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This chapter deals with nonverbal predicate constructions, i.e. clauses whose predicate is not a verb but e.g., a noun, an adjective or a locative phrase. Although the predicate in these clauses is not a verb, they do frequently contain a copular verb. As copula verbs are an integral part of these constructions, the chapter starts of with a description of copula verbs (§13.1). As the use of these copula verbs is not restricted to nonverbal predicates, their functions in other constructions are presented at the end of the chapter, in §13.3. The attested types of nonverbal predicate constructions are described in turn in §13.2. and Lovegren (2013: Ch.14).

13.1 Copula verbs

Mundabli has a general copula dɨ̋ ‘be’ which is used in all kinds of nonverbal predicate constructions. This copula is a fully-fledged verb, behaving like a regular verb regarding tense, mood and aspect marking (see §8.1). It belongs to verb tone class b (see §3.2.2.1). The copula may be omitted in presentational equative constructions (see §13.2.1), i.e. in clauses which can be translated as ‘This/that is a/the...’, and in adjectival predicates (see §13.2.2). In all other contexts, the use of the copula is obligatory. The etymology of the copula verb is unclear. It is not obviously related to a stative verb like e.g., nîm ‘sit’ or dô ‘stay’. The use of the copula dɨ̋ is not restricted to nonverbal predicate constructions. It is also attested in a number of other constructions (see §13.3). Apart from the copula verb dɨ̋, there is at least one semi-copula, namely the verb tʃû ‘come, become’ (see §13.2.6).
There is another copula ɡɛ̣ which surfaces in locative predicates in the broader sense, i.e. including existential predicates and possessive predication. In this context, it is used in exactly the same constructions as ɗɨ̣ but, in addition to its function as a copula, it seems to be associated with simultaneity. Apart from its use as a copula, ɡɛ̣ is also attested as a clause linker. The use of ɡɛ̣ including its use in locative nonverbal constructions and as a conjunction for clause linking is dealt with in §13.2.5.4.

13.2 Nonverbal predicate constructions

This section describes the different types of nonverbal predicates attested in Mundabli. All non-verbal predicates in Mundabli are at least optionally, and often obligatorily, introduced by the copula verb ɗɨ̣ ‘be’ (Class b). Locative attributes can alternatively be introduced by the particle ɡɛ̣ (Class a). This copula is not formally a verb because, although it co-occurs with tense markers like a verb, it does not fit into any of the three verb tone classes and, its tone being constant across tenses, it does not exhibit any of the characteristic tone changes. Its use is restricted to situations in which two simultaneous events are described (see §13.2.5.4). When a clause containing a verbless predicate does not contain a copula, and is thus a true verbless clause, the predicate directly follows the subject NP. When a copular clause lacks an overt subject, a purely tonal low tone dummy subject (cf. §6.2) precedes the copula.

I describe the various constructions in turn, starting off with equative constructions (or nominal predicates) (§13.2.1), followed by adjectival predicates (§13.2.2), then simulative predicates (§13.2.3) and numeral predicates (§13.2.4). Following these, locative predicates, existentials and predicative possession are dealt with in (§13.2.5). Finally, I conclude this section with a description of the semi-copula tʃụ ‘become’ and the constructions it occurs in (§13.2.6). Wherever relevant, copulas are underlined and the relevant clause is enclosed in square brackets.

13.2.1 Equative constructions

Equative constructions express the identity of the referents of two noun phrases. Equative constructions are formed with the copula verb ɗɨ̣. The predicate is represented by a noun phrase ((534) and (536)).

(534) mɨ̄ tɛ̋m ɲùŋfu n = dɨ̣ f-án, [n = dɨ̣ ɲkʊ̌ŋ ndʒān] یستگラن N. یستگلا = be(b) PROX-here یستگلا = be(b) cl.1.chief Mundabli

‘I, Tem Nyungfu, I am here. I am the chief of Mundabli.’
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(535) neighbour wū kà tʃyé [ɲwɔ́m b-én
cl1.neighbour cl1;3sg.poss p3 know(c) cl2.children cl2-dem.prox
dì ɲwɔ́m nĩ]
be(b) cl2.children cl1.mother;3poss

‘Her neighbour knew that these children were her siblings.’

(536) ndʒān dì ná áná, [ndʒān dì ndʒān] Mundabli be(b) as like_that, Mundabli be(b) Mundabli

‘Mundabli is like that. Mundabli is Mundabli.’

Equational predicates may lack a full NP subject. However, in this case, a purely tonal low tone dummy subject (cf. §6.2) precedes the verb complex, which causes the Class b copula verb dì ‘be’ in ɒ0 tense to be realized with a low-high rising tone, as in (537) and (538).

(537) bɔ̋ dzé tí yɛ̄ [dì bɛ́n]
cl2 say(b).1pfv surprisingly comp ds.be(b) 2pl

‘They are [instead] saying that [it] is you!’

(538) [dì tá bɛ̄n ndʒān à]
ds.be(b) only 2pl Mundabli Q

‘Is it only you Mundabli [people]?’

Mundabli does not make a formal distinction between “true equational clauses”. In other words, clauses with a referential nominal predicate, as in (534)-(536), and “clauses with true nominal predicates” (Dryer 2007a: 233), i.e. clauses with non-referential nominal predicates, as in (539)-(540), are expressed in exactly the same way.

(539) nsʊ̄ŋ wū dzé wū lā yɛ̄ wà, [à dì
cl1.friend cl1;3sg.poss say(b) cl1pp dat comp 2sg, 2sg be(b)
kpé bǒ]
cl1.woman cl1/9.bad

‘Her friend said to her: You, you are a bad woman!’

(540) ñ=wò má yɛ̄ wù dzé l5~l5 bikó ñ=kò ӑ
1sg = think cs.quot comp cl1 say(b) lie~red because 1sg = p3 neg
tʃyé w5 yɛ̄ ñwàti dì nã, [dì nĩŋ kə-dzɔŋ]
know(c) neg comp cl7/8.book be(b) as be(b) cl7.thing cl7-good

‘So I was thinking that he was telling a lie because back then, I did not know that literacy is a good thing.’

1This is supposed to mean that Mundabli and its people are the way they are. This cannot be changed and it will always be like that.
Although this is not often the case, the copular verb dɨ̋ can be omitted in positive declarative present tense equative clauses. In all other tense-mood-aspect combinations, the use of dɨ̋ is obligatory because the copula verb serves as the host for TAM morphology. All attested examples of equative constructions which lack a copula verb are presentational constructions, i.e. the subject is represented by a demonstrative pronoun and the translation starts with ‘This/that is a...’, as in (541)-(544).

(541) [w-ën ṅkʊŋ fáŋ]
   CL1-DEM.PROX CL1.chief here?
   ‘This here is a/the chief.’

(542) à mî tʃyé yɛ [w-ɔ́ gbɔ̄ wān w-ā]
   2SG CONSEC know(c) COMP CL3-DET CL3.house CL1.child CL1-2SG.POSS
   yà
   INTERJ
   ‘And then you know that that [is] your child’s house, you hear?’

(543) [k-ɔ́ nɨ́ŋ nɔ̣ wù tʃũ k-ʃ]
   CL7-DET CL7.thing subord CL1 come(b) CL7-REL
   ‘...that is the thing [because of] which he came.’

(544) ā dɨ̋ wɔ̄ yɛ bɨ-ŋũ dî jĩ yi
   NEG be(b) NEG COMP CL8-CL7/8.suffering f1 go_down(a) eat(b).IPFV
   wù t-án áná, [w-ën lỳɛ]
   CL1 DIST-here like_that CL3-DEM.PROX CL3/7a.boldness
   ‘It is not that suffering would come down and eat him there like that,
   this would be a bold thing to claim.’

### 13.2.2 Adjectival predicates

Adjectival predicates may be introduced by the copula verb dɨ̋ (545) or they may directly follow the subject NP without a copula, as in (546)-(547). The adjective is marked by an agreement prefix, which is tonal for Class 1 and 9 and segmental for all other agreement classes (cf. §5.3.1).

(545) [mɔ̀ w-ë̄n dɨ̋ bɔ̣]
   CL1.person CL1-DEM.PROX be(b) CL1/9.bad
   ‘This person is bad.’

(546) [yũ y-ɔ́ bɔ̣ nwɛ́n ɑ̣ kĩ-li]
   CL9/10.buttock CL9-DET CL1/9.bad now ADVLZ NMLZ-be_strong(a)
   ‘Sex is very dangerous these days.’
### 13.2.3 Similative predicates

Similative predicates obligatorily include the copula verb *dɨ̋*. Similative predicates also require an adverbial constituent consisting of two particles *ná* and *áná* which are glossed 'as' and 'like that', respectively, as in (548)-(550).

(547) bɔ̄ dzé gàn bɔ́ lá yē [bán bɔ́ impers speak(b) go(a) CL2.DAT DAT COMP CL1/2.outside CL1/9.bad ā kĩ-li] 
ADVlz NMLZ-be_strong(a)

‘They are telling them that [the world] outside is very bad.’

However, cases of adjectival predicates are rare. This is partly due to the small number of adjectives (cf. §5.3.1). However, even with few adjectives, predicative use is marginal. It is more common to use a nominal predicate in which the noun is modified by the relevant adjective, as in (539).

(548) wān w-5 mí dzē nī lá yē
CL1.child CL1-DET CONSEC say(b) CL1.mother.3POSS DAT COMP
[dī w-ēn dī nā áńá] n=tō jē yē
CL3.beans CL3-DEM.PROX be(b) as like_that 1SG = FOC want(a) COMP
m=fō jū wā lá, yē k-ō nīŋ nō
1SG = tell(a) come(b) 2SG DAT COMP CL7-DET CL7.thing SUBORD
wān w-5 fā lá k-ō f-ān f nsīlā
CL1.child CL1-DET P1 do(a) CL7-REL PROX-here LOC CL1/2.afternoon

‘The child told the mother: as these beans are like this, I want to tell you what your child has done here in the afternoon.’

(549) kā [gbō w-ēn dī nā áńá] bèn jwōm
COND CL3.house CL3-DEM.PROX be(b) as like_that 2PL CL2.children
b-Ŷ, bèn yīŋ yā t-5 tị t-Ś
CL2-DET 2PL build(c) go_up(c) DIST-there up DIST-DET

‘As this house is like this, you, the children will be building it up (adding on top of the house).’

(550) jwōm w-Ś kpān jū, ākà [dʒwēn kū CL1.husband CL1-DET be_correct(b) come(b) like Missong home.LOC
dī nā áńá]
be(b) as like_that

‘The husband came as near as Missong, like that.’

This construction is similar to Lovegren’s “Gesture-framing construction” in Mungbam (Lovegren 2013: 445). However, I am not aware that any of the
clauses in the examples above has a hand gesture as its predicate. Instead, the predicate is the adverbial proform áñá ‘like that’, and it is always specified by a subsequent sentence describing what the adverbial proform áñá ‘like that’ refers to, i.e. what the subject of the copula clause is like.

### 13.2.4 Numeral predicates

Numeral predicates are introduced by the copula verb dɨ́. I am not aware of any instances of numeral predication in which the copula is omitted. The numeral in a numeral predicate construction takes a concordant noun class prefix,\(^2\) as in (551)-(553).

\[
\begin{aligned}
\text{(551) } & [bɔ̋ kl kp 2 b-fy̆] \quad wān \quad mənɔ̄ \quad wù-mwò \quad āmɨ̀ \quad wān \\
& \text{CL2 CL2-CL2 CL1.child CL1.man CL1-one and CL1.child} \\
& kpé \quad wù-mwò \\
& \text{CL1.woman CL1-one}
\end{aligned}
\]

‘They were two, one boy and one girl.’

\[
\begin{aligned}
\text{(552) } & [bì kə̀ bɔ̋-fye᷇] \quad dżẹ̃ \quad wɔ̃ \quad b-fy̆] \\
& \text{CL8 CL8-two}
\end{aligned}
\]

‘They [the frogs] are no more two of them.’

\[
\begin{aligned}
\text{(553) } & bɛ̌ gān \quad jῖ \quad k-ɔ́, \quad [kî \quad dî \quad dzōfɨ̄] \\
& \text{CL3/7a.egg CL9.chicken CL7a-DET, CL7a be(b)} \\
& kî-mîŋ, \quad [kî \quad dî \quad dzōfɨ̄] \\
& \text{CL7a-how_many, CL7a be(b) ten}
\end{aligned}
\]

‘Count those eggs! How many are they? There are ten.’

The presence of a full NP subject is not obligatory in numeral predication (554). However, the use of a tonal dummy subject (cf. §6.2) is required if no subject NP is present.

\[
\begin{aligned}
\text{(554) } & wù \quad dzẹ̃ \quad yɛ̄ \quad [dî \quad b-mîŋ] \\
& \text{CL1 CL1.say(b) COMP CL2-CL2-how_many}
\end{aligned}
\]

‘He said that [there] were how many?’

### 13.2.5 Locative predicates and existential clauses

Locative predicates and existential clauses have the same form. Both contain locative constituents, but existential clauses co-occur with locative proforms

\(^2\)The irregular numeral dzōfɨ̄ ‘ten’ does not take a noun class prefix (see (553)). For more on numeral agreement prefixes, see §5.4.
more frequently, while predicative possession constructions contain comitative phrases. Locative predicates and existential clauses, including predicative possession constructions, are the only nonverbal predicates which allow the use of the simultaneous-locative copula \( gɛ\) as an alternative to the copula verb \( dɨ\). The use of the copula \( gɛ\) is described in §13.2.5.4.

### 13.2.5.1 Locative predicates

A locative predicate is introduced by the copula verb \( dɨ\), as in (555)-(557). Locative predicates require the presence of a locative constituent (cf. §11.3.4) and a copula verb.

(555) \[wɛ́, \ [wù à dɨ́ w5 gbɔ́ kʊŋ ò\] \]  
\[\text{INTERJ CL1 NEG be(b) NEG CL3.house house_back.LOC INTERJ}\]  
‘Alas! She is not behind the house!’

(556) \[wù dɨ́ (i) jì́ mì\]  
\[\text{CL1 be(b) LOC CL9/10.market in}\]  
‘She is at the market.’

(557) \[gbàn w-ā wú-kpé w-5 dɨ̋ gbɔ́ ò\]  
\[\text{CL1.in-law CL1-2SG.POSS CL1-female CL1-DET be(b) house.LOC INTERJ}\]  
yɛ̀ wù nɨ̀ yɛ̀ wù dā wā lá ò  
\[\text{COMP CL1 want(c) COMP CL1 see(a) 2SG.PP DAT INTERJ}\]  
‘Your mother-in-law is in the house [saying] that she wants to see you!’

The locative constituent can be represented by a locative proform, such as \( fán \) ‘here’ in (558) or the interrogative pronoun \( nā \) ‘where’ in (559).

(558) \[n=dɨ́ f-án\], \[n=dɨ́ \] Tela Mwɔm  
\[1SG=be(b) PROX-here 1SG=be(b) T. M.\]  
‘I am here. I am Tela Mwom.’

(559) \[n= dɨ́ bù jì́ tì wù lā\]  
\[\text{CL1.mother.3POSS ask(b) go_down(a).IPFV surprisingly CL1 PP DAT}\]  
yɛ̀ mî wān, \[jnwɔ́m w-ā dɨ́ jì́\]  
\[\text{COMP 1SG CL1.child CL1.husband CL1-2SG.POSS be(b) surprisingly}\]  
nā (ò))  
\[\text{where INTERJ}\]  
‘Her mother will ask her: My child, where is your husband?’
13.2.5.2 Existential

Existential clauses are not formally different from locative clauses. However, they usually have a presentative function by introducing discourse participants. This is reflected in the frequent use of the modifier dzû 'a certain' in (560)-(562), to modify the subject, as characteristic for thetic clauses (cf. §14.5). Existential clauses express the existence of the subject referent, either in general, as in (561), or in a specific place, as in (562). They employ the copula verb dɨ̋ and usually require a locative constituent, as in (560)-(563). However, the presence of a locative constituent is not obligatory. The locative phrase in existential clauses is commonly represented by the spatial proform fɪ̋n ‘there’, as in (see (560)-(562)), and less frequently by a more elaborate locative phrase, as in (563).

(560) [kpé dżū kà dɨ̋ fɪ̋n]
   cl1.woman cl1/9.indef p3 be(b) there
   ‘There once was a woman.’

(561) [mɔ̀ dżū dɨ̋ fɪ̋n] wù kán ts5 à
   cl1.person cl1/9.indef be(b) there cl1 lack(b) cl7/8.witchcraft ɨ
   ‘Is there any person who does not possess witchcraft?’

(562) kyɛ́ yá gān f-5 ywù,
   look(c) go_up(c) go(a) prox-there cl1/2.hanging_dryer cl19.leaf
dzû dɨ̋ fɪ̋n], ā mū jì
   cl19.indef be(b) there 2sg take(a) go.down(a)
   ‘Look up at the hanging dryer! There is a certain leaf. You should take it down.’

(563) Pê dzé yè [mbɛ̊ dɨ̋ wù gbɔ]
   P. say(b) comp cl6.wine be(b) cl1.pp house.loc
   ‘Pe said that there was wine in his house.’

When an existential predicate is negated, the locative constituent is absent (see (564) and (565)).

(564) Pê kɔ dám jú yè wù tjʊ kwó
   P. p3.hab shake(?).ipfv come(b).ipfv comp cl1.rr come(b) enter(c)
   kɛ́ gbɔ, [dʒi kä dɨ̋ wɔ̄]
   return(c) house.loc cl3.way p3;neg be(b) neg
   ‘Pe was ravaging [places] in order to come back into the house but there was no way.’
Copulas and nonverbal predicates

(565) tō nō̤ luŋ k5 b-ś wù,
cl7/8.day subord cl7/8.suffering catch(b) cl8-rel cl1
[kām b-ś bī-kp3n ā dī w5]
cl7/8.thousand cl8-det cl8-five neg be(b) neg

‘The day that suffering attacks her, the 5000 francs are not there.’

13.2.5.3 Predicative possession

Predicative possession is expressed by a copula in combination with a comitative phrase. The copula in predicative possession constructions is dī, as in (567).

(566) [wù kā dī ā njwám b5]
cl1 pl be(b) com cl2.children cl2;3sg.poss

‘She had children of her own.’

(567) nī wū bū wū lā yē mà, [ā
cl1.mother cl1;3sg.poss ask(b) cl1pp dat comp ncs.quot.q 2sg
kā dī ā mānō yē]
p3.hab be(b) com cl1.male quot.q

‘Her mother asked her: Do you have a husband?’

Predicative possession can also be expressed by the verb kān ‘have, hold’, as in (568).

(568) bī kā kān ngī, school, any nī ē bī nī ē k-ś
1pl f2 have(c) cl6.water school any cl7.sing 1pl want(c) cl7-rel
kī bī kā kān kī
cl7 1pl f2 have(c) cl7

‘We will have water, a school, anything we want, we’ll have it.’

There is no semantic difference between the two possessive constructions described above, as shown in (569) where both are used in sequence by the same speaker, describing the same state of affairs. Here, the speaker is telling other villagers that people in Europe do not have land to clear and grow crops.

(569) a. āyī, [b5 ā dī w5 ā dī fwen]
no cl2 neg be(b) neg com cl9.place clear(b)

‘No! They don’t have a place to clear.’

b. b5 ā kān w5
cl2 neg have(c) neg

‘They don’t have [any]!’
The difference between the two constructions in (569a) and (569b) seems to be a pragmatic one. Note that it is possible to omit the object when the verb kán is used, as in (569a). This is not possible when possession is expressed by the copula verb dɨ in combination with a comitative phrase, as in (569a).

13.2.5.4 The locative copula gɛ

There is a second copula gɛ which can be used as an alternative to dɨ in locative non-verbal predicates in the wider sense, i.e. including locative predicates, existential predicates and predicative possession. This copula is not formally a verb because, although it co-occurs with tense markers like a verb, it does not fit into any of the three verb tone classes and, its tone being constant across tenses, it does not exhibit any of the tone changes characteristic of verbs. It has a mid tone in non-final position and a mid-low tone in final position, irrespective of the tense it occurs in.

At first glance, the copula gɛ seems to be simply a locative copula which is used as an alternative to the copula verb dɨ in locative, existential and predicative possession constructions. However, while dɨ is always grammatical, the copula gɛ cannot be used in the first clause of a sequence. It seems to be associated with simultaneity somehow. It is only used in contexts in which the second of two simultaneous events is described by a verbless predicate construction. However, it is unclear what exactly the semantic relation between the two events is. Furthermore, all attested examples are in the distant past or p3 tense. While more research is needed in order to determine the exact function of gɛ, the examples provided in this section should provide a first impression. Examples of location encoded by the locative copula gɛ are in (570) and (571). Each example contains at least the clause containing the verbless predicate construction (in square brackets) and the clause preceding it.

(570) n = tsē, 1sg = search(a) n = sɛ́n 1sg = then kwō 3 see(a) ŋ jì tʃə̋m, enter(a) c.l.7/3.3/7.3 axe [tʃə̋m kɔ gɛ mɛ́ mú mî āná], c.l.3/7.3 axe p3 be_there(a) only c.l.3/10.corner in like_that tʃə̋m bô syâ w-ɔ́ kîn nɪ́ng, c.l.3/7.3.3 axe impers split(a).ipfv c.l.3-rel c.l.3.wood upon

'I then searched and saw an axe down in [the corner]. The axe was just there in a corner of the house like that, the axe that they split wood with.'

3The copula gɛ can occur in clause-final position when it is used with the full predicate meaning 'be there', as in (572).
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(571) tō dom lá wù gān dā sēsāŋ, [sēsāŋ cl7/8.day other dat cl1 go(a) see(a) cl9/10.spider cl9/10.spider kà gē dʒwó] p3 be_there(a) cl1/2.water_place

‘One day she went and saw a spider. The spider was at the water place.’

Just like the copula verb dī, gē is also attested as a full predicate, as in (572).

(572) nī wū kà fā ā n-jiwšm cl1.mother.3sg.poss 3sg.poss p3 be_occupied(b) com inf-stir(b) nām, [wān nī gē], wū yī cl8.fufu cl1.child cl1.mother be_there(a) cl1 rearrange_fire(c).ipfv gu cl3/7a.fire

‘Her mother was stirring fufu. Her sister was there. She was rearranging the fire.’

Examples of possessive predication with the simultaneous-locative copula gē are found in (573)-(574).

(573) ókē, byé-ā-ntí twó yō, [wū kà gē ā okay B.-com-N. carry(b) go_up(c) cl1 p3 be_there(a) com mú-gē mū dzú i sāks-ā-mòtò n] cl18-maize cl18;3sg.poss cl18.indef loc s.-com-m in 'O.K., Bie-a-Ntie carried up [the corn]. She had her small corn with her in a Sacks & Motor bag.'

(574) è, wū mú yō byān wū ánā, wū yes cl1 take(a) go_up(c) cl3.breast cl3;3sg.poss like_that cl1 fā gān wān wū w-5 lá, [wū gē give(b) go(a) cl1.child cl1;3sg.poss cl1-det dat cl1 be_there(a) ā wān wū] com cl1.child cl1;3sg.poss

‘Yes. She [the mother gorilla] takes up the breast like this and gives [it] to the child. She had a child.’

The particle gē, which is identical in segmental shape with the simultaneous locative copula, functions as a linking element in clause combinations which combine two clauses describing simultaneous events, as in (575).

4“Sacks & Motor bag” refers to a sturdy plastic bag with the company name “Sack & Motor” imprinted on it. These bags are commonly used in this area for carrying things over great distances.
13.3 Other grammatical functions of copula verbs

13.2.6 Constructions with the semi-copula tfû ‘come, become’

The verb tfû ‘come’, which is frequently used as a main verb and as a minor coverb in SVCs (cf. §9.1.1.1) is also used as a semi-copula with the meaning ‘become’, as in ((576) and (577)). In order to function as a predicate, it is complemented by a noun phrase. The verb tfû is a fully-fledged Class b verb.

(576) bɔ̋ cl 2 nîm sütëee, [bɔ̋ tfû njwén nswēn]
    cl2 sit(a) extensively cl2 come(b) now cl2.friends

‘They stayed [together] for a long time and became friends.’

(577) [wù tfû njkûŋ]
    cl1 come(b) cl1.chief

‘He has become a chief.’

13.3 Other grammatical functions of copula verbs

The copula verb dî occurs in several constructions in addition to nonverbal predicate clauses. The general copula verb dî can be a hodiernal tense marker (§13.3.1), and is found in compound tense and counterfactual conditional constructions (§13.3.2) as well as in a construction expressing ability (§13.3.3). Cleft constructions are also formed with the general copula dî, cf. §14.6.

13.3.1 f1 future marking

The f1 future marker dî is identical in shape with the copula verb dî. Like all tense markers, it occurs at the beginning of the verb complex, preceding the verbal core, as in (578)-(580). For more on tense marking, cf. Chapter 8.

(578) n = dî tɔ̀ jî dʒi dî njô
    1SG = f1 show(a) go_down(a) cl3.road cl9/10.place_subord
    wâŋ wâ dî f-ŋ
    cl1.child cl1-poss be(b) prox-rel

‘I will show you the way to where your child is.’
13.3.2 Compound tense and counterfactual conditional constructions

The copula verb \( \text{dɨ́} \) is used as auxiliary in compound tense constructions, as in (see (581)-(583)). These compound tense constructions consist of a copula clause which is complemented by a whole clause without overt subordinate marking. The copula clause in compound past perfect constructions starts with the locative proform \( \text{tɔ́} \) ‘there’. The subordinate clause follows the copula \( \text{dɨ́} \), which in turn is preceded by the relevant tense marker, as in (581)-(582). In the future perfect construction, the locative proform is absent so that the tense marker or the copula verb occurs at the beginning of the sentence, as in (583). The tonal pattern of the \( r2 \) future tense marker makes it impossible to tell whether a tonal dummy subject (cf. §6.2) is present or not.

(581) \( \text{t-ɔ́ dist-det p3 be(b) cl1.father cl1.poss p3 return_from_bush(c) also tì wù tjú tsú bò wān w-5 cl1.father cl1.poss come(b) beat(b) also cl1.child cl1-det} \)

‘When her father had also returned from the bush, her father came and also beat the child.’

(582) \( \text{t-ɔ́ dist-det p3 be(b) cl1.spider p3 say(b) cl1.pp dat comp} \)

‘The spider had told her: ... ’

(583) \( \text{kà dì n=kà ñwà mè ñwà̃ tì 2 be(b) 1sg=p3? write(a) finish(a) cl7/8.book cl7-det} \)

‘I will (then) have finished writing the letter.’
A very similar construction is used to express counterfactual conditionals, as in (584). The counterfactual conditional construction differs from the compound tense constructions by having a subordinate clause introduced by the complementizer yɛ̄.

(584) t-ʃ kà đĩ yɛ̄ bɔ̄ kà bù sɔ̄ wù ūká sǐp rèn
\[\text{DIST-DET P3 $\text{be(b)}$ COMP IMPERS P1 deliver(c) first CL1 like C.}\]

‘If he had been delivered before Cypren...’

### 13.3.3 The ability construction

The copula verb dĩ is also found in a construction which expresses ability (see also §8.4.2). In this construction, dĩ functions as a copula followed by a non-finite verb which is marked by the proclitic kə̄ and which may in turn be followed by an object (585) or by an oblique argument (586). As example (585) shows, the ability construction can also have a deontic interpretation.

(585) n=dĩ kə̄=fô̄ dʒĩ wá lá yɛ̄ ā gān
\[\text{1SG = $\text{be(b)}$ NOMLZ = report(a) CL9.road 2SG.PP DAT COMP 2SG go(a)}\]
\[\text{dā wān w-ā yɛ̄ see(a) CL1.child CL1-2SG.Poss QUOT.Q}\]

‘Can I show you the way to your child?’

(586) ā n=tʃyē wɔ̄ yɛ̄ bɔ̄ dĩ kā-gān ā byɛ̄
\[\text{NEG 1SG = know(c) NEG COMP CL2 $\text{be(b)}$ NMLZ = go(a) COM CL7a.feet}\]

‘I wasn’t aware that they are able to walk on foot.’

The ability construction can be negated either with the unmarked negation strategy, as in (587), involving a preverbal and a postverbal negative marker bracketing the copula verb, or with a post-verbal frustrative marker, as in (588).

(587) mā ā n=dĩ wɔ̄ kā-gān mū ā mí
cs.quot NEG 1SG = $\text{be(b)}$ NEG NMLZ = go(a) take(a) ADVLZ 1SG.PP
ndʒĭn
alone

‘I said that I cannot go and take [the corn] on my own.’

(588) wù dĩ kā=dô bɔ̄
\[\text{CL1 $\text{be(b)}$ NMLZ = stay(b) FRUST}\]

‘She cannot sit still.’