

Article

Case Marking in Kafa^{*}

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Abstract

The paper describes cases in Kafa, their marking of grammatical relations, and how case forms are influenced by the noun classes —proper and common (individuated and unindividuated)— with which they co-occur. Further, three types of subject (topic) constructions, nominative, non-nominative (oblique), and the subject of passive construction, direct and indirect objects, are also treated in this description. Kafa’s taxonomy of case shows the existence of $-\emptyset$ nominative, $-n$ accusative, $-\check{c}\check{c}$ oblique (in its generic sense) and $-o$ vocative cases. Kafa as a North Omotic language has reflexes of Proto-Omotic $*n$ accusative, $*s$ dative and $*n$ instrumental markers (Hayward and Tsuge 1998). Oblique case suffixes (instrumental, genitive, associative, benefactive, and allative) are semantic cases and are closely linked to Kafa postpositions.

1 Introduction

Kafa, a North Omotic Ethiopian language, has SOV word order and a nominative-accusative case system. Nominative is unmarked while accusative is marked by $-n$ (Fleming 1976:372-3; Hayward and Tsuge 1998: 23). Kafa case system retains reflexes of the Proto-Omotic $*n$ accusative $*s$ dative and $*n$ instrumental case markers (Hayward and Tsuge 1998).

Although two studies—Kassa (2012) and the present study—deal with case markers and systems in Kafa and rely on the same dialect, Gimbo, there are significant

^{*} The reviewer identified an alternate term for Kafa, namely Kafi Noonoo. Consistent with Fleming (1976) and Theil (2023a, b), I employed ‘Kafa’ as the standard form in the linguistic literature.

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differences in their labelling of case markers and treatment of the case system. Specifically, Kassa claimed (2012: 17-22) he relies on Dixon's Basic Linguistic Theory (2010 a, b) whereas the present work follows a descriptive, data-driven approach. Moreover, Kassa's (2012) dataset is larger than that of the present study, but the two use different numbering systems. Kassa assigned 43 numbers to his datasets, while the present study used 72. Five of Kassa's eight tables concern properties of nouns, personal pronouns, and non-personal pronouns. In contrast, all seven tables in the present study focus solely on the case properties of nominals. Given these distinctions, Kassa's master's dissertation merits separate study to capitalize on its significance.

Case markings of Kafa are discussed, relying on data collected from consultants at various times in 1992 at Addis Ababa and in 1998/9-2002/3 at Bonga town in the Kafa zone. School textbooks, religious literature, and other secular literature and dissertations have also been consulted. Since 2010, the online presence of Kafa speakers and their use of Kafa in social media have helped me to collect more data on the language and update my study.

I propose two levels of discussion: morpholexical and syntactic level markings of nominals, where most syntactic grammatical relations are marked by overt and distinct case markers depending on their interactions with focus and definiteness. Kafa nominals change their stem forms when they add a suffix¹. The suffix is attached after the alteration of the final vowel of the noun.

In combined and complex sentences, some nouns do not show overt case markings, but they still have clear roles in the sentence. To show the gap between the lack of overt case marking and its clear functions, I use an empty, $\emptyset$ symbol and the term 'zero case marking'. This makes uniform the description that, even when there is no case ending, the noun still has a case-related role in the sentence.

Syntactic case inflections are not straightforward nominative-accusative marking in Kafa. It mixes case marking (nominative, accusative, various oblique and vocative cases) as the following examples show.

¹ Kafa nouns have two sets of stem-final vowels; one in isolation, "terminal vowel (TV)", and the other in construction, 'stem-formative vowel'. Nouns in isolation usually end with /-o/, /-e/ and rarely in /-i/ and /a/. Hayward (1991) provided a detailed treatment of terminal vowels in North Omotic languages. Tesfaye (2022) and Theil (2023a, b) discussed Kafa case markers and noun ending vowels (TVs). At the present stage of Kafa studies, Theil stated watertight rules for the distribution of TVs have not been provided.

- (1) are- $\emptyset$ urro- $\emptyset$ baakko- $\emptyset$ gay-on č'ine-t-an
 she-NOM man-ACC chicken-ACC steal-GER see-PERF-3SG:F:SUBJ
 'She saw a man stealing a chicken'

- (2) ababi- $\emptyset$ mit'-on k'ofiyo-na kut't'i-t-e
 Abebe-NOM tree-ACC:DEF axe-INSTR cut-PERF-3SG:M:SUBJ
 'Abebe cut the tree with an axe'

In example (2) it is expected to see the change of *o* in *k'ofiyo* (*k'ofiyo-na*) to *e* or *i*. I have no explanation why it remained as *o*.

- (3) hiinn-o ne kone ne
 2SG:M-VOC be:PRES who be:PRES
 'Who are you!'

2 Grammatical relations properties

2.1 Verb agreement suffixes

Kafa is an SOV, head-final language, and typologically speaking, agreement marker suffixes are observed in columns 4 and 5 in table 1 below. The two subclasses of suffixes occur with modal and non-modal constructions.

Kafa basic sentences have obligatory subject-pronoun agreement suffixes on the verb; however, there are also prefixes, as in column 3 (Aberra 2003). These prefixes are similar to the personal pronoun citation forms (cf. column 2); functionally, the prefixes occur with nonfinite and conditional constructions. They also occur with the copula verb *to be* in finite clauses, functioning as a compound tense in a finite declarative clause and in future-tense and progressive-aspect constructions.

Table 1: Kafa subject agreement suffixes

	pronouns	prefixes	suffixes with modals	suffixes elsewhere
1sg	taa	taa	òn, àn, i	e, o, ø
2sg	nee	ne	ø	in
3sg:m	aroo/ bi	bi	a, aa	e
3sg:f	aree/ bi	bi	u	a(n)
1pl	noo	no	on	on
2pl	iitooši	iitoš	ot	ote
3pl	boonoši	boono/boonoš	eete /na'o	ete

2.2 Word order — SOV

In a three-word monotransitive Kafa sentence, the subject comes first, followed by the object and the verb. As is the case with unmarked typological SOV languages, Kafa has suffix inflectional markers, postpositions, and a head-final phrase or clause. The verb is also marked for subject agreement. As the verb is marked for the subject agreement, Kafa's lexical subject personal pronouns can be omitted.

- (4) bušo-ø maas'aaf-on kemi-t-e
 boy-NOM book-ACC buy-PERF-3SG:M:SUB
 S O V
 'A boy bought the book'

Although Kafa's unmarked word order is SOV, the word order of subjects, objects, and complements freely varies within a clause, as long as the grammatical relations of the nominals are unambiguous. In all cases, the verb occurs at the right end. In (5) and (6), subjects and objects interchange their positions.

- (5) maayo-n kafo-ø maa-h-e OSV
 food-ACC bird-NOM eat-IMPERF-3SG:M:SUBJ
 'The bird pecks the grain'
- (6) kafo-ø maayo-n maa-h-e SOV
 bird-NOM food-ACC eat-IMPERF-3SG:M:SUBJ
 'The bird pecks the grain'

3 Morpholexical markings of the case

Nominals have varied final vowels depending on their being in citation form (stand-alone; with stem-final vowel), as in a dictionary entry or when they are in construct form (stem-formative form; without final stem vowel), when the nominal has suffixes such as gender, number, and case. These changes in nominal final vowels take place regardless of their roles in phrasal and clausal constructions and regardless of the specific suffixes that identify their roles in the phrases and clauses.

3.1 Nouns and subclasses

From a 2000-word sample of the Kafa glossary (Aberra 2019), 898 are identified as nouns. From these 898, most nouns end in the vowel *o*, and about 80 (of 898) have *i/a* or *e*. These are citation forms (nouns in isolation). These nouns consist of the subclasses of proper and common nouns. There is a change in these vowels.

Table 2: Change of final stem vowels

ket'o	'house'
kečči–dečč	'under the house'
keččø–aafoč	'in front of the house'
kečče–gub	'behind the house'

Nominal non-initial consonants may have a change of articulations (*t' > čč* and others) when geminated (lengthened) (cf. Fleming 1976).

(7) ʔaʔo 'black'

(8) ʔaʔi–ø miimi
black-GEN (inalienable) cow
'the black cow'

(9) ʔaʔi–ø baago
black-GEN (inalienable) sheep
'the black sheep'

In cases where proper nouns are used in different grammatical relations, these vowels do not exhibit change.

- (10) almazi– $\emptyset$ kəbədi–n raheli–n tobi–ya mičč–a
 Almaz–NOM Kebede–ACC Rachel–ACC hit–COMPZR blackmail:PERF–3SG:F:SUBJ
 ‘Almaz blackmailed Kebede so that he would hit Rachel’

The same forms *almazi*, *kəbədi*, and *raheli* are used when they function as subjects, which shows uniformity of occurrence.

Kafa subject and direct object occur with the citation form, $-\emptyset$, except for proper nouns of individuated human beings, Kafa place names, names of months and animals.²

3.1.1 The two classes of nominals and their suffixes

For these two classes of nominals, case marking is composite.

3.1.1.1 Case marking system I

Whenever a noun is [–proper], [–definite], then overt nominative and accusative case markers are suppressed, the syntactic case $-\emptyset$ will be the default case marker form.

3.1.1.2 Case marking system II

Whenever specific properties of nominals change, the following rules will apply:

1. If the noun has the feature [+proper], the stem vowel form will be $-i$.
2. If the noun has the feature [+definite], the accusative will be $-n$ regardless of its being [+ or – proper].
 - 2.1. If a noun is [+proper], [+definite], then the accusative case is $-n$.

The exception is of proper nouns of individuated human beings and Kafa place names, when they occur as a subject, end in $-i$ (eg. 11) and as an object without $-i$ (eg. 12), see a counter example in (26). Accusative endings are $-\emptyset$ and $-n$. More study and data are needed to identify their difference in distribution.

- (11) ababi– $\emptyset$ mit’o–n k’ofiyo–na kut’t’i–t–e
 Abebe–NOM tree–ACC:DEF axe–INST cut–PERF–3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘Abebe cut the tree with an axe’

² The Kafa proper nouns are (a) personal names like *addii*, *yeeri*, *ačče*, *amete*, *allalla*; (Petros 2001); (b) Kafa place names *dečča*, *šapa*, *č’irri*, *tiffa*, *yeba*, *čema*, *kafa*, *bonga*, *gawwatta* (Petros 2001); (c) months *čečči* ‘August’, *guddii* ‘July’, *dudii* ‘June’, *diyii* ‘May’; and (d) some wild animals and insects *čaaqi* ‘porcupine’, *geppečče* ‘frog’, *šakke* ‘monkey’, *waro wabe* ‘mole’, *šunne* ‘mosquito’ These nouns end in $-i/a$ and rarely $-e$.

Generic names of animals, some insects and countable concrete nouns are also examples: *genget t’o* ‘snail’ *injinjo* ‘wasp’, Kafa clans’ names *menjo*, *mano*, *kašemo*, *manoččo*, *oddo*, *gatto*, etc (Petros 2001).

- (12) ta- $\emptyset$ kəbəd- $\emptyset$ wom-on k’awi-y-o
 I-NOM Kebede-ACC come-INF want-IMPERF-1SG:SUBJ
 ‘I want Kebede to come’

- 2.2. If a noun is [–proper], [+definite], the stem vowel is in *o*, the accusative case is *–n*.

3.2 Pronouns and their case markers

3.2.1 Nominative case

Independent personal pronouns exist in either isolated (elicitation) or nominative case form $\emptyset$.

Table 3: Subject and independent personal pronouns $-\emptyset$

1sg.	taa
2sg.	nee
3sg.m	aroo/ bii
3sg.f	aree/ bii
1pl.	noo
2pl.	iitooši
3pl.	boonoši/ arenaʔo

3.2.2 Accusative case

Accusative is marked by *–n*. The stem for the accusative forms is the same as that of the independent forms.

Table 4: Object Pronouns *–n*

1sg.	taa–n
2sg.	nee–n
3sg.m	bii–n
3sg.f	(no data)
1pl.	no–n
2pl.	iitošin
3pl.	boono–ši–n

3.2.3 Dative Case

Even though the data for the indirect object pronouns are meagre, in table (5) we see a trend of marking dative case /č(i)/, possibly s/š as dative marker (as in the third person singular) is the proto form.

Table 5: Indirect Object Pronouns –č

1sg.	taa–č
2sg.	nee–s / ne–š / neeč
3sg.m	bii–s / bii–š
3sg.f	bii–č
1pl. - 3pl.	(no data for plurals)

3.2.4 Genitive case

Genitive is prototypically marked by the suffix –čč as shown in table (6).

Table 6: Genitive Pronouns (+ object) –čč

1sg.	ta–čč
2sg.	nee–č
3sg.m	bii– č
3sg.f	are–č
1pl.	no–čč
2pl.	iitoši–čč
3pl.	bonnoši–čč

3.2.5 Benefactive Case

/-š/ is observed mainly as a benefactive case marker. Before observing the data, the two benefactive and reflexive forms are found to be used interchangeably. They are presented in the two tables below.

Table 7: Benefactive Pronouns –ši

1sg.	taaši / taoši
2sg.	neeši / neoši
3sg.m	biinoši / arooši
3sg.f	areoši
1pl.	nooši
2pl.	iittoši
3pl.	boonoši

3.2.6 Benefactive – Reflexive case

Benefactive – reflexive case is marked in one of two ways but not both at the same time.

The combined term benefactive – reflexive reflects the use of ‘self’ in contrast to the bare benefactive ‘for object pronoun’. As table (8) demonstrates benefactive – reflexive case markers are *–k’ellič* ‘head’ and *–š*.

Table 8: Benefactive – Reflexive Pronouns *–k’ellič* ‘head’ and *–š*

1sg.	tak’ellič / taoši
2sg.	nek’ellič / neoši
3sg.m	bik’ellič / arok’ellič / biinoši / arooši
3sg.f	arek’ellič / biinoši / areoši
1pl.	nok’ellič / nooši
2pl.	ittok’ellič / ittooši
3pl.	bok’ellič / boonoši

4 Syntactic case markers and their distributions

Kafa nominal markers, including case inflections, can be classified into syntactic (4.1), those marking grammatical relations in basic sentences —nominative, accusative, oblique, and vocative — and semantic (4.2), those with meaning import and overlapping with postpositions of Kafa.

4.1 Core cases - Syntactic case markers

Nominative is unmarked (*–ø*) while accusative is marked by *–n* (Fleming 1976: 372-3). As demonstrated, mixing of case markings is prevalent, with Kafa marking grammatical relations such as subject and object with the nominative, accusative, oblique, and vocative cases. Moreover, the grammatical subject, direct object and predicate complement of the verb *to be* are marked by *–ø* (eg. 14). In addition, case marking is closely tied to noun subclasses (proper, common) and definiteness for its occurrence.

- (13) hinn–o ne kone ne
 2SG:M–VOC be:PRES who be:PRES
 ‘Who are you!’

- (14) baago aat’t’o ne
 sheep expensive be:PRES
 ‘The sheep is expensive’

4.1.1 Nominative case – Subject

A nominative case has $-\emptyset$ marker. The nominal is the citation form in, $-o$. Exceptions include inherently feminine nouns, some nouns like *yeeri* ‘God’, kinship terms like *maače* ‘female’, *amate* ‘father or mother-in-law’, *mane* ‘sister’, and the subclasses of proper nouns listed earlier. Most proper nouns are marked by $-i$.

- (15) *kassi- $\emptyset$ epi-t-e*
 Kassa–NOM cry–PERF–3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘Kassa cried’

- (16) *abəbi- $\emptyset$ kəbədi- $\emptyset$ ham-on geti-t-e*
 Abebe–NOM Kebede–NOM leave–INF say/tell–PERF–3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘Abebe said that Kebede left’

- (17) *abəbi- $\emptyset$ kəbədi-č haili- $\emptyset$ ham-on geti-t-e*
 Abebe–NOM Kebede–OBL Hailu–NOM leave–INF say/tell–PERF–3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘Abebe told Kebede that Hailu left’

Pronoun subjects exist in their citation form as nominative, as exemplified in the paradigm below.

Table 9: Subject pronouns in their citation forms

<i>taa waa-t</i>	‘I came’
<i>nee waa-t-in</i>	‘you (SG) came’
<i>aroo waa-t-e</i>	‘he came’
<i>aree waa-t-an</i>	‘she came’
<i>noo waa-t-on</i>	‘we came’
<i>iitooši waa-t-ote</i>	‘you (PL) came’
<i>boonoši waa-t-ete</i>	‘they came’

In addition, Kafa subject nominal exhibits, equi-NP deletion (18), and reflexivization (19).

- (18) *ta- $\emptyset$ giĵjo-n gay-oč šəligi-y-o*
 I–NOM money–ACC steal–SUB think–PRES-1SG
 ‘I think to steal (of stealing) the money’

The subject of the nonfinite subordinate clause is zero. I translated the subordinate verb which is marked by –oč as in gay–oč.

- (19) ta–ø taoši –ø č’iinn–et
 I–NOM myself–ACC see–PERF:1SG:SUBJ
 ‘I saw myself’

Passivization promotes the non-subject argument to a grammatical subject (topic) position. Kafa marks passive by lengthening the verb stem vowel and the ultimate consonant. *eeččete* ‘he asked’; *eeččeette* ‘he was asked’; *dokirite* ‘he circumcised’ and *dokirette* ‘he was circumcised’.

- (20) kunano–n taa–na t’oobbe–h–e
 dog–ACC 1SG–INST hit:PASS-IMPERF-3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘The dog is hit by me’

Usually, the agentive complement is suppressed, but if the subject occurs with the instrumental (20) or accusative case marker (21), then the non-subject agent (topic) *bušo* was promoted as exemplified below.

- (21) bušo–ø urro–n t’oobbe–h–e
 boy–NOM man–ACC hit:PASS –IMPERF–3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘The boy is hit by the man’

4.1.2 Accusative case — Direct object

Accusative is marked by –n. In most cases, the accusative –n is suffixed to –o except for proper names, where the accusative is suffixed to –i. The presence of –n is strongly influenced by the definiteness of the object, as exemplified in the following sentence.

- (22) baaro–ø maa–h–e
 maize–ACC eat–IMPERF–3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘He ate maize’

- (23) baaro–n maa–h–e
 maize–ACC eat–IMPERF–3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘He ate the maize’

- (24) almazi– $\emptyset$ kəbədi–n raheli–n tobi–ya mičč–a
 Almaz–NOM Kebede–ACC Rachel–ACC hit–COMPZR blackmail:PERF–3SG:F:SUBJ
 ‘Almaz blackmailed Kebede so that he would hit Rachel’

Direct object is alternately marked by $\emptyset$.

- (25) raheli– $\emptyset$ gabr– $\emptyset$ muzo–n mam–on č’inə–t–an
 Rachel–NOM Gebre–ACC banana–ACC eat–INF see–PERF–SG:F:SUBJ
 ‘Rachel sees Gebre eating the banana’

Example (25) has a proper noun object with the $\emptyset$ accusative case marker, demonstrating that case marking is influenced by the noun's subclass.

- (26) daabo– $\emptyset$ maa–t–i
 bread–NOM eat–PERF–1SG:SUBJ
 ‘I ate bread’
- (27) kassi– $\emptyset$ buš–iš–oč daabo–n k’ut’i–t–e
 Kassa–NOM child–PL–OBL bread–ACC cut–PERF–3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘Kassa cut the bread for the children’

4.1.3 Oblique case– Indirect object

Oblique case –čč marks indirect objects with various semantic import.

- (28) kassi– $\emptyset$ uurey–ičč k’aamašo– $\emptyset$ keemi–t–e
 Kassa–NOM woman–OBL skirt–ACC buy–PERF–3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘Kassa bought a skirt for the woman’
- (29) uure– $\emptyset$ bušo–č aač’o–n immi–t–an
 woman:DEF–NOM child–OBL water–ACC give–PERF–3SG:F:SUBJ
 ‘The woman gave the child the water’

In a typical sentence like (28 or 29), an indirect object follows a subject.

- (30) aabeti kuwaaso–n keeme–k’k’i taa–čč immi–t–e
 Abeti ball–ACC buy–GER 1SG–OBL give–PERF–3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘Abeti gave the ball to me after buying it’

- (31) taa–čč im–be
 1SG–OBL give–IMPERATIVE
 ‘(Lit. me-for give) Give it to me’

The indirect object has one distinctive feature from the subject and the direct object being marked by –čč. As examples (30) and (31) display various positions of indirect objects, they almost always occurred with the oblique –čč case marker regardless of their positions in the sentence.

- (32) aabeti kuwaaso–n keeme–k’k’i taa–čč immi–t–e
 Abeti ball–ACC buy–GER 1SG–OBL give–PERF–3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘Abeti gave the ball to me, (after) buying it’

The oblique –čč marks the experiencer subject as in the following sentence.

- (33) šunne– ččo waa–t–e
 worker–OBL come–PERF–3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘The worker came’

From the above examples, the Kafa case markings of grammatical relations do not seem to be a reliable mechanism, as the same case marks different grammatical relations.

In the specific discourse context of blessing and expressing one's indebtedness, three-place verbs like give are observed occurring without either a direct or indirect object.

- (34) yeeri–ø im–b–a
 God–NOM give–JUSSIVE–3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘Let God give you (on my behalf)!’

Amharic has a similar expression *ʔigzer yi–sit’–il–iññ* (God 3SG:M:SUBJ–give–BENEF–1SG:OBJ) ‘(Lit.) let God give you on behalf of me’. It has both direct and indirect object pronoun agreement markers on the verb, whereas Kafa shows subject agreement only.

In the following instance, the grammatical subject (topic) is marked by the oblique case as in (eg. 33) repeated here as (eg.35).

- (35) šunne–ččo waa–t–e
 worker–OBL come–PERF–3SG:M
 ‘The worker came’

4.1.4 Vocative case

Vocative is a type of case that is mostly inflected for personal pronouns with the *–o* suffix. It has a very productive use in the day-to-day greetings of the Kafa people, used for calling purposes. One exception that Theil (2023:990) cited from the Kafa New Testament is *nihoo* ‘father’ and the vocative is *nihoo–čo* ‘father!’.

A vocative pronoun, regardless of its grammatical role, is marked by the vocative *–o*.

- (36) hiinn–o ne kone ne
 2SG:M–VOC be:PRES who be:PRES
 ‘Who are you!’

Table 10: Vocative second person pronouns

hiinn–o	you–SG:M:VOC	‘you!’
hiinn–e	you–SG:F:VOC	‘you!’
hiinn–ote	you–PL:VOC	‘you!’
hiinn–ote	you– SG:M:POL:VOC	‘you!’
hiinn–oti	you–SG:F:POL:VOC	‘you!’
hiinn–ošite	you–PL: POL:VOC	‘you!’

The language has second singular, plural and polite pronoun forms used in conversation for calling or indicating purposes which are distinct from the regular *nee* ‘you (SG)’; *ittoši* ‘you (PL)’. *hiinn–* is a suppletive vocative and polite form for the personal pronoun forms *nee* ‘you (SG)’; *ittoši* ‘you (PL)’ identical / similar to the proximal deictic pronoun. There are also other polite forms in Kafa *ittó* 2SGM.POL *itti*, 2SGF.POL *ittoši* 2PL.POL (Theil p.c. 2002) and *bó* ‘she (SG) polite’ (Ado 1999:27).³

³ Acute accents in Theil’s and Ado’s examples refer to the high tone of Kafa.

It may be that people do not prefer to use *nee* and *ittoši* and resort to the singular and plural deictic markers *hinni* ‘this’ and *hinnoši* ‘these’. Deictic pronouns may be considered more polite than personal pronouns.

Various case markers occur with the same grammatical relations, which has led to the conclusion that syntactic case is not determined solely by the grammatical relations in which they occur, but by other post-basic sentence factors such as discourse and pragmatics.

4.1.5 Fleming’s (1976) and Marcos’s (1982) views on case markers in Kafa

Fleming (1976:372-3) stated that “the object of action is most frequently unmarked but may have an accusative marker /n/ suffixed. Concerning the object/accusative, he further stated that ‘what is not clear are the conditions under which object marker /n/ is used’”.

Marcos (1982:35) summarized that the possessive genitive, dative, instrumental, locative, etc, are marked by /-(v) C (v) / (Table 11 and examples 37 - 41):

Table 11: Marcos’s examples of pronouns	
taa–čč imbe	‘give it me’
kunano bii–č beete	‘He has a dog’
bi niho gaʔo–č	‘near his father’
gabbere deči–čči	‘under the stool’
miči toomoyi–čč	‘on the tree’
kaassi–č bagenaʔo	‘Kassa’s sheep’
aroo–či k’ello	‘his hair’
gaayo–či miimi	‘the chief’s cow’

The genitive of locative and source is usually unmarked, as in (37)–(41).

- (37) yoo–či aabo
 winter sun ‘sun of winter time’

- (38) ne giidoo
 your knee ‘your knee’

- (39) boongi asenaʔo
 Bonga people ‘people of Bonga’

Kafa has an instrumental case marker *–na* ‘by or with’

- (40) k’ofiyo–na
axe–with ‘with/by an axe’

- (41) gumbo–na
stick–with ‘with/by stick’

4.2 Semantic cases

In this description, semantic cases can be dichotomized into two: Postpositional cases/locative phrases and Non-postpositional.

4.2.1 Postpositional cases

Some Kafa case markers are postpositional. There is no clear-cut border distinguishing semantic case markers from postpositional phrases [except sometimes for the larger disyllabic phonological size of the postposition and monosyllabic size of the semantic case markers]. As most postpositional cases have locative meanings, they are listed here with the noun *ket’o* ‘house’.

Table 12: Postpositional cases

ket’o–waan	‘to the house’
ket’o–čče	‘from the house’
kečči–dečč	‘under the house’
kečči–deš	‘below the house’
kečč–aafoč	‘in front of the house’
ket’o–č	‘for the house’
ket’o–na	‘with the house’
ket’o–mona	‘like a house’
kečči–č	‘for the (sake of the) house’
ket’o–č	‘in the house’
kečče–gub	‘behind the house’

The word *ket’o–č* represents both ‘in’ and ‘for the house’ by tone or vowel length of -o.⁴

Kafa has instrumental, associative, benefactive, allative and genitive (alienable and nonalienable) meaning-based cases.

⁴ The reader raised a good question as vowel length is marked elsewhere, similarly it is also possible here to mark it as in *ket’oo–č*. I refrain to construct it as I have no actual data.

(a) Instrumental

- (42) k’awo–na
rifle–INST
‘with a rifle’

- (43) kassi–ø kamelo–na haami–t–e
Kassa–NOM car–INST go–PERF–3SG:M:SUBJ
‘Kassa went by car’

(b) Associative case has an identical form with instrumental *–na*.

- (44) ket’o–na tokki
house–ASSO with
‘with the family (metaphorical)’

- (45) aro iibo–na tokkiye giifiro–ø maa–h–e
he guests–ASSO with supper–ACC eat–IMPERF–3SG:M:SUBJ
‘He eats supper with the guests’

(c) Allative is a type of locative case marked by *–waan*, with the meaning to, towards.
It is a direction locative.

- (46) ket’o–waan
house–ALLAT
‘to/ towards the house’

(d) Inalienable possession is marked by *–i* (47-48); however, if the possessive relationship is alienable, the marker is *–e* (49-51).

- (47) kaaf–i donoete doyečo
Kafa–GEN poetry student
‘student of Kafa poetry’

(48) eeḵḵ-i k'ifo
 milk-GEN mug
 'mug for drinking milk'

(49) gatt-e k'aro
 ox-GEN horn
 'horn of ox'

(50) baag-e ʔeet'o
 sheep-GEN fur
 'fur of a sheep'

(51) k'oond-e noonoo
 pot-GEN mouth
 'mouth of a pot (pot's mouth)'

If, for some predictable reason, the nominative, accusative or oblique cases fail to appear, then the noun occurs in the citation forms.

(52) woraferašo-∅ kooričo-n kori-t-e
 chief-NOM letter-ACC write-PERF-3SG:M:SUBJ
 'The chief wrote the letter'

Fleming (1976) and Marcos (1982) noted a genitive in *-ičč* and *-čo* with pronouns as *ta-ččo* 'my', *nee-ččo* 'your', *bii-ččo* 'his/her', see Table 11. Details are unclear to me at present.

5 Mixed case markings (and interactions of case roles)

The two levels (morpholexical and syntactic) of case marking cover most nominal roles in constructions. Mainly due to interactions between syntactic and semantic roles, residues of case forms, and exceptions involving mixing or unexplained case marking have been observed.

Kafa has an ∅ (phonetically null) case marker that occurs with the grammatical relations subject and object.

5.1 Object with *ø* and *n* markers

- (53) hayli-*ø* gaabeero-*ø* keem-et
 Hailu-NOM chair-ACC buy-PERF:3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘Hailu bought a chair’

- (54) dahero-*ø* šuuri-t-e
 lion-NOM move-PERF-3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘The lion has moved’

Accusative *ø* and *n* mark direct objects, and the two forms complement each other with indefinite and definite objects.

- (55) baaro-*ø* maa-h-e
 maize-ACC eat-IMPERF-3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘He ate maize’

- (56) baaro-n maa-h-e
 maize-ACC eat-IMPERF-3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘He ate the maize’

Sometimes the absolute *-ø* is found marking both the subject and direct object of the same basic monotransitive sentence of the language.

5.2 Nominative subjects and non-nominative subjects

The non-nominative grammatical subject can be marked by an oblique case as in the following cases.

- (57) ikke gato taa-čč bee-t-e
 one ox 1SG-OBL have-PERF-3SG:M:SUBJ or 1SG:SUBJ?
 ‘I have an ox’

- (58) kunano bii-čč bee-t-e
 dog 3SG:M-OBL have-PERF-3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘He has a dog’

- (59) šunne–ččo waa–t–e
 worker–OBL come–PERF–3SG:M
 ‘The worker came’

It can be argued that a non-nominative subject occurs frequently in possessive relationships, and it poses a problem for the description.

5.3 The predicative nominal of the verb ‘to be’ has the – $\emptyset$ marker.

- (60) hinni gabaro– $\emptyset$ ne
 this chair–NOM be:PRES
 ‘This is a chair’

5.4 The vocative case-marked nominal can function as a predicate complement

- (61) hiinn–o ne kone ne
 2SG:M–VOC be:PRES who be:PRES
 ‘Who are you!’

5.5 A usually suppressed agent complement of the passive construction is marked by instrumental –*na*.

- (62) kunano–n taa–na t’oobbe–h–e
 dog–ACC 1SG–INST hit:PASS-IMPERF-3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘The dog is hit by me’

A suppressed agent alternately marked by the accusative –*n*

- (63) bušo– $\emptyset$ urro–n t’oobbe–t–e
 boy–NOM man–ACC hit:PASS–PERF–3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘The boy is hit by the man’

The cases are composite in nature whenever the nominative, accusative or oblique cases fail to appear for some predictable reason. For instance, if the noun is [- proper], and/or [- definite], then the noun occurs with the default null form regardless of the nominal being a subject or complement of a verb.

- (64) woraferašo– $\emptyset$ kooričo–n kori–t–e
 chief–NOM letter–ACC write–PERF–3SG:M:SUBJ
 ‘The chief wrote the letter’

The two levels of case-marking rules cover the vast majority of Kafa syntactic cases. However, there are exceptions or residues. For instance, in the following Kafa sentence (65), which was extracted from a story written in Kafa orthography and converted here to the phonetic alphabet, let us focus on *urro* ‘man’, which appears as *urreenon* ‘the man’.

- (65) k’aaʔe gat’očč giddačč–aa urr–ee–n–on
 cliff near coming.close–3SG:F:SUBJ man–F–ACC–ACC
 mič’o–čč giya–h–an
 laugh–on/at start–IMPERF–3SG:F:SUBJ
 ‘She, coming very close to the cliff, starts laughing at the man’
 (Story 13 p.21 line 6-7)

How do we account for the form *urreenon* ‘the man’ with *–eenon* as its suffix? For this example, the likelihood of an error is minimal as the story is written down by a native speaker and edited by two native speakers (language teachers) without interference or suggestion from the researcher. The first problem is *–ee*. The Kafa word for ‘man’ is *urro*, which is masculine. There is a change from *urro* → *urree*, and *–ee* is a feminine form. We may guess and state that it has been used here as a polite form, as the story dictates (but it needs to be attested). Then we have two “*–n*”s that make the accusative doubly, and the intervening *–o* is also a construct state noun marker. This is a mixed-case usage.

One possibility is that the *urreenon* might be doubly case-marked—one for syntactic and the other for semantic — simultaneously, as accusative, with postpositional meanings at/ by/ on. The clue is the verb *mič’–*. It is an intransitive verb, hence it does not subcategorize internal actant-direct object but can govern it, so it will assign *–n* accusative, and for the actant to appear semantically, it needs at least a postposition case *–on*.

Another more probable explanation is the first “*n*” in *urr–ee–n–on* after *–ee* marks accusative case, and the *–on* can be any focus or discourse marker.

This and other evidence lead to the proposal of a mixed case-marking system for Kafa. Leading the argument further and following the line of argument that morpholexical, $\emptyset$

and the other syntactic cases co-occur as compositional. In most Kafa sentences, cases interact and overlap in marking grammatical relations, as exemplified here in section 5.

6 Conclusion

Case markers involve syntactic functions, and the semantic and pragmatic roles of the actants as demonstrated in Kafa. Case markers are not isolated functions of nominals' role in phrases and clauses; case markers interact heavily with other properties of the actants, including the citation and construct forms of the nominals. In his deliberation, Hayward (1991:537) emphasized that phonological processes play a significant role in the surface forms of agreement markers. This can be extended mainly to the oblique case, where the conflation of cases uses –čč, inherent phonological form as well as phonologically derived form from other sounds, how the word *ket'o* 'house' changes its ultimate consonant *kečč*). Mixed case markings, phonological alterations, and –∅ case markings are additional avenues for further deliberations on the Kafa case.

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