.’¹⁷ (Kassa 2015:96.)
- (21) zá-gá móó-já dólzá
 PROX.EXO.M-DIST person-SBJ.M mad
 ‘That person is mad.’ (Kassa 2015:97)

¹⁴ The 1SG subject appears to be implied by the possessive pronoun; it is not otherwise marked in the clause.

¹⁵ Perhaps this unique behavior uniting the definite article and demonstrative forms into a category could be considered grounds for a positing a ‘determiner’ class in Hoozo. Regardless, it should be noted that possessive-marked NPs don’t appear to participate in the same behavior triggered by the definite articles and demonstratives (e.g. 16, above). For the sake of clarity, the term ‘determiner’ has been avoided here.

¹⁶ In Hoozo, the proximal anaphoric demonstrative appears to have undergone reanalysis as a definite article; this appears to coincide with an important structural development: when the anaphoric demonstrative forms (such as /ʔá/ or /ʔé/) are not followed by a final exophoric suffix (such as the distal /-gá/ in (20-22)) in comparison with (23, 25, and 26). This analysis follows Kassa’s glossing (2015:90).

¹⁷ This exact same sentence appears twice in Kassa’s grammar; once it is translated with a definite NP ‘the child’ and once with a distal demonstrative ‘that child,’ (Kassa 2015:96).

- (22) zí-gá má-ʔébb-jé ná-ʃ t̀wá
 PROX.EXO.F-DIST eat-NMLZ-SBJ.F 1SG-DAT bad
 ‘That food does not agree with me.’ (Kassa 2015:97)

As expected, it is possible to find NPs preceded by definite articles or demonstratives but without core subject/object case marking. It’s important to note (for the argumentation in sections 4 and 5) that definite articles and demonstratives can occur with non-case-marked nouns. Example (23), below, illustrates this through a locative construction, where the NP is preceded by the masculine definite article but the locative marker follows the NP, as a postposition.¹⁸

- (23) ʔá ʔá g̀dzá-jà ʔá ẁg̀g̀b̀i ʔ̀b̀b̀i-ʃ k̀i-t̀i
 3SG.M DEF.M money-OBJ.M DEF.M bag belly-LOC put-PFV-REAL
 ‘He put the money inside the bag.’ (Kassa 2015:224)

Kassa explicitly states that when subject and object NPs are determined by anaphoric demonstratives or by definite articles, they obligatorily take case marking (2015:96 and 99). While Kassa’s statement generally holds, three counterexamples have been identified in the grammar.

First, Kassa lists the form /ʔínó/ as a definite article for plural nouns, but in the grammar, this form never occurs with subject or object case marking (as illustrated in 24, where subject case marking would be expected). Thus, the lack of case marking on NPs preceded by this form appears to be consistent and categorical.

- (24) ʔínó ʃén-móó sukara ʃén-bèt’-ì
 DEF.PL trade-person sugar trade-drop-PFV-REAL
 ‘The merchants sold sugar.’

The second and third counterexamples could be due to typos. They are clearly not categorical counterexamples as is the one in example (24). In (25), for instance, the definite-marked subject of the zero copula construction carries no case marking. This is not typical of such constructions in the grammar, though—all other definite article or demonstrative-marked NP subjects in such constructions, do show subject case marking as expected (Kassa 2015).

- (25) ʔá mango mànzá Ø
 DEF.M mango small COP
 ‘The mango is small.’ (Kassa 2015:281)

In (26), the object NP is marked for case but is not preceded by a definite article or demonstrative. No discussion of the lack of definite article or demonstrative marking in this example is provided in the grammar.

- (26) ʔá párá-já ʃáá-jà ʔák-t̀i
 DEF.M leopard-SBJ.M goat-OBJ.M eat.meat-PFV-REAL
 ‘The leopard ate (the) goat.’ (Kassa 2015:77)

It’s not clear at this point if the counterexamples in (25) and (26) are due to variation among speakers or due to an error. Whatever the reason for the exceptions identified thus far, the robust tendency in

¹⁸ Some may prefer to consider Hoozo’s locative marker as a case marker. In this paper, I’ve attempted to follow Payne’s argument for distinguishing between case and postposition: where case is seen as a marker assigned by the structure within which the NP resides and adpositional marking is “free from such configurational constraints” (1997:92-93).

the language appears to be that only NPs preceded by definite articles or demonstratives are candidates for case marking in Hoozo.

3.4. Ganza Unlike the other Mao languages, no fully-grammaticalized case-markers have been identified for the Ganza language (Gwami Nana).¹⁹ There is, however, a morphosyntactic pattern involving demonstratives and NPs that is very similar to the demonstrative + NP + case structures found in the other languages, and the Ganza pattern sheds some light on the development of the structure. Ganza exhibits a construction where we find demonstratives preceding NPs which are then followed by a phonologically clipped form of the same demonstrative which is encliticized to the right edge of the NP (see examples 27-29, below). This post-NP enclitic (reduced from the prenominal demonstrative) exhibits gender and number agreement with the noun and is here tentatively glossed the same as the demonstrative.

(27) ìtí ásí=ᵀdí
DIST.M person=DIST.M
'that (M) person'

(28) ìgì gáᵇᵇ=gì
DIST.F donkey=DIST.F
'that (F) donkey' (from Smolders' fieldnotes)

(29) ùgù gáᵇᵇ=gù
DIST.PL donkey=DIST.PL
'those PL donkeys' (from Smolders' fieldnotes)

The construction involving Ganza's distal masculine singular demonstrative /ìtí/ (in 27) and its reduced enclitic is by far the most frequently occurring. The morphological expression of gender in Ganza, like Hoozo, is sex-based, and the vast majority of nouns (e.g. inanimates) are categorized as masculine. The post-NP enclitic associated with this distal demonstrative exhibits a number of different phonologically-conditioned allomorphs (e.g. [=t, =fí], as in examples 30-31).

(30) ìtí gáᵇᵇ=t
DIST.M donkey=DIST.M
'that (M) donkey' (from Smolders' fieldnotes)

(31) ìtí fǎf=fí
DIST.M rope=DIST.M
'that (M) rope' (from Smolders' fieldnotes)

This structure tends to be found only on the most topical NPs in natural speech (Smolders, p.c.)—as expected the demonstrative and its post-NP enclitic cannot occur on pronouns, which are themselves 'determined' NPs anchored in discourse. In all data collected thus far, only one NP in a sentence is marked with this DIST + NP + DIST complex (33), but the NP which carries the marking can be complex (as in 34).

¹⁹ No grammar of Ganza (Gwami Nana) has been written. Available data include a short sketch written by Paris Reidhead (1947) based on two weeks of elicitation, an unpublished manuscript "How to Speak Ganza" written by Loriann Hofmeister, and two recent works by Josh Smolders: an in-depth phonological sketch and a detailed glossary—both published in 2015. The sources for the data in this paper are from my own fieldnotes (from 2014) where no other citation is given. Data from Josh Smolders' fieldnotes is always cited. The tones on the nominals have been checked with Smolders' glossary to be sure of accuracy.

- (32) ití ásí=↓dí ga=ákúm-bô
 DIST.M person=DIST.M 3SG.M=good-COP
 ‘That person, he is good.’
- (33) ití màlá=↓dí wá↓sí ga=k’á:-bô
 DIST.M little.child=DIST.M meat 3SG.M=eat.meat-DECL
 ‘That little child, he ate (the) meat.’
- (34) ití bwànzà wàlòm kàlmàn=dì ga=ákúm-bô
 DIST.M young.man brother.in.law camel=DIST.M 3SG.M=good-COP
 ‘That young man’s brother-in-law’s camel is good.’ (from Smolders’ fieldnotes)

In (32-34), reduced pronominal clitics mark the subject as 3SG.M. While these sometimes attach as proclitics to the verb, they often attach as enclitics to other structures in the clause, including the demonstrative + post-NP enclitic structure (as in 35) where the subject is frequently expressed by a reduced pronoun/clitic.²⁰

- (35) [ití ásí=↓dí]=ga ákúm-bô
 DIST person=DIST.M=3SG.M good-COP
 ‘That person, he is good.’ (from Smolders, p.c.)

Of particular importance here is that these personal clitics marking subject persons and which can move (like the /=ga/ below) are not part of the same system as the demonstrative-related enclitic.

As in the data above, the same demonstrative + post-NP construction can occur on the single argument in a passive construction (36).

- (36) ití kán↓á=dí aw-k’á:-bô
 DIST.M dog=DIST.M PASS-eat.meat-DECL
 ‘That dog was eaten.’

Interestingly, in (37-39) the post-NP enclitic form (/=dì/) occurs without any demonstrative or pronominal modifier before the NP. In this instance, the form appears to have become wholly independent from the demonstrative²¹ and is just the sort of pattern that could lead to a nominative case marker.

- (37) àsí=dí kán↓á hǎ=ga fǎá-bô
 person=DIST.M dog AFF=3SG.M know-DECL
 ‘The/that person knows the dog.’²²

²⁰ These reduced pronominal forms frequently attach to the affirmative form /há/ (an old demonstrative), which has a cognate form /ha-/ AFF in Mawes Aas’e (a verbal prefix) and which has fused with certain pronouns (cf. Ahland 2015).

²¹ It’s important to recall that the demonstrative and the post-NP enclitic form is part of a larger pattern, where there is a set of three different pronominal demonstratives, each with its own enclitic form that is phonologically related to the pronominal demonstrative (examples 27-29). The distal masculine demonstrative is more common than the feminine and plural in the data that have been collected thus far. This is perhaps a function of the fact that gender is masculine for nouns (unless sex-based gender of a particular form requires a feminine marker) and number is often unmarked morphologically on nominals, i.e. as a general form.

²² While I have translated such examples into English with the definite article ‘the,’ this is not meant to imply that the /=dì/ form is functioning in such a way. Whether identifiability is actually indicated by this form has not been established.

(38) kán^lá=dí àsi hǎ=ga ʃáá-bô
 dog=DIST.M person AFF=3SG.M know-DECL
 ‘The/that dog knows the person.’

(39) hà=gá àsi=dì kwâ:-bô
 AFF=3SG.M person=DIST.M come-COP
 ‘A person came.’

The primary problem with analyzing Ganza’s distal enclitic as a subject case marker is that what appears to be the same /=*di*/ form can also appear on objects, preceding the object case marker--albeit in only a few examples found thus far (see 40, below).

(40) ɪgì p’àli=gí àsi=dí=li gi=fùn-bô
 DIST.F girl=DIST.F person=DIST.M=OBJ 3SG.F=love-DECL
 ‘The girl loves the person (male).’

Perhaps this occurrence of the /=*di*/ on the object in (40) is due to topicality but without broader pragmatic context, one can’t be sure. It is also worth noting that the other NP (the subject, in this instance) ‘girl’ is not a candidate to receive the /=*di*/ because it must take the feminine demonstrative (due to sex-based gender) and it must then also take the corresponding DIST.F enclitic form /=*gi*/.

Whatever the reason for the /=*di*/’s positioning in (40), the prohibition on two /=*di*/-marked NPs in the same clause holds. In (41), the /=*di*/ is found again on the subject while the object NP only carries the accusative case marking /=*l*/ ([=*li*]).

(41) àsi=dí kán^lá=l hǎ=ga ʃáá-bô
 person=DIST.M dog=OBJ AFF=3SG.M know-DECL
 ‘The person knows the dog.’

Smolders’ (p.c.) suggestion that the /=*di*/ enclitic is associated with topical NPs is at the very least not contradicted by any of these findings. While the form is not synchronically associated with a particular grammatical relation, it is much more frequently attested on subjects than objects, and, of course, the relationship between topicality and grammatical subjects is very well established (cf. Charles Li’s volume *Subject and Topic*, 1976, among others).

3.5 Summary of the Morphological Patterns In the data above, both Mawes Aas’e and Seezo exhibit obligatory morphological case-marking on subjects and non-obligatory morphological case-marking on objects (with obligatory marking on pronominal objects); this is a marked S/A vs. marked P pattern (Mawes Aas’e, Ahland 2012:325-7; Seezo, Mengistu 2015:128). Hoozo also marks both S/A and P categories but generally does so only when they are preceded by a definite article or demonstrative (Kassa 2015:95-97). Ganza, on the other hand, shows no clear evidence of subject case marking but does attest to pronominal demonstratives with reduced/encliticized forms of these demonstratives following the NP. Ganza does show evidence of an object case marker /=*l*/ which appears to be optional.

Table 1, below, provides an overview of case markers, postpositions, definite articles, and demonstratives in each of the Mao languages. There are some likely cognate relationships across the Mao languages: the subject case markers in Mawes Aas’e and Seezo and Hoozo’s dative/locative marker are likely cognate; the dative/locatives in Mawes Aas’e and Seezo are likely cognate; and the instrumental/comitative in Mawes Aas’e, Seezo and Hoozo are also likely cognate. It does not appear that there is any single correspondence set which stretches across all the Mao languages for subject or object cases. Of course, this is further underscored by the fact that Ganza does not appear to have developed a subject marker at this point.

What’s quite striking, though, when one considers these Mao languages, is that there are internal patterns (e.g. similar sorts of constructional patterns) attesting to links between the prenominal demonstratives and/or definite markers and a corresponding postnominal form that appears to be related to the prenominal definite article/demonstrative form. In three of the Mao languages (Mawes Aas’e, Seezo and Hoozo), this postnominal form is today a case marker. In Mawes Aas’e, for instance, we find similar forms in the prenominal distal demonstrative /íjé/ and the definite article /íj/ as in the subject case marker /-j/ (Table 1). Likewise, in Hoozo, we find a similar pattern across the proximal demonstratives (/ʔá/ M and /ʔé/ F), the definite articles (/ʔá-/ M and /ʔé-/ F), and the subject case markers (/ -já/SBJ.M and /-jé/ SBJ.F) (Table 1).²³

Table 1: Case Marking, Postpositions, Definite Articles, and Demonstratives in Mawes Aas’e, Seezo, Hoozo and Ganza*

		Mawes Aas’e	Seezo	Hoozo	Ganza
Case	SBJ	-íj/ -té **	-j	-já M / -jé F	
	OBJ	-na [-la] / -tá **	-a	-jà M / -jè F	-l
Post-Position	DAT/LOC	-et	-te	-j	
	INS/COM	-an	-ne	-n / -nì	
Article	DEF	íj	jé-	ʔá- M / ʔé- F	
Dem.	Proximal	nà	hèt’-	ʔá M ʔé F ʔínó PL anaphoric zá M zí F exophoric	ìntì M ùngù PL ìngì F
	Distal	íjé anaphoric jéjé exophoric	hí-	ʔágá M ʔégá F ʔínógá PL anaphoric zágá M zígá F exophoric	ìtù M ùgù PL ìgì F
	E.Distal	gjéjé	hí:jàn-	ʔágá M ʔégá F ʔínógá PL anaphoric zágá M zígá F exophoric	ìtí M ùgú PL ìgí F

*Mawes Aas’e from Ahland 2012; Seezo from Girma Mengistu 2015; Hoozo from Getachew Kassa 2015; Ganza from Josh Smolders 2015. **These /-té/ and /-tá/ forms are found only on plural pronouns and optionally on the 3SG form (in complementary distribution with the more frequent case markers for SBJ and OBJ).

In Ganza, as demonstrated in section 3.4, the distal demonstrative /ìtù/ M (and to a lesser extent, perhaps, the /ìgì/ F and /ùgù/ PL forms of the distal demonstrative) appears to be used on topical NPs in instances where exophoric (spatial) meaning is not particularly clear (suggesting that it may be on the way to becoming a definite article). Certainly, the the distal demonstratives’ corresponding reduced enclitic forms have a distribution that is similar to the subject case markers found in the other Mao languages (e.g. postnominal, and while not strictly limited to subjects in Ganza, it is by far most frequent on subjects).

²³ Hoozo’s object case markers appear to be simply tonal pairs with the corresponding subject case markers (with H for subject case and L for object case, see Table 1). It is likely that the object markers were the result of the tone of the subject case marker undergoing a polar shift (H > L), as opposed to any sort of independent development from some other source.

Seezo is perhaps the most puzzling, given that the case marker /-f/, while likely cognate with Mawes Aas'e's subject case marker /-if/, does not follow the larger Mao pattern of matching the Seezo definite article and one of the Seezo demonstrative sets. We return to this problem in section 4, below.

In short, while it does not appear to be possible to reconstruct a single proto-subject case marker form across the subgroup, all the Mao languages attest to a common construction involving a prenominal definite article or demonstrative followed by a reduced (i.e. related), postnominal form. It is argued below that the demonstrative components of these constructions and the post-NP positioning of a reduced and/or related form from the demonstrative have provided the structural material for morphological case development in the Mao group.

4. Development of The Mao Subject Case Markers

The data illustrated in section 3 suggest that subject case marking, where it exists in the Mao languages, is rooted in two phenomena: a common prenominal demonstrative + NP + postnominal form construction found across the group and also the relationships between domains of topicality, definiteness, and subjecthood. It is important to note that while three of the Mao languages have developed case marking for subjects, Ganza has not yet reached a morphological case expression for subject. That said, Ganza's use of an analogous construction involving prenominal demonstratives and postnominal enclitics is important to the wider Mao story. The discussion below begins with a brief description of the pathways involved: the development of demonstrative into definite article and the relationship of topicality and definiteness in the Mao languages to the subject category.

4.1. A Note on the Pathways Involved. The development of definite articles from anaphoric demonstratives is clear in Mawes Aas'e and Hoozo, likely in Seezo (through comparison with Mawes Aas'e, as described in section 4.2, below), and perhaps underway in Ganza. This is also supported by well-attested typological patterns. Diessel notes the typological tendency for demonstratives to develop into definite articles, "adnominal demonstratives provide a common historical source for definite articles" (1999:128). Anaphoric demonstratives often begin their trajectory toward definite articles through marking "non-topical antecedents that tend to be somewhat unexpected, contrastive or emphatic" (1999:128). These adnominal anaphoric demonstratives can become extended to all manner of referents, and this is indicative of the reanalysis from demonstrative > definite article (Diessel 1999:129); this involves a move toward higher topicality and, of course, identifiability in discourse.

As discussed in section 3.5, above, subject case markers (and in some instances, other case markers as well) in the Mao languages bear a striking resemblance to the demonstratives and definite articles. A brief perusal of Table 1, above, makes this clear. This repeated pattern is, of course, not an accident. The data suggest that only those demonstrative + NP + postnominal form constructions that became associated with definiteness (only one such construction in Mawes Aas'e and Seezo, but two gender-relevant constructions in Hoozo) gave rise to subject case markers (through the postnominal elements). Of course, the link between domains such as topic > definite markers and subject case is not particularly unusual: topic is a very common source for grammatical subjects (cf. Chafe 1976; Givón 1976; Mithun 1991; Shibatani 1991; and Ahland 2009, among many others).

4.2. The Specifics. Let's begin with the details pertinent to Mawes Aas'e. Here, we can see subject and even object case patterns corresponding to the distal and proximal demonstratives, respectively (Table 2, below). In column three, the less-frequent subject and object case markers /-té/ SBJ and /-tá/ OBJ (found only on certain pronoun forms, cf. Ahland 2012:326), also correlate with an infrequently used 3SG pronoun /íté/ (cf. Ahland 2012:239). This 3SG pronoun is very likely cognate with Ganza's masculine distal demonstrative /iti/. Thus, it seems probable that there was an old demonstrative /*itV/ (here, reconstructed with final vowel quality undetermined).

Table 2. Demonstrative, Pronoun, and Case Correspondences in Mawes Aas'e

Demonstrative	íǰé DIST	nà PROX	*ítV
Personal Pronoun	íǰè 3SG	---	íté 3SG
Definite Article	íǰ	---	---
Case	-íǰ SBJ	-na [-la] OBJ	-té SBJ / -tá OBJ

Central to the story regarding subject case development in Mawes Aas'e is the distal demonstrative /íǰé/. This demonstrative, like others, could be used adnominally (involving the pronominal + NP + postnominal construction) or pronominally. The adnominal construction became associated with topicality and then, as a result, with definiteness (illustrated in Figure 1, below).

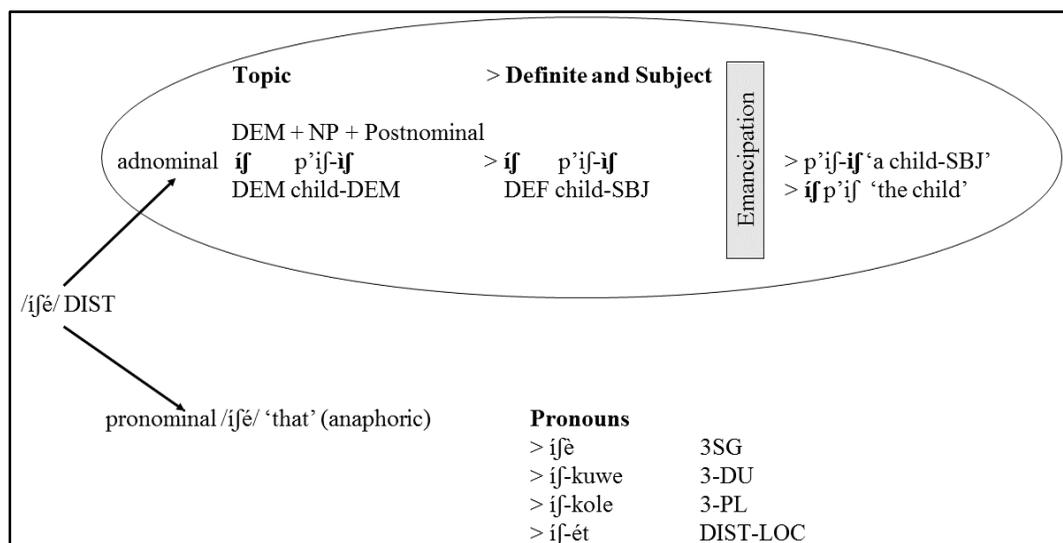


Figure 1. Mawes Aas'e's Trajectory of the /íǰé/ Demonstrative Split

The topicality associated with the construction could have also led to the reanalysis of the ending: the postnominal form became a morphological subject case marker, most probably through frequent topic and subject co-association. Eventually, in Mawes Aas'e, the pronominal definite marker became emancipated from the postnominal subject marker (i.e. there was no longer any co-occurrence requirement for the pre- and postnominal forms and the source construction began to break apart). The analysis of the postnominal form to subject case is thus tied up in both the topic > subject development as well as the domain of definiteness.

In Mawes Aas'e and Hoozo, at least, it is only those demonstratives that developed into definite articles which are also related to subject case markers. The emancipation of Mawes Aas'e's definite marker from the postnominal subject marker also allowed the definite marker to occur with object marked NPs (which, of course, carry a different postnominal form: the object case marker): /p'íǰ-na/ 'a child-OBJ' vs. /íǰ p'íǰ-nà/ 'the child-OBJ'.

Finally, Mawes Aas'e's pronominal form of the distal demonstrative also sparked new changes, producing a new series of 3rd person pronouns (Figure 1). This pronominal distal demonstrative has also maintained its ability to function as a non-personal deictic 'there' (DIST-LOC) as well.

In Seezo, the definite article /jé-/ and subject case marker /-f/ do not share the same morphological shape. Interestingly, these structures don't match any of the Seezo demonstratives either (/hèt'-/ PROX, /hí-/ DIST, and /hí:jàn/ extra DIST, repeated from Table 1). There is a single form, though, which could have produced both the definite article and the subject case marker: Mawes Aas'e's exophoric distal demonstrative (/jéʃé/, see Table 1).²⁴ It is conceivable that this demonstrative led to the postnominal subject case marker /-f/ through the same reduced postnominal agreement (or copy) process we see in the other languages. The definite article /jé-, then, could have been the result of simplification of the demonstrative, as it collapsed into a prefix, from /jéʃé/ > /jé-. Again, as in Mawes Aas'e, emancipation has taken place such that the definite article and subject case markers can occur independently of one another (cf. see example 8 above).

In Hoozo, as mentioned in section 3.5, the gender-relevant subject markers (/já/ M and /jé/ F) do follow a similar vowel and tone pattern found in the definite articles (/ʔá-/ M and /ʔé-/ F) and proximal anaphoric demonstratives (/ʔá/ M and /ʔé/ F). It appears that just as in Mawes Aas'e, Hoozo's anaphoric demonstratives developed into definite markers, and, in Hoozo, these prenominal definite articles and demonstratives required gender-agreeing forms at the end of their NPs.²⁵ While Kassa has analysed the form /ʔíná/ as a definite article for plural nouns (2015:156) in addition to the masculine and feminine definite articles, it is worth noting that this form does not co-occur with subject (or object) case marking in any example in the grammar. This lack of co-occurrence is not particularly surprising, given that the Mao pattern tends to involve phonologically similar elements in the pre- and postnominal forms and Hoozo's so-called plural definite article does not carry the same shape as any identified case marker in the language. With respect to the singular masculine and feminine definite articles and the related case forms (both subject and object, which differ from one another only by tone), there appears to be at least some emancipation. In example (23), we do find that the definite article can precede NPs which are not candidates for core cases (such as the locative in this instance). And, as noted above, examples 25 and 26 (if not errors) do illustrate that definite articles and case can occur independently of one another, if only very rarely. Perhaps emancipation is only beginning to take root in Hoozo.

In Ganza, we don't find a fully-developed morphological subject case marker, but we do find an analogous set of prenominal demonstrative + NP + postnominal enclitic constructions. Of the available demonstratives, only the distal demonstratives (M, F, and PL) appear to have become used anaphorically (i.e. in a non-exophoric, non-spatial function). And within this distal set, the construction involving the masculine distal demonstrative /iti/ with its corresponding /=di/ enclitic is the most frequently attested construction in the data; this may be due to the fact that most nouns do not require feminine gender marking because only sex-based gender appears to be marked morphologically (see also the discussion in footnote 21, above). Due to the lack of a textual corpus in the language, it is not possible to determine the degree to which the demonstrative /iti/ has become associated with definiteness; that said, its frequency and clear non-exophoric function does suggest that reanalysis as a definite article is at least a possibility. There is quite clearly emancipation between the demonstrative and the enclitic (as seen in examples 37-39) where the enclitic occurs without the demonstrative. The /=di/ enclitic would be an excellent candidate for morphological

²⁴ While Mawes Aas'e's anaphoric /ifé/ and exophoric /jéʃé/ demonstratives are today distinct in function and in shape, they are almost certainly from a single demonstrative form, where the anaphoric function diverged from the older exophoric function; this then resulted in the more frequent anaphoric form undergoing phonological simplification (loss of initial consonant and vowel raising before the palatal fricative). The adnominal anaphoric demonstrative's ultimate association with definiteness perhaps played a role in the reanalysis and simplification as well.

²⁵ It is not clear if there is any direct historical relationship between the glottal stop of the definite articles and the initial [j] approximant of the subject case markers. Both consonants, the glottal stop and the approximant, are phonemes and can occur as onsets initially and medially, according to data in the Hoozo grammar (Kassa 2015). At any rate, what appears to be clear is that a postnominal form, agreeing with the gender of the noun co-occurred with the definite article.

subject case development, given the patterns found elsewhere in the Mao group, but its occurrence on object NPs is problematic for its analysis as a subject case marker.

Table 3, below, summarizes the historical scenario described above: the source of the subject case marking in Mawes Aas'e, Seezo, and Hoozo is ultimately a demonstrative for each language.

Table 3. Development of Definite Markers and Subject Case in Mawes Aas'e, Seezo and Hoozo

	Demonstrative		Prenominal		Postnominal form > SBJ case
Mawes Aas'e	íǰé DIST	>	íǰ DEF	NP	-íǰ
Seezo	*ǰeǰe DIST	>	ǰe- DEF	NP	-ǰ
Hoozo	ǰá PROX.ANA.M	>	ǰá DEF.M	NP	-ǰá
	ǰé PROX.ANA.F	>	ǰé DEF.F	NP	-ǰé
Ganza	ìtì DIST.M	>	ìtì DEM	NP	=di [di, ǰi...] (Topic marker?)

The demonstrative sources, then, through their use in the prenominal demonstrative + NP + postnominal form construction, became associated with definiteness (perhaps as a result of first marking topical referents); the postnominal forms then became associated with subject case which in the instances of Mawes Aas'e and Seezo became fully emancipated from the preceding definite marker. As noted above, the tendency in Hoozo is for co-occurrence between the definite articles and the subject case markers. Of course, Ganza is included in Table 3 for sake of comparing its analogous distal demonstrative construction with the relevant constructions in the other Mao languages.

4 Conclusions: A Possible Extension and Final Thoughts

While the phenomenon of definite markers and subject case markers sharing certain structural similarities is somewhat clear from looking at the data in Table 3, above, there is some evidence that other case and/or postpositional elements in some of the Mao languages could have developed through similar pathways. Perhaps the clearest example is found in Mawes Aas'e, where the proximal demonstrative /nà/ is strikingly similar to the object case marker /-na/. As with demonstratives and subject case markers, the demonstrative precedes the NP and the case marking follows (42).²⁶

- (42) nà p'íǰ-nà tí-int'-á
 PROX child-OBJ 1SG-see-DECL
 'I saw this child.'

It's important to note that, synchronically, the proximal demonstrative is the only other demonstrative in Mawes Aas'e that has been identified as having anaphoric function in discourse—it functions as a marker of emphasis/highlighting and contrastive focus for the NPs it precedes in Mawes Aas'e (cf. Ahland 2012:275-278). There is no evidence that this construction was ever associated with topicality, and thus it would not have been a good candidate for definiteness or as a source for subject marking. As argued in section 4, those constructions that appear to have been associated with topicality (and then with definiteness) played a role in the development of subject case. That said, the similarities between the proximal and demonstrative (and the wider Mao patterns

²⁶ As can be observed throughout the grammar, the proximal demonstrative and the object case marker are entirely emancipated from one another today (cf. example 2 and section 4.2, above as well as Ahland 2012).

discussed above) suggest that a similar sort of demonstrative + NP + postnominal form construction was also involved in the development of Mawes Aas'e's object case. Finally, as observed in the right-most column of Table 2 (in section 4.2), the /-té/ SBJ and /-tá/ OBJ case markers which are today found only on selected pronouns also correspond formally to the /íté/ 3SG personal pronoun. Perhaps this 3SG pronoun and these two case markers with limited distribution also developed along a similar pathway beginning with a demonstrative.

In Hoozo, the dative/locative marker (/-/f/) is suspiciously similar to the subject case markers in Mawes Aas'e and Seezo. It remains to be seen if this form, too, was positioned postnominally through a similar sort of construction and thus ultimately derived from a demonstrative. Even the locative markers in Mawes Aas'e (/et/) and Seezo (-te) could have some relationship to the hypothesized demonstrative /*itV/ which is argued to have reflexes in both Mawes Aas'e and Ganza (Table 2). Of course, at this point, without more synchronic and comparative evidence to support such claims, these questions will have to remain.

Ultimately, the number of internal similarities between demonstratives, definite articles, and subject case markers across the Mao group suggests that a common demonstrative + NP + postnominal construction was shared. What's difficult to ascertain, though, is the extent to which the construction itself was the result of genetic inheritance or whether the construction is due to some sort of contact phenomenon, such as calquing where the construction was borrowed but filled with structures from each language. No other languages of the immediate area have yet been identified as having a similar sort of demonstrative construction (including available data on Omotic, Cushitic, or Nilo-Saharan languages of the area).²⁷

If the construction was inherited from an earlier state (perhaps Proto-Mao), new morphological forms have since replaced whatever forms may have existed at the earlier stages—i.e. something akin to morphological renewal (see also Heath 1998) which could have taken place with varying degrees of independence in each Mao language. At this point, the answer is not clear. What does seem clear, though, is that those Mao languages which have developed morphological subject case marking have done so through similar means and those means are also analogous to the non-case marking structures identified in Ganza.

Abbreviations and symbols

1	First person	NMLZ	Nominalizer
2	Second person	NPST	Non-past
3	Third person	NSG	Non-singular (dual and plural)
AFF	Affirmative	OBJ	Object case marker
ANA	Anaphoric	PASS	Passive
AUX	Auxiliary	PAUC	Paucal
COP	Copula	PF	Perfect
DAT	Dative case marker	PFV	Perfective

²⁷ The language of Mursi (Surmic\Eastern Sudanic\Nilo-Saharan), which is spoken in the far southwest of Ethiopia (in an remote area, hundreds of kilometers from the Mao area—i.e. likely too far away to be a reasonable, recent contact source) does show at least a two-part demonstrative construction (circumfixing around the noun). In Mursi, demonstrative constructions are formed with a prenominal demonstrative + N + postnominal deictic (either proximal or distal) construction: *ṅà-tágíś-á* DEM-moon-PROX vs. *ṅà-tágíś-únù* DEM-moon-DIST (Mütze and Ahland, forthcoming). It is not clear, though, whether the deictic endings are related / reduced from the prenominal demonstrative. Colleen Ahland reports that the deictic demonstrative construction and case marking in Mursi cannot co-occur—an interesting find which suggests the possibility that the demonstrative construction and case marking construction could be part of a related system (personal communication). No other languages with similar constructions have been found closer to the Mao area in Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State.

DECL	Declarative	PL	Plural
DEF	Definite article	POSS	Possessive
DIST	Distal	PROG	Progressive
EXIST	Existential verb	PROX	Proximal
EXO	Exophoric	PRS	Present tense
GEN	Genitive	PST	Past tense
HAB	Habitual	PURP	Purposive
INF	Infinitive	REAL	Realis
INS	Instrument	REFL	Reflexive
M	Masculine	REL	Relativizer
F	Feminine	SBJ	Subject case marker
LOC	Locative	SG	Singular
MED	Medial	SS	Same-subject medial verb
NEG	Negative		

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