# 22 MURSI

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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 Hamer-Bako-Geleb
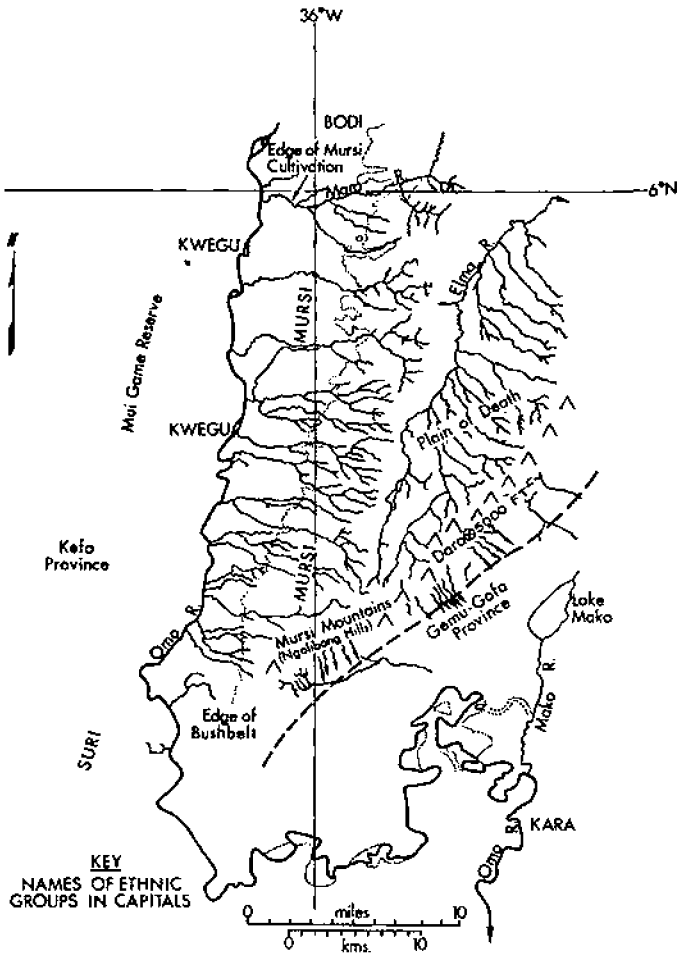
Map 22.1: Mursi Country

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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 them-
selves mun (sing. muni), but the present writers have decided to
use the term Mursi, because it seems preferable to them not to intro-
duce 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 "Tdamá" 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 culti-
vation. They are called tumura (sing.: tumuri) by the Mursi, and
call themselves me?en (sing.: me?enit). 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
nidi (sing.: nidini) by the Mursi and yidi (sing.: yidinit) 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 servi-
ces 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 exis-
tence 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 them-
selves, although they also acknowledge the name muguji, which is

used of them by the Kara (older literature: Kerre), with whom they
live in close association.[2] Although some intermarriage has pro-
bably 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 is 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.: oaci),
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 dif-
ferent 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 exist-
ing 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 baleθa (sg.:
baleθi), 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 nangatom 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 nikoroma, and the Mursi nikalabong. 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 Bòttego, 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 Bòttego'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 Hohnel 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 Citerni 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 Minilik'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 Bòttego 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 Bòttego 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 Nalder (1937), Marchetti (1939), and Rizetto (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 mentioned[5] 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. L. 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 $\underline{\theta}$ is in alternation with $\underline{s}$ in the speech of some individuals, though some more-or-less consistently use one or the other.

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4. <u>G r a m m a r</u>

4.1 <u>Major Word Classes</u>

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 <u>Pronouns</u>

Pronouns show an <u>n</u> element in the singular and <u>g</u> 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.	aɲi	[aɲɩ]	aɲoi
2 sg.	iɲe		iɲoi
3 sg.	noŋ	[nɔŋ]	ɲai
1 pl.	age		agyu
2 pl.	ige	[ɩge]	igyu [ɩgyu]
3 pl.	yok	[yɔk]	yokyu [yɔkyu]

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

The object pronouns will be illustrated in the frame:

"The man gives <u>me</u> food"

ŋa hɩra Baʔa 'aːj-a-<u>in</u>-o

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

Similarly, "I give (to) <u>you</u>"

k-aj- <u>in</u>-o

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

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"The man gives me food"

ŋa hɪra Baʔa 'a:ɟ-a-in-o

1 sg.	'a:ɟ-a-in-o		1 pl.	'a:ɟ-it-o
2 sg.	'a:ɟ- in-o		2 pl.	'a:ɟ- un-o
3 sg.	'a:ɟ- e-o		3 pl.	'a:ɟ- e-o

Similarly, "I give (to) you"

k-aɟ- in-o

| 2 sg. | k-aɟ-in-o | | 2 pl. | k-aɟ-un-o |
| 3 sg. | k-aɟ-e-o | | 3 pl. | k-aɟ- e-o |

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When the verb is in the past, the n element is palatalized to ɲ e.g., zu(g)o ɲa giniɲo, "did the people not ask you (sg.)?" [zu(ɤ)o ɲa gɪnɪɲo].

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

ki-hini iɲe   "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 iɲe, 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.

	Sing. Possessed		Pl. Possessed	
1 sg.	dori-a-na:no	"my	doren-a-gaɲo	"my
2 sg.	dori-a-nunu	house"	doren-a-guɲu	houses"
3 sg.	dori-a-nene:	etc.	doren-a-geɲo	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-gaɲo, etc. with plural possessed.

Interrogatives occur in forms variegated as to number and case.

"who?"

Nom. sg.	noi	Nom pl.	gyoi
Acc.	nen		
Gen.	ni: (sg. possessed)		
	gi: (pl. possessed)		

"which?"

Sg.   ainoi   pl.   agyoi

"what?"

ʔoŋ, also sometimes neŋ (="who?")

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Examples:

buna hin <u>noi</u>	"who wants coffee?"
lami <u>neŋ</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>agyoi</u>	"which people?"
a θukti ke <u>gyoi</u>	"who are these people?"
a <u>ʔoŋ~a</u> oŋ	"what is it?"
hini <u>ʔoŋ</u>	"what do you want?"
rui <u>ʔoŋ</u>	"what are you crying for?"
seni e:~<u>neŋ</u>	"what did you say?"
ke-meθi e:~<u>neŋ</u>	"what shall I do?"
sara guŋu a <u>neŋ</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:nè or ko:n, 2. ràmàn, 3. θìzzì, 4. uwl or wu:š, 5. há:nán, 6. ìllè, 7. ìθa:bài, 8. ìθθè, 9. θàkàl, 10. tomon. Of these, "9" 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 kòn ("twenty" lit. man -one), hir kon ko tomon (30), θuo raman (40 - lit. people two), θuo há:nan (100). Note that in the numerals, θ ~ s so that we may hear sizzì, etc. Also, the pronunciation of θuo is very short, sounding like θᵘo 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"	kiɲaŋ i kido-<u>tui</u>	"a crocodile is in the river"

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	k-ɔgoi dori-<u>tui</u> [k-ɔʁoi dɔri-<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:š-<u>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:ɲi 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 augum-<u>o</u>	"at the foot of the tree" (lit.: tree buttock-at)
"for"	ki timi-<u>θe</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"	ŋaina-ko ŋaina <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"

Prepositions:

"before" (time) sabo....   (from <u>sa:ba</u> "head")

"after" (time) wurio....

    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. ~i	pl. zero	
kironoi	kirono	"fly"
šwai	šowa	"bird"
sg. zero	pl. -cin	
go	gocin	"fire"
wara	waracin	"knife"
sg. zero	pl. -(i)o	
bi	bio	"cow"
gongul	gongulo	"canoe"
[gɔŋgUl]	[gɔŋgUlo]	
kama	kamaio	"bag"
sg. -i	pl. -a	
lusi	lusa	"boy"
baɲi	baɲa	"pond"
sg. zero	pl. -ɲa	
uli	uliɲa	"bull"
lukwe	lukweɲa	"chicken"
sg. -i, -a, -o	pl. -en, -ena, -eno	
dori	doren	"house"

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ela	elen	"waterhole"
kido	kiden	"river"
ŋoro	ŋorena	"elephant"
kio	keno	"tree"

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

šu:ne	šu:ge	"father"	⎫ terms of
jone	juge	"mother"	⎬ reference
ŋone	ŋonigen	"sister"	⎭
gwodine	gwodiŋgen	"brother"	

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

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

liba gai "our (incl.) sorghum"

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

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

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

	sg.	pl.	
"this"	ŋa-lusi-ta	ŋa-lusa	"boy"
	ŋa-dori-ta	ŋa- doren	"house"
	ŋa-ki -ta	ŋa- keno	"tree"
"that"	ŋa- lusi -tuni	ŋa- lusa-gunu	"boy"
	ŋa-dori -tuni	ŋa-doren-gunu	"house"
	ŋa- ki -tunu	ŋa- 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 ŋa-ina, "this boy"; lusi ŋa-inunu, "that boy".

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

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

Examples of referential demonstratives: ena 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 goloɲa

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-aɲaha	pl.	zu-aɲaha	"woman"
ŋatuiɲ	pl.	ŋatuiɲa	"lion"
ŋatuiɲ-amai	pl.	ŋatuiɲ-ama	"male lion"
ŋatuiɲ-aɲaha	pl.	ŋatuiɲ-aɲaha	"lioness"

Similarly for lukwe ("fowl"), medere ("sheep"), toŋo ("goat"), ɲoro ("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"

    toŋo ba(g) laɲoi   "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 - luθi),

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

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

mor lam hiri-o ("man"; hiri)	"the man is looking for the calf"
Dole lam mor	"the girl looks for the calf"
mor lam Dole-o	(lit.: calf looks-for girl)
bi bá(g) gušúr [bi ba(ɣ) gJšUrr]	"a hyena is eating the cow" ("hyena": gušur-o)
ŋoro ba laŋoi laŋoi ba ŋor ("elephant": ŋoro)	"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 -iŋ. Examples:

komoru	priest	or a komoru-iŋ	the priest's homestead
bi	cow	giyey a bi-ŋ	a cow's bone
tugul	man's name	ŋa: tugul-i	Tugul's wife
ŋacaha	woman's name	lusi a ŋacaha-i	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 (ɔrr); gai bush, forest, ŋoro 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-uŋusi 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.

ŋa-hiri,   "that man!"

ŋa-lui-ta (< ŋa-luθi-ta),   "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

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:

Indefinite		Definite		Proposed Stem	Gloss
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-ŋusio	tuŋo	ku-tuŋa	ku-tuŋno	ŋus-,tuŋ-	"sleep"
ku-curio	curto	ku-curta -cura	ku-curto -cura	cur-	"wash" (t.v.)
k-orio	orto	k-ara	k-arto	or-,ar-	"see"
ki-cibio	cipto	ke-cepta -cebba	ke-cepto -cebbo(?)	cip-,cep-	"tie up"
ki-libio	lipto	ki-lipta -libba	-lipto	lip-	"sour" (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 -zekka	ke-zekto	zik-,zek-	"move camp"
ku-dugio	dukto	ku-duka	ku-duk-to	duk-	"plant"
ke-begio	bekto	ke-bekta -bekka	ke-bekto -bekko (?)	bek-	"watch over"
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 ba:to	ka-ba:ka	ka-ba:to	ba:k-	"eat"

The stems are arranged in groups according to the apparent assim-
ilative 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 ø after y), 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 interpre-
ted as matt-o 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 → ø in the case of tuŋo). 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
he fifth group of two, -t- occurs after -p (< -b), with the possible
ariant -bb- in place of -pt in some cases. In the sixth group of
ight, -t- occurs after -k (< -g), except that some variants occur
    -k-→ø, -kt-→-tt-, -t-→ ø).

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

    Reference to data on other Surma languages (Tucker and Bryan
966: 382 ff.) shows the presence of a -t- or -θ- in plural conju-
ations, but the data is too scanty to throw any light on the problem.
Murle has it also, see Lyth 1947: 25 ff.)

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

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

    logo ki-šigio   "the word I understand"

    ki-šigi logo   "I understand the word"

    runo talo   "tomorrow he will buy"

    tal ʔoŋ   "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	šegeo	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 _bak-_		Stem _am-_
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 ácuúk, "I am eating meat".)

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

runo _bure_ k-okoiyo   "tomorrow morning I will go"

hale _kalio_ orio   "later today you will see"

k-uŋusi uŋo sizzi na kunio   "I will come after three nights"
(lit.: I-sleep sleeps three and I-come).

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. _kiŋiŋ_ is an intensifier used with _be-_ or _burto_ for emphasis.

Examples:

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

loko-be-šiku	"have you heard the news?"
[lɔɤo bɛ- 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"
šuːnu 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:

gwìo wà'dáːk-á	"rain has fallen"
gwìo daːk-t-o	"rain is falling"

with the subordinate verbs in:

hùlì gwìo 'dak-t-e ku dug liwa:

"when/if rain falls one plants sorghum"

hùlì kè'hé-waːr-o-e lìbà l'lúːŋio

(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.,

sg.	pl.	
baːka [baːɤa]	baːto	"eat!"
šiga [šɩga]	šikto	"listen!"
ire [ɩre]	irto [ɩrrto]	"drink!"

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

sg.	pl.	
(ga) wòːŋa	(ga) ho'Daːŋa	"come!"
(ga) báːgà	(ga) báːgày	"go!"

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, under-stand" "that I may drink"

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

kì-hìnì 'úrò'mát-<u>ìnèn</u>   "I want to drink milk"

kì-hìnì wu-<u>cen</u>   "I want to go";

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

kì-hìnì tila ami-θe?   "I want to eat food"

kì-hìnì tila ag-<u>a?</u>   "I want to cook food"

kì-hìnì rumiṇa cur-<u>a?</u>   "I want to wash clothes"

kì-hìnì logiṇa šig-<u>a?</u>   "I want to hear the words"

kì-hìnì goṇ-<u>a?</u>   "I want to look"

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

kì-hìnì Ba?a   "I want (to eat) food"

kì-hìnì 'cógà   "I want (to have) sexual intercourse"

kì-hìnì úṇó   "I want (to) sleep"

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

kì-hìnì ku-curo   "I want to wash" (transitive)

kì-hìnì ku-tuṇno   "I want to sleep"
(lit.: that I go, that I sleep)

More research is badly needed here.

4.3 Derivation

A few examples thought to be <u>nouns</u> derived from verbs have been recorded:

buhogi	(witch)	<	ku-buso	(bewitch)
meθi	(debate)	<	ke-meθio	(make a speech)
[mɛði]			[kɛ-mɛðio]	
ilagai	(illness)	<	k-ilasio	(be ill)
[ɩlaɤai]			[k-ɩlasio]	

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

<u>hìrì-mò</u>	< <u>hìrì</u>	<u>bàr'ì-mo</u>	< bari
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) <u>dative</u>: suffix <u>-θen</u>   (<u>-θe</u> in imperative,) e.g.

<u>gwi</u> <u>beleθen</u> <u>neŋ</u>   "for whom are you dividing the garden?" (lit.: garden you-divide-for whom)

<u>ke-beleθen</u> <u>ŋa:na:ŋo</u>   "I am dividing (it) for my wife"

<u>aliθen</u> <u>Do:le</u>   "he is speaking to the girl"

<u>seaθe</u> <u>komoru</u> <u>ke</u>...   "tell the priest that..."

<u>oɟaθe</u> <u>kama</u> <u>tui</u>   "put (it) in the bag" (lit.: put-(it) the-bag into)

(2) <u>instrumental</u>: suffix <u>-ca</u>, e.g.

<u>k-ami</u> <u>tila</u>   "I eat porridge"

<u>ke</u> <u>a</u> <u>k-am-ca</u> <u>tila</u>   "the thing for eating porridge

<u>ko-ŋugio</u>   "I close"

ke a ko-ɲuk-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 ínó 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 lam bio	"the priest seeks the cattle"
lusi dag bi	"the boy hits the cow"

SOV: used in the negative, e.g.

komorena kirin ɲa ameo	"priests do not eat giraffe" (lit.: priests giraffe not eat)
ermi tila ɲa 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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aɲi ki-hini bi a koroi	"I want a black cow" (lit.: I want cow part. black)
aɲi 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 goloɲi	"it is a red cow"
a bio goloɲa 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-lornani ture

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

a kama be-ajai ni lusigoloɲi

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

a ahi 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:

bì 'kó -ŋòrò 'bú-ŋòr	"the elephant is bigger than the cow" (lit.: cow and-elephant big-elephant)

bì kò-roθo bu-bi   "the cow is bigger than the dog"

ŋoro ko-car tir- caro   "the leopard is faster than the
elephant"
(lit.: elephant and-leopard quick-
leopard)

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

bù-ŋór θóŋ   "the elephant is biggest of all"
(lit.: big-elephant only)

or, equivalently;

ŋòr à bù górì   (lit.: elephant is big very)

ŋòr'-á bùi   (lit.: elephant-is big)

rom tìr há:ŋ   (lit.: ostrich fast very)

In place of há:ŋ, either waŋ 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.

       tugo   "language"
       [tuɤo]

       tug-a-muniɲ   "the Muni language"

       lusi-ti-tuguli   "Tugul's boy"

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

       komoru logo ihe   "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.,

ùligòlòɲì bi ágeɲe a:-wi (or a-wuš, "four")

                         "Uligolonyi has four cows"
                         (lit.: Uligolonyi cow part. his four)

dada-na:no bio a meri elle   "my father has many cows"
                                  (lit.: father-my cows many there-are)

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

iɲe bio a-i-soŋ (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"

otice 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.,

lòwò? "is it true?"   á:lòwò "it is true".
       (falling intonation)   (answer)

e 'á:mio? "do you eat?"   ine a:mio "you eat"
       (stress on á:-)

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,   definite verb,
 present time   past time
"I do not eat", etc.   "I have not yet heard,
                                 understood", etc.

5g. api ŋa ka-ba:kio   api ŋani ki-šiko

5g. ine ŋa   ba:kio   ine ŋani   šiku

5g. noŋ ŋa   ba:to   noŋ ŋani ki-šika

)l. age ŋa   ba:kor   age ŋani ki-šikto

)l. ige ŋa   ba:kor   ige ŋani   šikto

)l. yok ŋa   ba:keo   yok ŋani ki-šikto

(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).

Exs.   dori ŋani ke-dero   "the house has not yet leaked"

       ma ŋani ki-cidito   "the water has not yet boiled"

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

       ŋa baːka   pl. ŋa baːto   "do not eat!"

       ŋa šiga   pl. ŋa šikto   "do not listen!"

       ŋa ire   pl. ŋa irto   "do not drink!"

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

hiri ŋainunu muni-ŋau a tumuri   "that man is not a Muni-
                                         he is a Bodi"

bi-anunu cali-ŋau, a bwoca   "your cow is not good-it
                                         is thin"

a caːli, gerθi, loːgo   "it is good, bad, true
                                                      (lit.: word)

a cali ŋaio, gerθi ŋaio, loːgo ŋaio   "it is not good, bad, true"

ani ŋaio, ine ŋaio, etc.   "it is not I, it is not you"
                                         etc.

ŋamer ŋaio, bàré ŋaio   "not now, not yesterday"

tuno ŋaio, i bai   "it is not up, it is down".

       The negative copula is ŋa, e.g.

ani caci ŋa k-anio, k-ani muni   "I am not a Chachi- I am a
                                         Muni"

       Absence is indicated by niŋe, e.g.

Bura niŋe   "there are no eggs"

ulicagi wara niŋe   "Ulichagi does not have a
                                         knife"

       The predicative copula is inflected for person and number:

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

1 sg. ani k-ani muni bwi,   1 pl. age k-ano mun
       bwoca, etc.   bibi, bwocen, etc.

2 sg. ine ani muni bwi,   2 pl. ige ano mun
       bwoca, etc.   bibi, bwocen, etc.

3 sg. noŋŋa muni bwi,   3 pl. yok a mun bibi
       bwoca, etc.   bwocen, etc.

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	"I am a Muni"
ano butoga ige	"you (pl.) are wrong"

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

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

xamples: 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 -e is dropped before the comlement, 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 [kɔ], 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 pabi 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 ŋgaini   "either the big one or the little one" (lit.: "the big one or the little one, I do not know")

ko-goyo o:: ŋa ko-goyo   "whether he goes or not"

k-ani aɲi o: ani iɲe ŋgaini   "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"; mà, "water", gò, "fire"; ŋô, "neck".

Bisyllables: high-high: gíyéy, "bone", íDó, "cloud", nábí "ear", šú:ne, "father", hóhú "heart", kúttúl, "mountain", sárá, "name", láɲói, "grass", áccúk, "meat".

high-mid: góŋwi, "bark of tree", kyéɲo, "belly", ɲába [ɲáβa], "blood", šwái, "bird", córe, "hair", gwíyo, "rain", góro, "road", kóɲu, "snake", tóbbe, "planet" (Amh.), níday, "tooth", úɲoy, "louse", górai, "fat".

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

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

high or mid-falling: íɲe, "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", kíroɲoy, "fly", hiraɲaha, "woman", muɲiɲi, "star", libá [liβá] kabari, "seed", bakumu: mul, "world", kulíló, "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

ja:re	leg	ja:re dul	foot
kiaŋo	belly	ma kiaŋo	mid-stream
		kali kiaŋo	mid-day

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

rum a ja:ruiŋ   "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.,

á bá ágáyn   "cooking place"
(bá, "place", aga- "cook")

á bá uŋwiŋ   "sleeping place"
(uŋwiŋ derived from tuŋ~ ŋuŋ, "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 Citerni 1899.