

DAVID TURTON AND M. L. BENDER

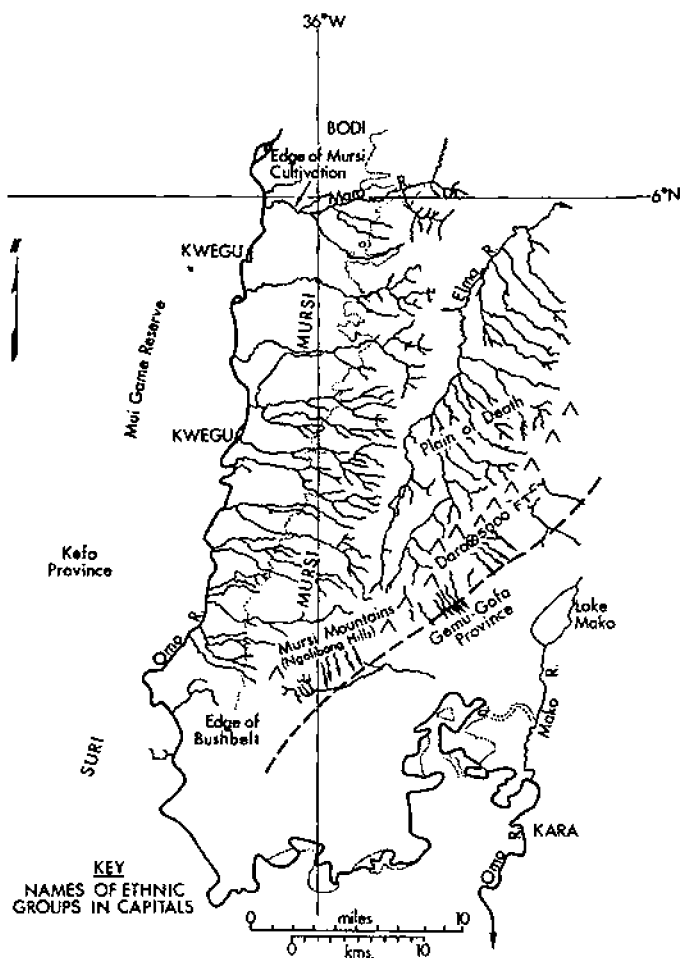
1. Introduction

The Mursi are a group of transhumant pastoralists and cultivators, numbering about 5000 individuals, who live in the lower Omo valley of southwestern Ethiopia. Their territory, which lies about 100 miles to the north of Lake Turkana (Rudolf), is bounded on two sides by the Omo itself, and on a third by a tributary of the Omo, called Mako by the Mursi, and labelled "Mago" or "Usno" on most maps. At the height of the drought, in December and January, the Omo can be forded easily at several points along its course in Mursi country, but from approximately May to September, when it is swollen by the heavy rains which fall on the central Ethiopian plateau, it presents a serious obstacle to communication. The Mako too, although smaller than the Omo, is all but impassable during these months. It is largely because of these geographical facts that the Mursi have been able to maintain a high degree of independence and autonomy in relation to central governmental administration, even for this isolated part of Ethiopia. When they have been mentioned at all in the literature, it has been only in passing.

Their country can be divided into two main ecological zones: an area of bushland thicket, which borders the Omo to a width of about ten kilometers, and an area of wooded grassland, which rises gradually to the watershed dividing the Omo and the Mako valleys. These two areas correspond to the Mursi's two main subsistence activities: the cultivation of sorghum and the herding of cattle. They are able to practice both flood cultivation, planting along the banks of the Omo in October and harvesting in December and January, as well as shifting cultivation, planting in clearings in the bush well back from the river, after the March/April rains, and harvesting in June and July. Rainfall in Mursi country itself is well below the minimum required for regularly successful cultivation, but the Omo flood is fed by the heavy rains which fall during July and August over the Ethiopian plateau. Flood cultivation, therefore, is an important standby in years of poor rainfall.

Although they depend for well over half of their subsistence needs on cultivation, the Mursi nevertheless maintain the values and outlook of a predominantly pastoral people. They are obsessed with cattle, every significant social relationship being expressed and maintained by the exchange of stock animals. Indeed, their very classification, not only of the social, but also of the physical environment, cannot be understood except in relation to cattle. Herding must be confined to the wooded grassland east of the Omo, since the bushland which borders the river not only provides no grazing, but also harbors the tsetse fly, the vector of bovine sleeping sickness. This geographical separation of subsistence activities results in a pattern of transhumance which, although it takes place over a relatively small area (about 1,000 square miles), does not allow for any permanent settlement.¹

The name Mursi is that by which they are known to the local administration (Mursi country falls within the Hamar-Bako-Geleb



Map 22.1: Mursi Country

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Awraja of Gemu-Gofa Province), and is one of several similar names by which they have been referred to in the accounts of travellers and explorers (e.g.: Mursu, Murzu, Murzi, and Murdi). They call themselves mun (sing. muni), but the present writers have decided to use the term Mursi, because it seems preferable to them not to introduce yet another name into the already confused and confusing picture of tribal nomenclature in the lower Omo area. Another name by which the Mursi refer to themselves, but only in ritual contexts and at public meetings or debates, is tama. Their northern neighbors, the Bodi, however, use this name to refer to the Mursi. Thus it is not the case, as some early writers had assumed (e.g.: Conti Rossini 1927), that the "Tdama" are a separate group from the Mursi.

Bodi is the name used by the local administration to refer to the people who live north of the Mursi and east of the Omo. They are approximately equal in number to the Mursi, and their economy is also based on transhumant pastoralism and upon flood and shifting cultivation. They are called tumura (sing.: tumuri) by the Mursi, and call themselves mefen (sing.: mefenit). They have also been referred to as "Mekan" and "Tishena", though the latter term is perhaps best reserved for a group who live northwest of the Bodi, overlooking the Omo in the vicinity of Chebera, who speak a dialect of Me'en very similar to Bodi, and who now subsist almost entirely by means of shifting cultivation. The Mursi and Bodi languages are not mutually intelligible, though they are clearly very closely related (cf. Bender 1971: 176, Table 11). The two groups do not intermarry, and the relationship between them appears to be characterized by fairly long periods of peaceful coexistence and occasional outbreaks of all-out war.

Living among both the Mursi and the Bodi, but confined to the banks of the Omo, are a very small group numbering probably no more than 300 individuals, who call themselves kwegu, and who are called pidi (sing.: pidini) by the Mursi and yidi (sing.: yidini) by the Bodi. Among themselves they speak their own language, which is closely related to Mursi and to Bodi, but not mutually intelligible with either. They speak the languages of these two groups fluently. The Mursi claim that Kwegu is particularly difficult to learn, a fact which is presumably related to the socially inferior position to which the Kwegu are allotted by both their Mursi and Bodi neighbors, who do not allow them to keep cattle, and who believe indeed that close contact between a Kwegu and cattle is extremely harmful to the latter. Thus, the Kwegu are not allowed to visit (except for short periods) the plains to the east of the Omo where the Mursi and Bodi keep their cattle. However, in return for gifts of honey and for their services as expert hunters and makers of dugout canoes (which they also navigate with a skill rare among Mursi and Bodi), they are provided by these latter groups with milk and with goats for bridewealth. The Kwegu call the Mursi murzu, a term which was adopted by some of the early travellers.

The Kwegu who live among the Mursi and Bodi know of the existence of a group of people having the same language as themselves who live further down the Omo, at approximately the point where it is joined by the Mako. These people use the name Kwegu for themselves, although they also acknowledge the name muquji, which is

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used of them by the Kara (older literature: Kerre), with whom they live in close association.² Although some intermarriage has probably taken place in the past between these two groups of northern and southern Kwegu, present contacts between them appear to be extremely limited. The Kwegu language of the Muguji appears to be as strongly influenced lexically by Kara as that of the Kwegu living among the Mursi is by Mursi.

West of the Omo and south of the Maji plateau live a group who call themselves and who are called by the Mursi, cai (sing.: caci), and who have also been referred to (especially by the early Italian writers) as Tid. They keep cattle and practice shifting cultivation, but have no access to flood land along the Omo. Many of them have settled on the lower slopes of the Maji-Sai plateau, where they have adopted a predominantly agricultural way of life. They speak a different dialect of the same language as the Mursi, with whom they intermarry and have close cultural and economic links. Indeed, the relationship between the two groups would appear to be analogous to that between the Bodi and the Tishena.

Further to the west live a group often called "Tirma" in existing literature (both this and "Tid" are probably best regarded as place names) and whom the Mursi call tirmaga (sg.: tirmagi). It is not clear whether the Tirmaga speak a different dialect from the Chai, but all three groups (Tirmaga, Chai and Mursi) certainly speak the same language and are culturally very similar. The Tirmaga and Chai, and probably also the Mursi, are called surma by the Omotic-speaking Dizi, who live on the Maji plateau, this being a term which appears frequently in the early Italian writings. Perhaps the most obvious (in the sense of immediately visible) indication of the cultural similarity of these three groups, and one which sets them apart from all the others mentioned above, is that their women cut and stretch their lower lips, eventually inserting clay lip-plates which may reach a diameter of four centimeters. Also characteristic of these groups is the institution of duelling, associated with the age organization, in which six-foot wooden poles, called dongen (sing.: donga) are used.

The Suri, another apparently distinct group who form part of the Mursi-Tirmaga-Chai complex, live south and east of the Tirmaga and Chai, and may number as many as 20,000 (Suri may turn out to be a useful generic name for all these groups). Their subsistence is mainly sorghum agriculture and collecting: they lost their cattle in the early 1970's through disease. They also have trading links with a group to the north of them, whose self-name is bale.

These, the Zilmamu of earlier accounts,³ number about 2000 and are sorghum agriculturalists. The Mursi call them balega (sg.: balegi), and say that they cannot understand their language. However, many of the Bale understand Suri. It should be stressed that our knowledge of the peoples living west of the Omo, who have strong cultural links with the Mursi, is very rudimentary, compared with our knowledge of the Mursi themselves. These comments, therefore, are only tentative, and will almost certainly need to be revised after further intensive fieldwork has been carried out.

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Southwest of the Mursi live another group of pastoralist-cultivators, whom the Mursi call bume and who are also known by this name to the local administration. They call themselves hangatom and they speak the same language as the Turkana.⁴ Some of these people cultivate along the right bank of the Omo, opposite Mursi cultivation sites, and the two groups are thus brought into frequent and often hostile contact. The Bume call the Chai pikoroma, and the Mursi pikabong. The latter name also appears on some maps as the name of the mountain range in Southern Mursi country.

See Chapter 18 for more information on Surma peoples.

2. History of Mursi studies.

The first published reference to the Mursi occurs in the account of the Italian expedition led by Vittorio Böttogo, which in 1896 followed the left bank of the Omo to where it enters Lake Turkana and thereby answered one of the last remaining questions of the era of African exploration. Until Böttogo's party had accomplished this journey, it was not known whether the Omo entered the Nile, Lake Turkana (formerly known as Lake Rudolph, this name having been given it by Teleki and Von Höhnel in 1888), or even the Indian Ocean. The expedition was in Mursi country in August 1896, but made little contact with the people, who apparently deserted their settlements at its approach. The Mursi say that they had very few cattle indeed at this time (there were a number of disastrous rinderpest epidemics throughout East Africa during the 1890's) and that they were living mainly along the banks of the Omo itself. They are described in the published account of the expedition (Vanutelli and Citeri 1899) as living principally by hunting and fishing.

This was the only expedition to penetrate the country presently occupied by the Mursi during a flurry of exploration of the lower Omo area which lasted from approximately 1890 to 1910. The Mursi were protected by their geographical isolation both from the visits of European explorers and from the military incursions of the Emperor Menilik's forces, which had established a fort at the northern end of Lake Turkana by the turn of the century. Whether they came from the north or from the south, explorers and military expeditions alike skirted the area lying between the Omo and Mako rivers, and indeed Böttogo found, when he arrived at the junction of the Omo and the Mako in August 1896, that he had to travel a good distance up the right bank of the latter river before he could cross it and continue his journey down the Omo.

Conti Rossini (1927), using a few items of Mursi vocabulary collected by the Böttogo expedition, pointed out the connection between this language and those of the "Surma" group. He had already (1914) published an edited version of d'Abbadie's vocabulary of Me'en. Short vocabularies of Tirma were published by Walder (1937), Marchetti (1939), and Rizzato (1941). Cerulli (1942) compared the then-existing Tirma material with Conti Rossini's on the Me'en. Although some clear connections between these languages were thus beginning to appear, the task of classification was made impossible by the sheer lack of data. Margaret Bryan summed up the situation in an article appropriately sub-titled: "A linguistic no-man's land" (1945), in which she describes

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the southwest Ethiopian border region as "the gathering place of a welter of obscure tribes and sections of tribes, speaking a bewildering diversity of languages". Tucker and Bryan (1956), however, tentatively placed the Mursi in an "isolated language group" which they termed "Didinga-Murle", a name which reflected the fact that the material upon which they based this classification came almost entirely from languages spoken in the southern Sudan.

In 1951 Eike Haberland, a member of an expedition from the Frobenius Institute of Frankfurt to Southern Ethiopia, paid a brief visit to the Bodi, and later published a short ethnographic account, which included some reference to the Mursi and "Jidenitsch" (Kwegu) (1959). The same author later published a short comparative word list of Bodi, Mursi, and Kwegu (1966), thereby further establishing the close relationship between these languages, and their membership of Tucker and Bryan's Didinga-Murle group. More material from the Ethiopian side of the border was provided by Bender (1971), who published new word lists (collected by himself and others) of Mursi, Me'en, Tirma, Zilmamu (Bale), and Kwegu, and who proposed the name Surma for the wider grouping. Bender's Surma, therefore, includes Tucker and Bryan's Didinga-Murle, as well as several Ethiopian languages about which the latter authors had only the scantiest of information.

By far the fullest accounts of any of the languages here mentioned⁵ is that recently published by Ricci of "Mekan" (1972). This very extensive article, which includes a "Mekan-Italian" word list of over 200 pages, is based upon a typescript compiled in 1949 by Sudano Fulvio, who was an administrative officer among the Tishena during the Italian occupation of Ethiopia. Ricci has incorporated Fulvio's material into a comprehensive survey of the literature on "Mekan" and related languages.

The first anthropological field study of the Mursi was carried out by Turton between 1968 and 1970 (Turton 1973, 1975). Based upon the information he obtained during this field trip, and with the collaboration of Professor A. N. Tucker,⁶ Turton prepared a linguistic summary of Mursi, which is to be published as part of a survey of the Didinga-Murle, or Surma group, taking into account recent information on the Ethiopian languages in question (Tucker forthcoming). The structural sketch which follows is a revised version of that summary, made by M. I. Bender with the help of further fieldwork.

3. Structural Sketch: Phonology

The systematic phonemes of Mursi are as follows (next page):

The interdental or post-dental θ is in alternation with s in the speech of some individuals, though some more-or-less consistently use one or the other.

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4. Grammar

4.1 Major Word Classes

Beginning here, a phonemic transcription will be used. Occasionally, phonetic transcriptions will be added to illustrate the occurrence of some notable allophones.

The alternates /s/ ~ /θ/ and [z] ~ [ð] will be freely mixed in text.

4.1.1 Pronouns

Pronouns show an n element in the singular and g in the plural, a Nilo-Saharan characteristic pointed out by Greenberg (e.g. 1963a: 132) and others, e.g. Tucker and Bryan 1966: 22-24.

Self-standing pronouns are of two types: those which precede, and those which follow the verb.

| | <u>Preceding</u> | <u>Following</u> |
|-------|------------------|------------------|
| 1 sg. | api [apɪ] | apoi |
| 2 sg. | ipe | ipoi |
| 3 sg. | noŋ [noŋ] | pai |
| 1 pl. | age | agyu |
| 2 pl. | ige [ige] | igyu [ɪgyu] |
| 3 pl. | yok [yok] | yokyu [yokyu] |

These pronouns are not used obligatorily, but use of the following pronoun adds emphasis, e.g. gaio "he knows", gai pai, "he (and nobody else) knows".

The object pronouns will be illustrated in the frame:

"The man gives me food"

ŋa hira Baʔa 'a:j-a-in-o

| | | | |
|-------|----------------------|-------|--------------------|
| 1 sg. | 'a:j-a- <u>in</u> -o | 1 pl. | 'a:j- <u>it</u> -o |
| 2 sg. | 'a:j- <u>in</u> -o | 2 pl. | 'a:j- <u>un</u> -o |
| 3 sg. | 'a:j- <u>e</u> -o | 3 pl. | 'a:j- <u>e</u> -o |

Similarly, "I give (to) you"

k-a:j- in-o

| | | | |
|-------|---------------------|-------|---------------------|
| 2 sg. | k-a:j- <u>in</u> -o | 2 pl. | k-a:j- <u>un</u> -o |
| 3 sg. | k-a:j- <u>e</u> -o | 3 pl. | k-a:j- <u>e</u> -o |

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| 3 sg. | k-a:j- <u>e</u> -o | 3 pl. | k-a:j- <u>e</u> -o |

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When the verb is in the past, the n element is palatalized to ñ e.g., zu(g)o ña ginipo, "did the people not ask you (sg.)?"
[zu(r)o ña ginipo].

The self-standing form may be used in place of the object infix,
e.g. ga dala ani "show me"

ki-hini ipe "I want you"

Compare the form ko-cogino, "I will have sexual intercourse with you", which is a simple statement of fact, with ko-cogi ine, a form much used in abuse.

Possessive pronouns distinguish number of both possessed and possessor, the n sg. / g pl. element again appearing. As with many Nilo-Saharan languages, an exclusive-inclusive distinction is found in the first person plural. A complemental particle -a- is also required.

| | <u>Sing. Possessed</u> | <u>Pl. Possessed</u> |
|-------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 sg. | dori-a-na:no "my" | doren-a-gano "my" |
| 2 sg. | dori-a-nunu "house" | doren-a-gunu "houses" |
| 3 sg. | dori-a-nene: etc. | doren-a-gepo etc. |
| 1 pl. excl. | dori-a-nau | doren-a-gau |
| 1 pl. incl. | dori-a-nai | doren-a-gai |
| 2 pl. | dori-a-nvi | doren-a-gwi |
| 3 pl. | dori-a-ne: | doren-a-ge: |

In pronominal forms ("mine," etc.), these are: in-a-na:no, etc. with singular possessed and gi-a-gano, etc. with plural possessed.

Interrogatives occur in forms variegated as to number and case.

"who?"

| | | | |
|----------|----------------------------|---------|-------------|
| Nom. sg. | <u>noi</u> | Nom pl. | <u>gyoi</u> |
| Acc. | <u>nen</u> | | |
| Gen. | <u>ni:</u> (sg. possessed) | | |
| | <u>gi:</u> (pl. possessed) | | |

"which?"

| | | | |
|-----|--------------|-----|-------------|
| Sg. | <u>sinoi</u> | pl. | <u>agyo</u> |
|-----|--------------|-----|-------------|

"what?"

?on, also sometimes nen ("who?")

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Examples:

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------------|
| buna hin <u>noi</u> | "who wants coffee?" |
| lami <u>nen</u> | "whom are you looking for?" |
| a dori a <u>ni</u> : | "whose house is it?" |
| dori <u>ainoi</u> | "which house?" |
| zu(g)o <u>agvoi</u> | "which people?" |
| a θukti ke <u>gyoi</u> | "who are these people?" |
| a ʔon-a <u>on</u> | "what is it?" |
| hini <u>ʔon</u> | "what do you want?" |
| rui <u>ʔon</u> | "what are you crying for?" |
| seni e:- <u>nen</u> | "what did you say?" |
| ke-meθi e:- <u>nen</u> | "what shall I do?" |
| sara gupu a <u>nen</u> | "what is your name?" |

4.1.2 Numeration

The numeration system does not show the base-five characteristics of many Nilo-Saharan languages, but does involve some certain or probable borrowings from other languages for higher numerals. The first ten numerals are: 1. Dò:nà or ko:n, 2. ràman, 3. θizzi, 4. uwl or wu:š, 5. há:nán, 6. lllè, 7. lea:bái, 8. lèèè, 9. θakàl, 10. tomon. Of these, "6" is a Cushitic borrowing (e.g. Arbore, Tsamay, Somali) and "10" is a widespread form whose origin is uncertain. Numerals above 10 use ko "and" (e.g. tomon ko Done, tomon ko raman) and hir ("man") or θuo ("people"), e.g. hir kón ("twenty" lit. man -one), hir kon ko tomon (30), θuo raman (40 - lit. people two), θuo há:nán (100). Note that in the numerals, θ ~ s so that we may hear sizzi, etc. Also, the pronunciation of θuo is very short, sounding like θu or even θo.

4.1.3 Relational concepts

Relational concepts make use of both case-markers and postpositions. For the former, see under Basic Grammatical Categories below.

Most Ethiopian area languages which have postpositions also have a fair number of prepositions (Ferguson 1976: 71). Mursi has only two, both used for time expressions (see last two examples below).

Examples:

| | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 'in, inside, into" | kipar i kido- <u>tui</u> | "a crocodile is in the river" |
|--------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|

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| | | |
|-----------------------|--|--|
| | k-ogoi dori- <u>tui</u> [k- <u>o</u> voi dori- <u>tui</u>] | "I go into the house" |
| | ma- <u>tui</u> | "in, under the water" |
| "outside" | dori- <u>Bo</u> | "outside the house" |
| "on" | dori - <u>tuno</u> | "on the house" (lit.: house-up) |
| "under" | ali- <u>bai</u> | "under the stool" |
| "behind, beyond" | dori- <u>Buyo</u> | "behind, beyond the house" |
| "front" | dori - <u>tutuo</u> | "in front of the house" (lit.: house - mouth-of) |
| "toward" | koi ga: <u>š-o</u> | "I go toward the forest" |
| | koi or- <u>o</u> | "I go toward the home- stead" |
| | koi alaka- <u>ye</u> | "I go toward Alaka" |
| | but: kuni alaka | "I come to Alaka" (no postposition) |
| "from" | kuni alaka- <u>ye</u> | "I come from Alaka" |
| "through" | ka:qi kede- <u>o</u> | "I go through the pass" |
| "middle" | kello kerigyen- <u>o</u> | "we are in the middle" (lit.: we-are middle -at) |
| "bottom, foot" | kio sugum- <u>o</u> | "at the foot of the tree" (lit.: tree buttock-at) |
| "for" | ki timi- <u>še</u> bio go | "I light a fire for the cows" (lit.: I light-for cows fire) |
| "without" | bio- <u>nine</u> | "without cows" (lit.: cows-lacking) |
| "like" | ɣaina-ko ɣaina <u>heto</u> | "this and that are alike" (lit.: this-and this alike) |
| "with" (instrumental) | kedi wara- <u>ye</u> | "I cut with a knife" |
| | kedi Be- <u>yo</u> | "I cut with an axe" |

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Prepositions:

"before" (time) sabo....

{from sa:ba "head"}

"after" (time) wario....

Adjectives, nouns, and verbs will be discussed under Basic Grammatical Categories and Syntax.

4.2 Basic Grammatical Categories

4.2.1 Nominals

Nouns are inflected for number and case, and sex-determiners are attached for gender distinctions.

Noun plurals (and singulars) show a variety of types and some stem changes: this is very reminiscent of Nilotic languages such as Anywa (see Ch. 20).

| | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------|
| sg. <u>~i</u> | pl. zero | |
| kiroŋoi | kiroŋo | "fly" |
| šwai | šowa | "bird" |
| sg. zero | pl. <u>-cin</u> | |
| go | gocin | "fire" |
| wara | waracin | "knife" |
| sg. zero | pl. <u>-(i)o</u> | |
| bi | bio | "cow" |
| gongul | gongulo | "cane" |
| [gongul] | [gongulo] | |
| kama | kamaio | "bag" |
| sg. <u>-i</u> | pl. <u>-a</u> | |
| lusi | lusa | "boy" |
| baŋi | baŋa | "pond" |
| sg. zero | pl. <u>-pa</u> | |
| uli | ulipa | "bull" |
| lukwe | lukwepa | "chicken" |
| sg. <u>-i, -a, -o</u> | pl. <u>-en, -ena, -eno</u> | |
| dori | doren | "house" |

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| | | |
|------|--------|-------------|
| ela | elen | "waterhole" |
| kido | kiden | "river" |
| goro | gorena | "elephant" |
| kio | keno | "tree" |

Kinship terms take special plural suffixes -ge and -gen, e.g.

| | | | |
|---------|-----------|-----------|-------------------------|
| šune | šu:ge | "father" | } terms of reference |
| jone | ju:ge | "mother" | |
| gone | gonigen | "sister" | |
| gwodine | gwodingen | "brother" | |

All liquids and some indivisibles are plural, e.g. ma, "water":

dori ana:no "my house" (sg.) ma gāno "my water" (pl.)

liba gai "our (incl.) sorghum"

mà wà hòdà: woru (lit.: water perfect-marker came back)

cf. hìrì wa'kòwá "a person came" and zugo wa hòdà "people came"

Definiteness is marked by a prefix ga- and suffixes distinguishing near from far.

| | <u>sg.</u> | <u>pl.</u> | |
|--------|----------------|---------------|---------|
| "this" | ga-lusi-ta | ga-lusa | "boy" |
| | ga-dori-ta | ga- doren | "house" |
| | ga-ki -ta | ga- keno | "tree" |
| "that" | ga- lusi -tuni | ga- lusa-gunu | "boy" |
| | ga-dori -tuni | ga-doren-gunu | "house" |
| | ga- ki -tunu | ga- keno-gunu | "tree" |

The presence of t in singular and g in plural is an example of the t/k alternation pointed out by Tucker and Bryan (1966: 22-24) and Greenberg (1963a: 132).

With reverse word order: lusi ga-ina, "this boy"; lusi ga-inunu, "that boy".

Predicative use of demonstratives: "take this", iba ga-ina; "take that", iba ga-inu-nu; "this is the one I saw", ga- kè-tà kú:riò; "that is the one I saw", ga-kè-tùnù kú:riò; "that is the

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house", dòrì á:na; "that over there is the house", dòrì á:nùh.

Examples of referential demonstratives: ana boroga, "the one before-mentioned" (near past); ina boroga, "the one before-mentioned" (more distant past).

Adjectives show number distinctions similar to those of nouns, e.g.,

hiri a bwoca "the person is thin"

pl. zu(g)o a bwocen

bi a goloni "the cow is red"

pl. bio a golona

There is no grammatical gender, but sex-determining suffixes are attached to some words, e.g.

hiri pl. zu(g)o "person"

hir-amai pl. zu(g)-ama "man"

hir-aqaha pl. zu-aqaha "woman"

qatuip pl. qatuipa "lion"

qatuip-amai pl. qatuip-ama "male lion"

qatuip-aqaha pl. qatuip-aqaha "lioness"

Similarly for lukwe ("fowl"), medere ("sheep"), tono ("goat"), qoro ("elephant").

There is no evidence that female forms are used in diminutive, pejorative, or other negatively-marked senses.

Mursi has a fairly elaborate system of case marking. There is an absolute form of the noun: this is the basic form and it may stand as subject or object of the verb in the "normal" word order SVO, e.g.,

hiri lam mor "the man is looking for the calf"

tono ba(g) lapoi "the goat is eating the grass"

gušur-o ba(g) bi "the hyena is eating the cow"

In the "abnormal" word order, OVS, the subject is marked by a nominative case-ending, e.g. (with 'boy': lusi - lušì),

itim lušì-o "the boy kindles"
(lit.: kindles boy)

mor lam lusi-o "the boy is looking for the calf:
(lit.: calf looks- for boy)

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| | |
|---|--|
| <u>mor lam hiri-o</u> ("man": <u>hiri</u>) | "the man is looking for the calf" |
| <u>Dole lam mor</u> | "the girl looks for the calf" |
| <u>mor lam Dole-o</u> | (lit.: calf looks-for girl) |
| <u>bi bá(g) gušúr</u> [bi ba(v) gJšJrr] | "a hyena is eating the cow" ("hyena": gušúr-o) |
| <u>goro ba lanol</u> <u>lanol ba gor</u> ("elephant": <u>goro</u>) | "the elephant eats grass" (lit.: grass eats elephant) |

In the above examples, the nominative case is marked by -o (as against absolute zero) and zero (as against absolute o) respectively. Further study may show that indefinite vs. definite or other categories are involved.

As seen above under Major Word Classes, an accusative marker -n is found in pronouns. This has not been found with nouns.

The genitive case is marked by suffixes -i or -in. Examples:

| | | | |
|---------------|--------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| <u>komoru</u> | priest | <u>or a komoru-in</u> | the priest's homestead |
| <u>bi</u> | cow | <u>givey a bi-n</u> | a cow's bone |
| <u>tugul</u> | man's name | <u>ga: tugul-i</u> | Tugul's wife |
| <u>nacaha</u> | woman's name | <u>lusi a nacaha-i</u> | Ngachaha's boy |

Locative (including dative and instrumental) is marked by -o after C and -ye, -šo, or -jo after V. These were listed under postpositions above, and may best be considered as such.

Examples:

or homestead, k-ogoi or-o, I am going home (orr); gai bush. forest, goro i ga-šo an elephant is in the forest; golati, place-name, kuni golati-ye I have come from Golati; ri, shade, kau ri-jo, let us go to the shade; hada, sleeping skin, k-uqusi hada-ye, I sleep on a sleeping skin.

There is no vocative case; a person is simply called by name. An unknown person is addressed by use of the demonstrative, e.g.

| | |
|--|-------------|
| <u>ga-hiri</u> , | "that man!" |
| <u>ga-lui-ta</u> (< <u>ga-luši-ta</u>), | "that boy!" |

4.2.2 Verbs

The verb in Mursi can be thought of as occurring in two moods: indicative and subjunctive. The indicative has two aspects: indefinite (or imperfective) and definite (or perfective). Since the two aspects sometimes utilize different stems, it is sometimes necessary

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to include both as principal parts of the verb. The third person singular of the indefinite and all plural persons of the definite include an infixed -t- which results in assimilations of the verb stem-final consonant. Since the rules for these have not been fully worked out, examples will here be given in tabular form:

| <u>Indefinite</u> | | <u>Definite</u> | | <u>Proposed</u> <u>Stem</u> | <u>Gloss</u> |
|-------------------|------------------|-----------------|------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 sg. | 3 sg. | 1 sg. | 3 sg. | | |
| ka-gayo | gayo | ka-taka | ka-takto | ga-,tak- | "know" |
| ko-koyo | koyo | k-oka | kayto | ko-,kay-,ok- | "go" |
| ka-talio | tallo | ka-talla | ka-tallo | tal- | "buy" |
| ke-re'θio | re'θo | k-era | k-erto | reθ-,er- | "die" |
| ka-matio | matto | k-ira | k-irto | mat-,ir- | "drink" |
| ku-dumio | Dumno | ku-duma | ku-dumno | dum- | "find" |
| ki-jimio | jimno | ke-jema | ke-jemno | jem- | "lead" |
| ku-ɲasio | tuɲo | ku-tuɲa | ku-tuɲno | ɲus-,tuɲ- | "sleep" |
| ku-curio | curto | ku-curta | ku-curto | cur- | "wash" |
| | | -cura | -cura | | (t.v.) |
| k-orio | orto | k-ara | k-arto | or-,ar- | "see" |
| ki-cibio | cipto | ke-cepta | ke-cepto | cip-,cep- | "tie up" |
| | | -cebba | -cebbo(?) | | |
| ki-libio | lipto | ki-lipta | -lipto | lip- | "sour" |
| | | -libba | | | (i.v.) |
| ki-šigio | šikto | ki-šika | ki-šikto | šik- | "hear, under- stand" |
| ka-ragio | Dakto | ka-raka | ka-rakto | rak- | "hit" |
| ki-zigio | zikto | ke-zekta | ke-zekto | zik-,zek- | "move camp" |
| | | -zekka | | | |
| ku-dugio | dukto | ku-duka | ku-duk-to | duk- | "plant" |
| ke-begio | bekto | ke-bekta | ke-bekto | bek- | "watch over" |
| | | -bekka | -bekko (?) | | |
| k-ogio | okto | k-akka | k-akto | ok-,ak- | "cook" |
| ki-bigio | bi:kto, bi:to | ki-bi:ka | ki-bi:kto | bik- | "break" |
| ka-ba:kio | bakto | ka-ba:ka | ka-ba:to | ba:k- | "eat" |
| | ba:to | | | | |

The stems are arranged in groups according to the apparent assimilative behavior of the infixed -t- in 3 sg. indefinite and pl. definite.

In the first group of two, no -t- occurs in the 3 sg. indefinite (perhaps the -t- has been assimilated to \emptyset after γ), though -t- occurs in the 3 sg. definite. In the second group of three also, no -t- occurs, but it seems that it has been assimilated to the final -l, -θ, or -t respectively (obviously, however, matto could be interpreted as matto or as mat-to). In the third group of three, no -t- occurs in either indefinite or definite (meaning that t → n after nasal, or t → \emptyset in the case of tuɲo). In the fourth group of two, -t-

occurs in both indefinite and definite after r-, except that -rr- occurs as a variant of -rt- in some cases (not illustrated). In the fifth group of two, -t- occurs after -p (< -b), with the possible variant -bb- in place of -pt- in some cases. In the sixth group of eight, -t- occurs after -k (< -g), except that some variants occur -k- → ∅, -kt- → -tt-, -t- → ∅.

This information is from several informants, and not all informants volunteered or would accept all variant forms, and they were not consistent from one time to another. This suggests that assimilations such as -kt- → -kk- are optional and in "free variation". Obviously more research is needed here to sort out all the possibilities and arrive at a consistent analysis, using an extensive sample of both verbs and informants.

Reference to data on other Surma languages (Tucker and Bryan 1966: 382 ff.) shows the presence of a -t- or -θ- in plural conjugations, but the data is too scanty to throw any light on the problem. Murlle has it also, see Lyth 1947: 25 ff.)

The presence of a k(V)- prefix in 1 sg. (and 1 pl., and in the subjunctive, also 3 sg.) is a characteristic of most Surma languages (see Chapter 18), whose function and possible origin is unexplained. The exact status of the suppletive stems ("go, die, drink, sleep"), and those involving vowel-changes (see, move camp, tie up, cook") is also unclear. Vowel assimilations (harmony) in the k(V)- prefix occur as can be seen by comparing the V of kV- and the first stem vowel in all cases.

Note also that the final -o is dropped when the verb is followed by any other word, thus:

| | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| <u>logo ki-šigio</u> | "the word I understand" |
| <u>ki-šigi logo</u> | "I understand the word" |
| <u>runo talo</u> | "tomorrow he will buy" |
| <u>tal ʔon</u> | "what will he buy?" |

The two aspects serve the usual functions:

Indefinite - present, future, and continuous action.

| | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| eat, will eat, am eating | "hear, will hear, am hearing" | "drink, will drink, am drinking" |
| sg. ka-ba:kio | ki-šigio | ka-matio |
| sg. ba:kio | šigio | matio |
| sg. ba:to | šikto | mato |
| pl. ka-ba:kor | ki-šigor | ka-mator |
| pl. ba:kor | šigor | mator |
| pl. ba:keo | šegeio | mateo |

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Definite- past and perfect action.

| "ate, have eaten" | "heard, have heard" | "drank, have drunk" |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| 1 sg. wa-ka-ba:ka | wa-ki-šika | wa- k- ira |
| 2 sg. wa- ba:ku | wa- -šiku | wa- - iru |
| 3 sg. wa- ba:ka | wa- -šika | wa- - ira |
| 1 pl. wa-ka-ba:to | wa-ki-šikto | wa-k-irto |
| 2 pl. wa- -ba:to | wa- -šikto | wa- -irto |
| 3 pl. wa- -ba:to | wa- -šikto | wa- -irto |

Specific tense distinctions are marked by the use of suffixes or adverbs.

Present Continuous

"I am eating"

| Stem <u>bak-</u> | Stem <u>am-</u> |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1 sg. ka- bak-ineno | k- am-ineno |
| 2 sg. bak-ineno | am-ineno |
| 3 sg. bak-ineo | am-ineo |
| 1 pl. ka- bak-inenor | k- am-inenor |
| 2 pl. - bak-inenor | am-inenor |
| 3 pl. - bak-ineo | am-ineo |

(Note the partial elision of suffix before following word:
ka-bak-inen áccúk, "I am eating meat".)

Future is indicated by means of an appropriate adverb and the indefinite aspect, e.g.,

| | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| <u>runo bure k-okoiyo</u> | "tomorrow morning I will go" |
| <u>hale kalio orio</u> | "later today you will see" |
| <u>k-ugusi upo sizzi na kunio</u> (lit.: I-sleep sleeps three and I-come). | "I will come after three nights" |

As with Berta (see Ch. 21), there are both recent and remote past tenses, marked by wa- and be- respectively. The recent past usually refers to happenings of the same day. The adverb bare signifies "yesterday" or "a few days ago"; burto signifies many days or years ago. Either may precede or follow the verb. kinin is an intensifier used with be- or burto for emphasis.

Examples:

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------------|
| bi-a-na:no wa-arru | "have you seen my cow?" |
|--------------------|-------------------------|

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| | |
|-------------------|---|
| loko-be-šiku | "have you heard the news?" |
| [lovo be- šiku] | (lit.: the-word have-you-heard) ⁷ |
| be- ki-šika kiŋiŋ | "I heard ages ago" |
| bare k-oka bioi | "yesterday I went to the cattle" |
| šuinu re minaŋ | "when did your father die? (lit.: father dies when)" |
| burto | "a long time ago" |
| burto kiŋiŋ | "a very long time ago" |

There is a special subordinate verb form with suffix -e, e.g., compare the main verbs in:

| | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| gwlo wà'dá:k-á | "rain has fallen" |
| gwlo da:k-t-o | "rain is falling" |

with the subordinate verbs in:

| |
|---|
| hùlì gwlo 'dak-t-e ku dug liwa: |
| "when/if rain falls one plants sorghum" |
| hùlì kè'hé-wa:r-o-e ilbà i'lú:ŋio |

(lit.: when if we-are-going-Omo-loc.-vb. marker sorghum is-about-so high).

Obviously much more research is needed on this topic.

The imperative singular can be taken as the basic form of the subjunctive, e.g.,

| <u>sg.</u> | <u>pl.</u> | |
|------------------|----------------|-----------|
| ba:ka [ba:va] | ba:to | "eat!" |
| šiga [šiga] | šikto | "listen!" |
| ire [ire] | irto [irto] | "drink!" |

The verbs "come" and "go" have irregular imperatives:

| <u>sg.</u> | <u>pl.</u> | |
|------------|---------------|---------|
| (ga) wè:ŋa | (ga) ho'Da:ŋa | "come!" |
| (ga) bá:gà | (ga) bá:gày | "go!" |

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The imperative is identical to the second-person subjunctive:

| | | | |
|---|----------|----------|--------|
| 1 sg. | ka-ba:ka | ki-šiga | k-ire |
| 2 sg. | ba:ka | šiga | ire |
| 3 sg. | ka-ba:ka | ki-šiga | k-ire |
| 1 pl. | ka-ba:to | ki-šikto | k-irto |
| 2 pl. | ba:to | šikto | -irto |
| 3 pl. | ba:to | ki-šikto | k-irto |
| "that I may eat" "that I may hear, understand" "that I may drink" | | | |

The verbal noun seems to take two forms: (1) a suffix including -en:

| | |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|
| ki-hinì 'úrò'mát- <u>inèn</u> | "I want to drink milk" |
| ki-hinì wu- <u>cen</u> | "I want to go"; |

(2) a final -V? (it is not certain that the ? is significant):

| | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| ki-hinì tila ami- <u>še?</u> | "I want to eat food" |
| ki-hinì tila ag- <u>a?</u> | "I want to cook food" |
| ki-hinì rumiṇa cur- <u>a?</u> | "I want to wash clothes" |
| ki-hinì logiṇa šig- <u>a?</u> | "I want to hear the words" |
| ki-hinì gop- <u>a?</u> | "I want to look" |

In some cases, an equivalent expression with a simple noun is possible:

| | |
|---------------|---------------------------------------|
| ki-hinì Baʔa | "I want (to eat) food" |
| ki-hinì 'cógà | "I want (to have) sexual intercourse" |
| ki-hinì úṛó | "I want (to) sleep" |

The equivalent expression using a subjunctive verb form seems to be generally possible:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| ki-hinì ku-curo | "I want to wash" (transitive) |
| ki-hinì ku-tugno | "I want to sleep" (lit.: that I go, that I sleep) |

More research is badly needed here.

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4.3 Derivation

A few examples thought to be nouns derived from verbs have been recorded:

| | | | | |
|----------|-----------|---|------------|-----------------|
| buhugi | (witch) | < | ku-buso | (bewitch) |
| meθi | (debate) | < | ke-meθio | (make a speech) |
| [mɛθi] | | | [ke-mɛθio] | |
| ilagai | (illness) | < | k-ilasio | (be ill) |
| [ɪlavai] | | | [k-ɪlasio] | |

The suffix -mo serves as a formative of nouns of state, roughly the English "-hood" or "-ness."

| | | | | | |
|------------------|---|---------------|------------------|---|-------------|
| <u>h̄iri-mò</u> | < | <u>h̄iri</u> | <u>b̄ar'i-mo</u> | < | <u>bari</u> |
| adulthood | | adult, person | elderhood | | elder |
| <u>komoru-mo</u> | < | <u>komoru</u> | | | |
| priesthood | | priest | | | |

Compound nouns occur (see under word shape and lexicon below). As in other Nilo-Saharan languages, these may largely fill the role of derived nouns in Mursi. See also the phrases under instrumental verbs below, both of which could be considered as examples of instrumental. Noun derivation is obviously an area where much future research is needed.

Derivative verbs include:

- (1) dative: suffix -θen (-θe in imperative,) e.g.

| | |
|----------------------------|---|
| <u>gwi beleθen nen</u> | "for whom are you dividing the garden?" (lit.: garden you-divide-for whom) |
| <u>ke-beleθen ʒa:na:no</u> | "I am dividing (it) for my wife" |
| <u>aliθen Do:le</u> | "he is speaking to the girl" |
| <u>seaθe komoru ke...</u> | "tell the priest that..." |
| <u>ojaθe kama tui</u> | "put (it) in the bag" (lit.: put-(it) the-bag into) |

- (2) instrumental: suffix -ca, e.g.

| | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <u>k-ami tila</u> | "I eat porridge" |
| <u>ke a k-am-ca tila</u> | "the thing for eating porridge" |
| <u>ko-pugio</u> | "I close" |

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ke a ko-puk-ca "the thing for closing (i.e. lid)"

ko hugyo "I clean"

ruma ko-hukca ma "towel" (cloth for wiping water)

(3) reciprocal: suffix -nenor, e.g.

age ka-ga:neo "we know them"

age ka-ga:nenor "we know each other"

age ka-rageo "we hit them"

age ka-raginenor "we hit each other"

An initial attempt to find causative, passive, or intensive verbs met with failure. For example, the inquiries for causative met with such replies as: ayna bio ma, "give cows water" (no causative "to water"). Intensive seems to be indicated by the adverb ha:š, e.g. wa ino gusiBwe ha:š, "he has broken the gourd to pieces". Search for a passive led to the discovery that some verbs may be used in a stative sense, cf. guai wa inó nui?, "who broke the gourd", and non inca:Bwe, "it broke" (i.e. it is in a broken state).

4.4 Syntax

The usual word order is SVO, but SOV and OVS occur.

SVO: hiri dug lusi "the person (i.e. adult) hits the boy"

komoru iam bio "the priest seeks the cattle"

lusi dag bi "the boy hits the cow"

SOV: used in the negative, e.g.

komorena kirin na ameo "priests do not eat giraffe"
(lit.: priests giraffe not eat)

ermi tila na hinno "the baby does not want porridge"
(lit.: baby porridge not want)

OVS: As noted above under Major Word Classes, a marked nominative case is found with the subject in this word order, e.g.

gwi aj-a-in duli-o "Duli gave me the garden"
(lit.: garden gives-me duli-nom.)

bi am gušurr- "a hyena is eating the cow"
(lit.: cow eats hyena-nom.)

This word order places emphasis on the subject.

Order of Modifiers: The adjective follows the noun and is normally linked by the complemental particle a (see under copula below), e.g.,

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ani ki-hini bi a koro "I want a black cow"
(lit.: I want cow part. black)

ani ki-hini bio a kora "I want black cows"

In predicative sentences, the linking particle is omitted (but then it occurs as the copula preceding the adjectival phrase):

a bi goloni "it is a red cow"

a bio golona kare "they are all red cows"

a kido bwi "it is a big river"

a kiden bibi "they are big rivers"

Numerals follow the noun without the linking a, except for "one"

Examples:

hale ka-tali teno sakal "later I will buy nine goats"

bi a Done gara "one cow is lost"

zu(g)o raman bare hoda "two people came yesterday"

Notice that the numeral usually is used with plural nouns (both teno and zu(g)o above are plural). For a counterexample, however, see the one involving "four cow(s)" under possession below.

Relative Clauses normally follow their nouns without any introductory particle, e.g.

kani lusi a hiri be-lornapi ture

"I am the son of the man (who) carried your gun"
(lit.: I son part. man past-carry gun)

a kama be-ajal ni lusigoloni

"it is the bag (which) Lusigolonyi gave me"
(lit.: it-is bag past-gave-me Lusigolonyi)

a shi ti burto ena oka bukuno

"it is the thing of the owner who previously went off somewhere"
(lit.: it-is thing cop. previously owner went somewhere)

Comparison involves use of the connective ko-, "and" and no morphologically-marked forms.

Examples:

bi 'ko -nòrò 'bú-nòr "the elephant is bigger than the cow"
(lit.: cow and-elephant big-elephant)

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| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| <u>bì kò-roθo bu-bi</u> | "the cow is bigger than the dog" |
| <u>goro ko-car tìr- caro</u> | "the leopard is faster than the elephant" (lit.: elephant and-leopard quick-leopard) |

Superlative notions are expressed by use of intensifiers, e.g.

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| <u>bù-nór θón</u> | "the elephant is biggest of all" (lit.: big-elephant only) |
|-------------------|---|

or, equivalently;

| | |
|----------------------|------------------------------|
| <u>gor à bù góri</u> | (lit.: elephant is big very) |
| <u>gor'-á bùi</u> | (lit.: elephant-is big) |
| <u>rom tìr há:n</u> | (lit.: ostrich fast very) |

In place of há:n, either wan or gori may be used, all three meaning "very".

Possession is marked by possessed-possessor order with linking particles a or ti and the possessor in the genitive case, e.g.

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| <u>tugo</u> [tuvo] | "language" |
| <u>tug-a-muniñ</u> | "the Muni language" |
| <u>lusi-ti-tuguli</u> | "Tugul's boy" |

An alternative indicator of possession is the copula ihe [ihe], e.g.,

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| <u>komoru logo ihe</u> | "the priest wishes to speak" (lit.: priest word there-is) |
|------------------------|--|

Still another means of showing possession is by the use of the "zero copula", e.g.,

| | |
|--|---|
| <u>ùligòlòni bi ágepe a:-wi</u> (or a-wuś, "four") | "Uligolonyi has four cows" (lit.: Uligolonyi cow part. his four) |
| <u>dada-na:no bio a meri elle</u> | "my father has many cows" (lit.: father-my cows many there-are) |

When the complement is qualified, the copula "to be" may be omitted:

| | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| <u>ihe bio a-i-son</u> (ell-e) | "how many cows have you?" (lit.: you cows is-you-how many (cop.)) |
|--------------------------------|---|

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api bio sizi (ell-e) "I have three cows"

Pronominal possessors were given under Major Word Classes above.
amples:

a dori-a-ni "whose house is it?"

a dori-a-na:no "it is my house"

sara- gupu a nen "what (lit. who) is your name?"

sara-gano a babena "my name is Babena"

notice that "name" is treated as plural; this is Nilo-Saharan proper-
 no. 31 of Greenberg 1963a: 131-132).

Interrogation with interrogative words employs the pronouns
 sted under Major Word Classes above.

Non-verbal interrogation is by intonation with no word-order in-
 rsion or special particles, e.g.,

| | | | |
|--------------|----------------------|---------------|---------------|
| <u>lówò?</u> | "is it true?" | <u>á:lówò</u> | "it is true". |
| | (falling intonation) | | (answer) |

| | | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-----------|
| <u>a 'á:mio?</u> | "do you eat?" | <u>ine a:mio</u> | "you eat" |
| | (stress on <u>á:-</u>) | | |

Another variety of question, involving a degree of surprise or
 credulity, is one with the negative particle na-, very much as in
 glish, e.g.,

ine na:mio? "aren't you eating?"

Verbal negation involves the use of two negative particles: na,
 ot", nani, "not yet".

| | |
|--|--|
| indefinite verb, present time "I do not eat", etc. | definite verb, past time "I have not yet heard, understood", etc. |
| sg. <u>api na ka-ba:kio</u> | <u>api nani ki-šiko</u> |
| sg. <u>ine na ba:kio</u> | <u>ine nani šiku</u> |
| sg. <u>noŋ na ba:to</u> | <u>noŋ nani ki-šika</u> |
| pl. <u>age na ba:kor</u> | <u>age nani ki-šikto</u> |
| pl. <u>ige na ba:kor</u> | <u>ige nani šikto</u> |
| pl. <u>yok na ba:keo</u> | <u>yok nani ki-šikto</u> |

(Here the kv- prefix shows up in 3 sg. and 3 pl. as well as 1
 and 1 pl. See the note on p.549 above).

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| | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Exs. <u>dori nani ke-dero</u> | "the house has not yet leaked" |
| <u>ma nani ki-cidito</u> | "the water has not yet boiled" |

The negative imperative is formed from the subjunctive together with na:

| | | |
|----------|--------------|------------------|
| na ba:ka | pl. na ba:to | "do not eat!" |
| na šiga | pl. na šikto | "do not listen!" |
| na ire | pl. na irtto | "do not drink!" |

Non-verbal negation has a suffix -nau to both nouns and adjectives:

| | |
|--|---|
| <u>hiri nainunu muni-nau a tumuri</u> | "that man is not a Muni- he is a Bodi" |
| <u>bi-anunu cali-nau, a bwoca</u> | "your cow is not good-it is thin" |
| <u>a ca:li, gerði, lo:go</u> | "it is good, bad, true (lit.: word)" |
| <u>a cali naio, gerði naio, lo:go naio</u> | "it is not good, bad, true" |
| <u>api naio, ine naio, etc.</u> | "it is not I, it is not you" etc. |
| <u>namer naio, bäre naio</u> | "not now, not yesterday" |
| <u>tuno naio, i bai</u> | "it is not up, it is down". |

The negative copula is na, e.g.

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <u>api caci na k-anio, k-ani muni</u> | "I am not a Chachi- I am a Muni" |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|

Absence is indicated by nine, e.g.

| | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <u>Bura nine</u> | "there are no eggs" |
| <u>ulicagi wara nine</u> | "Ulichagi does not have a knife" |

The predicative copula is inflected for person and number:

"I am a big, thin, etc., Muni"

| | |
|--|--|
| 1 sg. api k-ani muni bwi, bwoca, etc. | 1 pl. age k-ano mun bibbi, bwocen, etc. |
| 2 sg. ipe ani muni bwi, bwoca, etc. | 2 pl. ige ano mun bibbi, bwocen, etc. |
| 3 sg. nonqa muni bwi, bwoca, etc. | 3 pl. yok a mun bibbi bwocen, etc. |

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The third person form a is used as a general copula, e.g.

| | |
|-------------|-------------------------------------|
| bi a golopi | "the cow is red" (or: a red cow) |
| ano butoga | "you (plural) are wrong" |
| k-ani api | "it is I" (lit.: I-am I) |

The reverse construction is used for emphasis:

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|
| k-ani muni api | " <u>I</u> am a Muni" |
| ano butoga ige | " <u>you</u> (pl.) are wrong" |

The idea of being present or in a place (existence) is conveyed by the copula -he- (pl. -ell-):

| | | | |
|-------|------------|-------|-------------|
| 1 sg. | api k-i-he | 1 pl. | age k-all-o |
| 2 sg. | ipe i-he | 2 pl. | ige ell-o |
| 3 sg. | noŋ i-he | 3 pl. | yok ell-e |

| | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <u>examples:</u> ŋani k-i-he | "I am still present, alive" |
| Bura ell-e | "are there any eggs?" |
| bio ell gašo | "the cattle are in the bush" |

Note that in the last example, the -a is dropped before the complement, cf. p.550 above. Further elision is seen in

| | |
|------------|--------------------------------------|
| ipe i ori | "where are you?" |
| k-i ŋa ba: | "I am here" (lit.: I-am this ground) |

As noted previously, this copula is also used to indicate possession.

The general connective is ko [ko], as in:

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| api ko ipe | "I and you" |
| hirama ko hiraŋaha | "the man and the woman" |
| ŋaina ko ŋainunu | "this and that" |
| api kori be ko kio | "I see the stone and the tree" |
| kabari k-orio ko ŋabi ki-šigio | "by eye I see and by ear I hear" |

"Either-or" ideas are expressed by use of the connective o: ɔ:, ɔ::], as in:

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| ina bo o: ina tino ŋaini | "either the big one or the little one" (lit.: "the big one or the little one, I do not know") |
|--------------------------|---|

ko-goyo o:: ɲa ko-goyo

"whether he goes or not"

k-ani ani o: ani ipe ɲgaini

"whether it is I or you, I don't know"

Compound verbs involving "say, do", etc., have not been found in Mursi.

5. Word shape and lexicon

The basic word shape is CVCV, but words are capable of expansion by means of prefixes and suffixes. As already discussed above under Basic Grammatical Categories, verbs occur in two aspect-differentiated stems. These are of form CVC, less common VC or CVV. The possible existence of tone classes or other morphological classes remains to be investigated.

Nouns may be grouped according to tone patterns.

Monosyllables: sú, "sun", búr, "ashes"; ma, "water", be, "stone"; má, "water", gò, "fire"; gò, "neck".

Bisyllables: high-high: gívéy, "bone", ídó, "cloud", nábí, "ear", sú:ne, "father", nóhú, "heart", kúttíj, "mountain", sárá, "name", lápóí, "grass", áccúk, "meat".

high-mid: gónwí, "bark of tree", kyéng, "belly", nába [nába], "blood", šwái, "bird", córe, "hair", gwíyo, "rain", góro, "road", kónu, "snake", tóbbe, "planet" (Amh.), níday, "tooth", únov, "louse", górái, "fat".

mid-high: waddí, "breast", baró, "night", buré, "smoke", kuró, "tail", erí, "skin".

mid-mid: ani, "I", sabba, "head", koni, "knee", ja:re, "foot", tagi, "moon", age, "we", giron, "nose", kio, "tree", sio, "hand", mai, "person, man".

high or mid-falling: íne, "thou", kayô, "tongue".

mid-low: tugò, "mouth", rossò, "dog", kerè, "horn", tarà, "liver".

There is reason to suspect that this analysis is inadequate. No noun is listed having initial low tone, and many of the 9 possible tone combinations (including only high, mid, and low) are missing. A re-analysis with a larger sample is badly needed.

Longer nouns (stress on first syllable): kabari, "eye", kíronov, "fly", hírensá, "woman", mupini, "star", libá [libá] kabari, "seed", bakumu: mul, "world", kuliló, "claw".

(Stress on second syllable): Ba:lógi, "leaf", Burái, "egg", úrgussi, "fish", kirimogi, "root".

Adjectives and other form classes have not been investigated.

Noun compounds are common, e.g.

sio hand sio tara palm of the hand

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| | | | |
|--------------|-------|-------------------|------------|
| <u>ja:re</u> | leg | <u>ja:re dul</u> | foot |
| <u>kiaŋo</u> | belly | <u>ma kiaŋo</u> | mid-stream |
| | | <u>kali kiaŋo</u> | mid-day |

Compare these with genitive constructions (see p. 556) in which the possessor takes a suffix and follows the possessed:

rum a ja:ruip "trousers" (cloth of the legs)

kiaŋ a biŋ "the belly of a cow"

Noun compounds with one component a derived noun also occur, e.g.,

é bá ágáyŋ "cooking place"
(bá, "place", aga- "cook")

é bá unwin "sleeping place"
(unwin derived from tun~ nua, "sleep"?)

For some general discussion of lexicon, including Mursi, Surma, and Nilo-Saharan, see Ch. 18.

Notes

1. Fuller accounts of Mursi ecology and subsistence may be found in Turton 1971, 1973, and forthcoming.
2. For information concerning this southern group of Kwegu, or Muguji, the authors are indebted to Jean Lydall and Ivo Strecker.
3. Tucker and Bryan (1956: 90) quote R. E. Lyth as reporting, in a personal communication, that "Zelmamu or Zulimamu is merely the name of a locality inhabited by the Suri" who live on the Boma plateau, in southern Sudan.
4. Reported by Harold Fleming and Serge Tornay.
5. But the account is very limited by the nature of the material collected; it is heavy on lexicon and light on grammar, as Ricci points out. A good bit of the bulk is provided by Ricci's valuable compilation and comparison of data on other languages. The Lyth grammar of Murle is a much more complete grammar of a Surma language (Lyth 1947).
6. Turton would like to record his deep appreciation of the help given him by Professor Tucker in the preparation of this summary.
7. Note the chance similarity of Mursi logo and Greek λογος, "word."

References

- Bender 1971; Bryan 1945; Cerulli 1942a; Conti Rossini 1914, 1927; Ferguson 1976; Haberland 1959, 1966; Lyth 1971; Marchetti 1939; Nalder 1937; Ricci 1971-72; Rizetto 1941; Tucker forthcoming; Tucker and Bryan 1956, 1966; Turton 1971, 1973, 1975, in press; Vannutelli and Citeroni 1899.