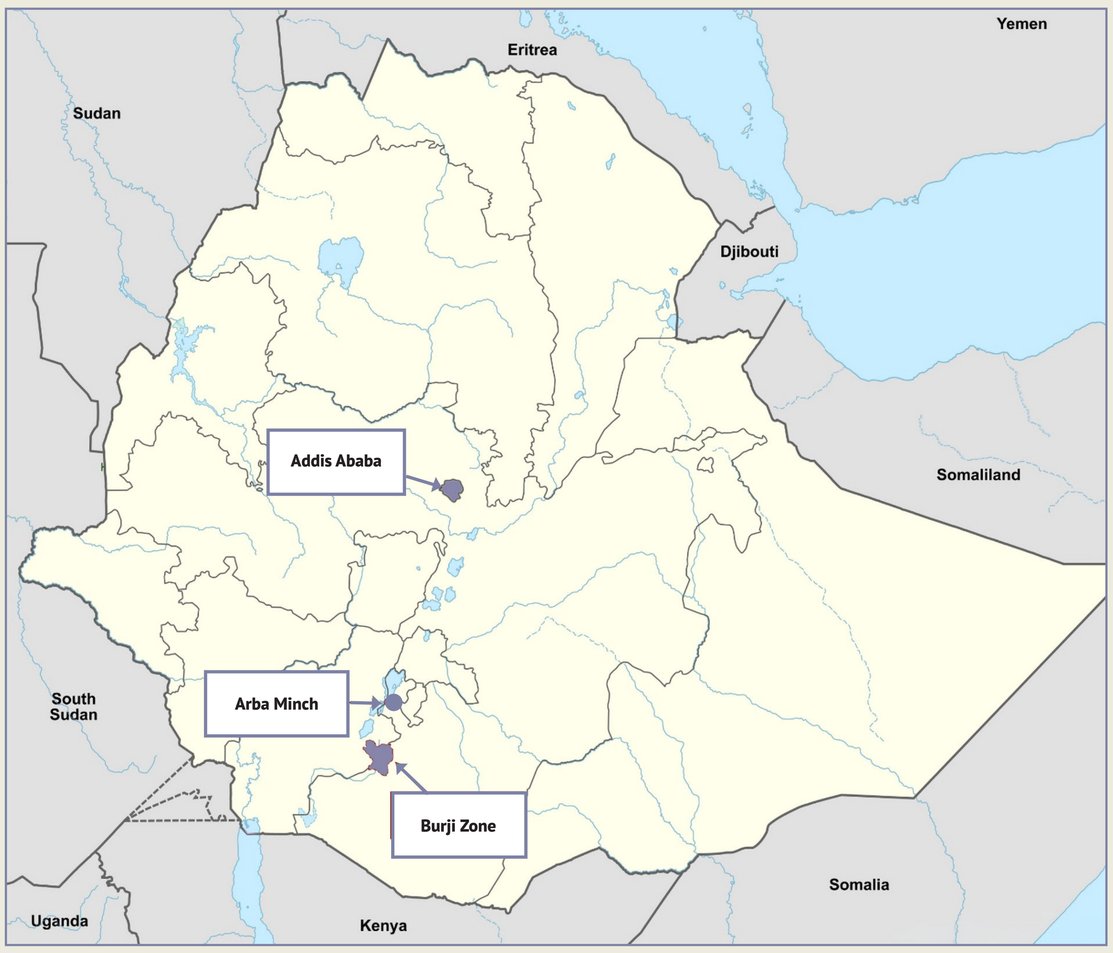
GRAMMATICALIZATION OF THE NOMINATIVE DEMONSTRATIVE CLITIC IN BURJI

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THE BURJI LANGUAGE AND PEOPLE

- Burji [bji] has about 50,000 speakers in southern Ethiopia and about 40,000 in northern Kenya.
- Highland East Cushitic sub-branch of the Afro-Asiatic family (Tosco 2000), but it shares characteristics with other sub-branches in the Southwest Ethiopian Language Area (Hudson 1976, Sasse 1986).

Mostly head-final; usually, a finite form of the verb is the last constituent of a sentence. Fully finite main verbs are distinguished from converbs and verbal nouns. It is strictly suffixing. It has a marked nominative system: P is unmarked, while S and A are marked with the nominative.

DATA COLLECTION

- Data collection took place between July and September 2025 in the towns of Arba Minch and Soyama (southern Ethiopia);
- Data transcription: April-May 2026.
- 21 short written stories and 3 hours of spontaneous spoken data.

DEPENDENT DEMONSTRATIVE

Burji exhibits one dependent proximal demonstrative that agrees in gender (masculine and feminine) and case (nominative and accusative) with the head. This system is almost entirely retained from Proto-East-Cushitic except for the nominative feminine **ti*, which has palatalized to [tʃ] (Sasse 1984: 115).

	M	F
ACC	ka	ta
NOM	ku	chi

Table 1: Burji dependent proximal demonstrative

CONCLUSIONS

The nominative demonstrative has grammaticalized into morphemes with different functions: on nouns, it became a determiner that alternates with the nominative form, while on verbs it grammaticalized into a relative marker that alternates with a juxtaposition strategy. Further research is needed on the motivations of these alternations, which could be syntactical or pragmatical.

DEMONSTRATIVE CLITIC ON NOUNS

On nouns, the nominative demonstrative has grammaticalized into a determiner (Sasse 1974:115) undergoing phonetic erosion and resulting in M = *hu* and F = *shi* [hu̯] < [ku] [ʃi̯] < [ʧi]

It is attached to the accusative form of the noun and agrees in gender with it, involving vowel change or assimilation in case of masculine nouns and without any morphophonemic process for feminine nouns:

(1) Aney=**hu** yaa ama=**sh** kana=nna wolli
husband.M=**M.NOM** CONJ wife.F=**NOM.F** PROX.ACC=SIM RECP
damm-is-adh-aa
live-CAUS-MID-IMPF

"The husband and the wife were living together like this."

The determiner alternates with a vocalic nominative that is suffixed to the stem of the noun; the motivation of this alternation is not clear yet (cf. Voith 2020).

DEMONSTRATIVE CLITIC ON VERBS

According to Tesfaye (2015:267), relative clauses in Burji are formed by juxtaposition. Even though this is reflected in my data, an alternative strategy is also used by attaching the nominative demonstrative to finite forms of the verb as relative marker that agrees with the subject of the relative for gender (*=hu/=shi)*. There are two orders: REL=head (canonic) and head=REL (marked).

CANONIC ORDER

The canonic order REL=head appears with a marked order of the constituents of the sentence; the subject can also be implied, as in (3):

(2) **[...]** *kaydu naanu qadi isinoo gabi akkab-in-eennoo=**hu***
today 1PL.NOM again 3PL.ACC from listen-1PL-PRF=**M.NOM**
mommaahoo=qaa dhetti dhetti naanu shiid-in-aa
story.F=FOC one.F one.F 1PL.NOM say-1PL-IMPF

"[...] today we tell again one by one the stories that we listened from them."
(250820_0037_011)

(3) *[...] joor-u dhaqqab-aa=d taydh-acheetaa=sh*
house.M-LOC arrive-IMPF=when sit-PRF.3SG.F=NOM.F
cimeyittee i-tt-aa=daa naq(-i) kar-annoo
old_woman.F be-3SG.F-IMPF=FOC beat(-CVB) throw-PST.3SG.M.NFOC

"At home there was an old woman that was sitting and he beat her and she fell down"

MARKED ORDER

The marked head=REL order appears with an unmarked SOV order of the constituents of the sentence:

(4) *i-nk-oo=di=qaa dhogolu=h(u) issa-tta aayyee*
say-3PL-IMPF=when=FOC tiger=M.NOM REFL-POSS.F.ACC mother.F
baa-s-annoo=hu naq-i siiy-aa
go-CAUS-PFV.3SG.M.NFOC=**M.NOM** beat-CVB kill-IMPF

"When they agreed, the tiger beats and kills his own mother that he made go out."
(250820_0037_054)

(5) *ani kaydu hoos-aannoo=nna shee=naa ada*
1SG.NOM today graze-PFV.1SG.NFOC=COND 2SG.ACC=FOC milk
baa-ss-aa=hu
go-CAUS-IMPF=**M.NOM**

"If i graze today, it is you that sell the milk." (250820_0037_062)

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