

Non-verbal predications in Zarma*

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Abstract

This article presents new findings in the use of copulas *nôo* ‘be’ and *ti* ‘be’ in non-verbal predications in Zarma (Songhay; Niger, Nigeria). Based on some exclusive contexts of use and some morphosyntactic criteria, the article distinguishes a basic type of predication with one term “NP + *nôo*” used in deictic identification (e. g.: *Abdù nôo* ‘it’s Abdu’) and a type of predication with two terms “NP1 + NP2 + *nôo*” used in nominal predications and equative sentences (e. g.: *wodìn Abdù nôo* ‘that is Abdu’). The article shows that copula *ti* replaces copula *nôo* in negation but also in non-verbal focus constructions where it is generally preceded by the subordinating conjunction *kà/gà* and very likely marks the presupposed part of the sentence (e. g.: [*Muusà nôo*] *kà ti càwkwôo* ‘[it’s Musa] who is a student’). Finally, the article shows that in Zarma, it is the one-term predication “NP + *nôo*” that is recruited to mark focus-fronted constituents of verbal and non-verbal predications, thus confirming an observation already made about other languages.

1 Introduction

Copular constructions in Zarma¹ (Songhay; Niger, Nigeria) are relatively complex and involve at least the three copulas *nôo* ‘be’, *ti* ‘be’, and *gôo/si* ‘be.at/not be.at’, which have been amply described in previous studies (Hamani 1981; Oumarou Yaro 1993; Sibomana 2008; White-Kaba 1994, etc., but also cf. the studies on related languages such as Heath 1998, 1999 concerning, respectively, Koyra Chiini and Koyraboro Senni, both in Mali). Taking as reference recent studies on neighboring Hausa (cf. Abdoulaye 2007: 245f., Abdoulaye/Barmou/Bida 2020), this article sheds new lights on the situation in Zarma, in particular by proposing a basic distinction between a type of predication “NP + *nôo*”, with a single term both logically and

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¹ Zarma (autonym *Zarma Chiine* [zármá ci:nè] lit. ‘language of [state of] Zarma’) is the most important Songhay language in terms of number of speakers (cf. Nicolai 1983) and is spoken mainly in Western Niger and North-western Nigeria.

Note: Data from published sources are cited generally as per the original, except where tones must be added. Otherwise the paper uses the official orthography of Zarma with some modifications: Long vowels are marked in all positions with double letters, low tone is marked with a grave accent (àa), falling tone with a circumflex accent (âa), rising tone with a flipped circumflex accent (ãa), while the high tone is unmarked.

syntactically, and a more familiar “NP1 + NP2 + *nôo*” type of predication, with two terms. The next data give some examples of non-verbal predications in Zarma:

- (1a) *Ăy yaa cawandikò nôo.*
 1SG TOP teacher COP
 ‘I am a teacher.’
 (White-Kaba 1994: xvii)
- (1b) [*Ngà ndà wandiyo]* *nòo.*
 3SG and girl IP
 ‘She’s with a young girl.’ (lit. ‘it’s [her and a young girl]’)
 (Hamani 1981: 340)
- (1c) *Ăy yoo, ăy mǎa kà ti Kulbà Bàaba.*
 1SG TOP 1SG name.DEF CONJ COP K.B.
 ‘As for me, my name is Kulba Baba’
 (Adamou Idé 2021: 364)
- (1d) *Abdù goo nè/ fuw-òo ra.*
 Abdou be.at here house-DEF in
 ‘Abdou is here/in the house.’
 (Sibomana 2008: 34)

Example (1a), with a subject pronoun (marked with a topicalization particle *yaa*), a complement NP and the copula *nôo*, illustrates the construction most often used to express nominal classification and related functions. Sentence (1b), with a coordinated subject NP and the predicate *nôo* (or *nòo*) ‘be’, presents a single-term predication which, in its basic usage, serves to directly identify a referent present in the immediate environment of the speaker. Although in (1b) predicate *nôo* technically is not a “copula”, it is clear that it is the same element that functions as a typical copula in (1a). Nonetheless, to avoid confusion, we will gloss it as “IP”, i. e., an identificational predicate, that is also used in equative predications, as we will see later. The construction illustrated in (1c), with the copula *ti* ‘be’, fulfills the same functions as the two-term predication illustrated in (1a) but it is normally restricted to focus constructions and negative utterances. Example (1d) illustrates a locative predication with copula *gõo* ‘be.at’, a copula which (together with its negative counterpart *si* ‘NEG.be.at’) also intervenes in Zarma predicative possession, existential predications, and – as an auxiliary – in progressive constructions. It should be noted that although Zarma has attributive adjectives, it nonetheless has no adjectival predications (cf. White-Kaba 1994: xi; cf. also Heath 1999: 104 for Koyraboro Senni) and uses quality verbs (formally related to the adjectives) for the predication of quality traits.

The aim of this paper is first to give a detailed description of the functions of *nôo* ‘be’, and *ti* ‘be’ when they appear as copulas binding a subject and a complement, using the typology proposed in Declerck (1988). The paper then describes the function of *nôo* in pragmatically neutral positive single-term predications, such as illustrated in (1b), where copula *ti* does not appear. Based on at least three exclusive contexts of use and three morphosyntactic criteria, the paper claims that the one-term “NP + *nôo*” predication is basic and is hence independent from the two-term “NP1 + NP2 + *nôo*” predication. Finally, the paper also describes the use of the one-term predication in constituent focus constructions and concludes that Zarma is similar to neighboring Hausa and other West African languages.

Regarding the definition of NVPs, Payne (1997: 112) proposes that NVPs do not have a semantically rich verb, that is, a verb capable of expressing the semantics of the predication. For example, by comparing copula *be* and the verb *eat*, we have an idea of the action expressed by the verb *eat*, but we have to look at the whole predication built around copula *be* to understand its meaning. In other words, with the same copula, *Abdu is a farmer* expresses a nominal predication, while *Abdu is in the room* expresses a location. In the traditional logical approach (cf. Creissels 2006: 343), in these examples, it is the noun phrase *a farmer* and the prepositional phrase *in the room* that are the nonverbal predicates, expressing properties verified by the referent of *Abdu*. In these contexts, copula *be* would be a semantically empty element that syntactically binds the terms and eventually carries tense/aspect categories (cf. Pustet 2003: 5 and the references she cites for a general definition of the copula as a semantically empty linguistic element). However, some more specific discussions nowadays make a distinction in English between nominal predications and equative or identity statements, even if both involve the structure “NP1 *be* NP2”. Indeed, by definition, equative or identity statements do not have a property-attributing nominal predicate, rather, they have two referring expressions as logical arguments around the copula *be*, which in this case is the logical predicate with the meaning ‘is equal to’ (cf. Roy 2013: 8 and the references she cites, cf. also Declerck 1988: 1 on the many types of *be*’s in English). This proposal implies the existence of at least two copulas *be*. The present paper first extends this analysis of English *be* to the Zarma copula *nôo*, i. e., taking *nôo* to be a simple copula in nominal predications but the logical (non-verbal) identification predicate in equative and identity statements, with two logical NP arguments. Secondly, the paper considers copula *nôo* in one-term predications to also be the logical predicate taking a single NP argument (for the same approach applied to Hausa cf. Abdoulaye/Barmou/Bida 2020).

The study mainly uses data given in previous descriptive works and in dictionaries or published narrative texts (cf. Bernard/White-Kaba 1994; Hamani 1981; Sibomana 1995, 2001, 2008, etc.) However, it also uses data overheard in daily conversations and isolated examples constructed and submitted to native speakers for grammaticality judgment.

The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 presents the functions involving two NPs with the copulas *nôo* and *ti*. Section 3 presents the one-term predication for deictic identification which involves a single NP and the copula *nôo*. Section 4 concludes the paper.

2 Functions expressed by two-term predications with copulas *nôo* and *ti*

This section explores the types of nonverbal predications involving 2 noun phrases and a copula. These types of predications have been the subject of much controversy in general discussions. Indeed, there are many proposed typologies, varying according to the types distinguished, their number, and the relationships between them (cf. among others Declerck 1988; Hengeveld 1992: 116; Mikkelsen 2005: 6 and the references she gives). Another difficulty is that some works use different (sometimes idiosyncratic) names for the same types of predication (cf. Higgins 1979, cited in Mikkelsen 2005: 48). Haspelmath (2022) gives a cogent review of the literature and proposes an up-to-date and exhaustive classification, while also addressing some more general questions about the nature of these constructions.

For the purposes of this paper however, we are going to use the typology found in Declerck 1988 (cf. also Abdoulaye/Barmou/Bida 2020; and Green 2007 who similarly use Declerck’s

typology in their study of non-verbal predications in neighboring Hausa). According to Declerck (1988), there are four main types of non-verbal predications having the structure “NP + *be* + NP” in English, which are: nominal predications (for classification and related functions), specificational predications, predications for descriptive identification or equation (the “descriptively-identifying” sentences in Declerck’s terminology), and identity statements (or “equivalent designations” in our terminology). The paper ignores a few other minor functions the status of which Declerck himself is not sure about. All predications involving two terms and a copula, along with adjectival attribution (in languages where they exist), are generally grouped together by most scholars because they share the same morphosyntactic expression in many languages (cf. Declerck 1988: 4; Payne 1997: 114). This is also the case for Zarma, as we will see later in this section.

2.1 Classification and related functions

According to Declerck (1988: 55), some constructions involving two NPs are nominal predications where a noun (the complement NP) predicates a property (classification, characterization, role, function) of the referent of the subject NP. When they express membership in a class (the most frequent function), nominal predications mark the relationship of proper inclusion between the subject’s referent (NP1) and the category designated by the nominal predicate, the NP2 (cf. also Payne 1997: 114). Zarma uses two copulas in nominal predications, that is, *nôo* in assertive positive utterances and *ti* in the presupposed part of sentences with a focused constituent or in negative utterances. But first, let’s us consider the pragmatically neutral positive and negative sentences, as given next:

- (2a) Wàagâa [kwaara beeri] nôo.
 Ouaga town big COP
 ‘Ouagadougou is a big city.’
- (2b) Abdù àlfàri nòo.
 Abdu farmer COP
 ‘Abdou is a farmer.’
- (2c) Wàagâa màn-ti [kwaara beeri].
 Ouaga NEG-COP town big
 ‘Ouagadougou is not a big city.’

Examples (2a-b) illustrate nominal predication where a subject NP (*Wàagâa* or *Abdù*) is linked to a complement NP with copula *nôo* (with a short vowel if clause-final; also, the basic falling tone apparently becomes low after a high tone on the preceding word, but it is high if the first tone on the following word is low; cf. Oumarou Yaro 1993: 117f.; in this paper, we will adjust the tones but keep the long vowel throughout). At the logical level, as we have mentioned in the introductory section, the two NPs in a nominal predication fulfill the distinct functions of subject and predicate. For this reason, the examples in (2) do not allow the reordering of the two nouns (at least not while keeping the same semantic or pragmatic implications). Indeed, in a nominal predication, the subject NP is referential (or can allow a referential expression co-indexed later in the sentence), while the predicate NP cannot be referential (or be co-indexed with a referential expression; cf. the discussion in Declerck 1988 : 56–59 and the references cited). The examples given in (2a-b) express positive assertions. When the nominal predication is negated, as illustrated in (2c), copula *nôo* is replaced by copula *ti* preceded by the negation

marker *màn-* (cf. also Oumarou Yaro 1993: 138). It is also possible to focus the subject NP or the predicate NP, as seen in the following sentences:

- (3a) Abdù (nôo) (kà) ti àlfàri.
Abdu IP CONJ COP farmer
'It is Abdu who is a farmer'
- (3b) Àlfàri (nôo) (kà) ti Abdù.
farmer IP CONJ COP Abdu
'Abdu is a FARMER.'
- (3c) Āyì gà ci Zarma.
1SG.EMP CONJ COP Zarma
'I am the one who is a Zarma.'
- (Oumarou Yaro 1993: 137)

In example (3a), which corresponds to neutral (2b), the subject NP *Abdu* is fronted and followed by *nôo* and the sentence has an exhaustive listing or a contrastive meaning, depending on the context. We gloss the *nôo* in focused sentences as “IP” (identification predicate) because we argue in Section 3.3 that it derives from the single-term predicate *nôo*. Next in the construction comes the particle *kà* which, as we will show shortly, is probably a subordinating conjunction. Both *nôo* and conjunction *kà* are optional, as indicated.² The out-of-focus proposition itself uses copula *ti*, which thus appears to replace copula *nôo* in presupposition contexts. However, it is also possible to focus the predicate NP, as shown in (3b). Rather unexpectedly, when the predicate nominal is fronted, the subject NP *Abdù* is positioned to the right of copula *ti*, i. e., to a place that should be empty if the predicate NP is fronted.³ We propose here that this unusual placement is perhaps due to the source of particle *kà/gà*, i. e., the subordinating conjunction *kà/gà*, that introduces subject-less subordinate purposive, sequential, and infinitive clauses and also function as a binder in “V1 + *kà* + V2” auxiliary verbs constructions. Some of these functions are illustrated next:

- (4a) Ng mò kàa g â noo ng` kaynè sè.
3SG then come CONJ 3SG give 3SG younger.sister to
'She then came to give it to her sister.'
- (Sibomana 2001: 222)
- (4b) Irkòy n` taas-oo bar g` tee dònou bònyan.
God SEP sand-DEF change CONJ make millet chunks
'God transformed the sand into millet chunks.'
- (Sibomana 2001: 230)

² As suggested by the neutral translation of (1c), the *kà/gà* focus constructions in non-verbal clauses do not always have a focus semantics when *nôo* is omitted. White-Kaba (1994: xviii) also gives a rare type of sentence, *à sù ti à* ‘he will not be (something)’, the original French translation of which (‘il ne le sera pas’) has no apparent focus marking. Nonetheless, *kà ti*-sentences without *nôo* but still with a focus interpretation are the most frequent ones. For example, Hale/Malio 1990 (as cited by Adamou Idé 2021: 20) report four near-consecutive such sentences and three of them have the focus reading in their translations

³ Sentences like (3b), where the predicate NP is fronted, can also mean ‘a good farmer is Abdu’, similar to French *une voiture c’est Peugeot* ‘a [good] car is a Peugeot/if it’s car, it must be a Peugeot’ (cf. Heath 1999: 174f. for a discussion of similar constructions in Koyraboro Senni but with a different proposed explanation).

- (4c) À dii g` hen day à nê...
 3SG catch CONJ cry indeed 3SG say
 ‘She started crying indeed and said...’

(Sibomana 2001: 230)

- (4d) Ifòo ni bay gà ci wàngù mâa?
 what 2SG know CONJ COP war name
 ‘What do you know about war?’/Lit.: ‘What do you know to be war name?’

(Oumarou Yaro 1993: 298)

In example (4a), particle *kà/gà* (here using the variant *gà*) is clearly a subordinating conjunction introducing a purposive/sequential clause, which has the same subject as the main clause. In (6b), *kà/gà* introduces a verb phrase (VP) and the verbs are closer semantically in the sense that there is essentially one action described by the two verbs, as seen in the English translation, although each verbs has an independent lexical meaning. Finally in (4c), there is one main action as described by V2, while V1 can be taken to be an auxiliary expressing a grammatical (aspectual, modal, and temporal) meaning. What is clear is that these sentences are “subject-centered” in the sense that the two verbs must share the same subject. We believe this likely provides a link with the subject focus *kà/gà*, the more so since both particles show the voiced/voiceless consonant alternation (the variant with the voiceless consonant is pan-Songhay and, of all Songhay languages, only Zarma has the alternation, which may point to *kà* as the basic form). Although we do not know the exact process through which conjunction *kà/gà* came to be used in subject focus constructions, the interrogative sentence in (4d) suggests a possible path. In this sentence, the main verb (*bay* ‘know’) is semantically weak and can be omitted while essentially keeping the same meaning. In that case, the subordinate *kà/gà*-clause would take over as the main clause. Sentence (4d) then may be intermediary between the *kà/gà* purposive clauses and the *kà/gà* subject focus constructions (one may note that Oumarou Yaro 1993 only uses the variant *gà* of the *kà/gà* conjunction and auxiliary verbs linker and a variant *ci* for copula *ti*). As an anonymous reviewer pointed out, one can find these two uses of particle *kà* (or its variants) in other Songhay languages (cf. the discussion in Heath 1999: 346 on Koyraboro Senni). This shows that the association is not a peculiarity of Zarma alone, and it therefore clearly needs to be accounted for in some plausible ways, such as along the lines we suggest.

Concerning the relations between copula *nôo* and copula *ti*, we propose that *nôo* is a relatively recent copula very likely derived from an old adverb, which is still visible in the adverb *noodin* ‘over there’ and in *gõo nõo ga* ‘be.at there to [doing something]’, one of the progressive constructions of Zarma (cf. also Oumarou Yaro 1993: 136). *Nôo* was probably first introduced in one-term predications for deictic identification (cf. section 3), via an emphatic or contrastive function (for a background, cf. Abdoulaye 2007: 243 and references cited there). From the one-term predications, *nôo* would have invaded the domain of two-term predications where it replaced older copula *ti* in assertive positive utterances, via the syntactic integration of topicalized NPs as subjects, i. e., from a topical structure “NP_{top}, + NP + IP” => NP1 + NP2 + IP/COP” (for the general grammaticalization processes of topical NPs into syntactic functions cf. Dahl 2009: 247; Givón 1976: 156). Apparently this process is still well on-going. For example, White-Kaba (1994: xvii) says that in two-term predications NP1 is always separated from the rest of the sentence by an emphatic particle or a demonstrative adverb (cf. for example

data (1a) above). Similarly, Sibomana (2008: 99), though not explicit on the issue, only gives example sentences of nominal predication containing topicalization markers on the NP1. However, his translation of the examples does not always reflect the topicalization structure. Some of these examples are given next (data from Sibomana 2008: 99f.; with the original French translations):

- (5a) Ay yàa Zarma nò.
1SG TOP Zarma COP
'I am Zarma.' ('Je suis zarma')
- (5b) Abdù wôo àlfàri nò.
Abdu TOP farmer COP
'Abdu is a farmer.' ('A. est paysan')
- (5c) Nii wôo zànkà hànno nò.
2SG TOP child nice COP
'You are a nice kid.' ('tu es un bon enfant')
- (5d) Tòbay ya màn koy, à koy tugu.
hare TOP NEG go 3SG go hide
'As for the hare, he did not go, he went and hid.'
('Le lievre, lui, ne partit pas, il alla se cacher.')

It may be noted that all examples (5) are discussed by Sibomana in a section devoted to topicalization. Nonetheless, all non-verbal sentences with formal topicalization, such as (5a-c), are translated without a topicalization structure in the translations, as indicated. By contrast, all verbal sentences with formal topicalization are also translated with the appropriate topicalization structures, as seen in (5d). Nonetheless, nowadays the data do point to the fact that *nôo* can fully function as a copula in nominal and identificational predications, as seen in (1b). Such non-topicalized sentences are also frequent in daily interaction, as confirmed by our own investigations. It may also be noted that most negative two-term *nôo*-sentences do not exhibit the formal topicalization (cf. Section 3.2). We believe that the existence side by side of topicalized and non-topicalized nominal predication sentences points indeed to a relatively recent intrusion of *nôo* into the domain, replacing copula *ti*. In this hypothesis, copula *ti* would have survived in negative sentences, as seen in example (2c). It also survived in the presupposed parts of two-term non-verbal constituent focus constructions (see data (3a)), *wh*-question constructions (exp.: *I fòo (kà) ti wôo?* 'what is this?'; cf. also Bernard/White-Kaba 1994: 288), and relativized constructions, as pointed out by an anonymous reviewer (exp.: *à còrãa kâŋ (gà) ti cawandikòo* 'his friend who is a teacher'; cf. also Tersis 1976: 40). A similar process has probably taken place in Hausa, too, where the copula *nee/cee* may have replaced the older copula *kèe*, which today is restricted to non-assertive contexts (cf. Abdoulaye et al. 2020: 209).⁴

In the next subsections we turn to the other functions fulfilled by two-term non-verbal predications.

⁴ Zarma may not be the only language in the area with topicalization in two-term nominal predications. Indeed, in Benítez-Torres (2021: 127f.) most examples of nominal predication in Tagdal (Northern Songhay) contain a comma after the subject NP in a NP1, + NP2 + COP structure. One may assume that the comma maybe reflects a topicalization structure, although the author makes no explicit comments on the phenomenon.

2.2 Specification

This subsection and the next two deal with three types of two-term predications that in some general discussions are regrouped and referred to as equational or identificational predications (cf. for example Payne 1997: 114; Creissels 2006; for a summary of the issue cf. Declerck 1988: 2f.). In his typology of NVPs, Declerck (1988) distinguishes specificational sentences from descriptive identification sentences and identity statements. According to Declerck (1988: 2, 10f.), a specificational sentence specifies a value expressed by one NP for a variable expressed by the other NP. In other words, a specificational sentence allows a speaker to choose a valid referent (or a list) from a set that matches the variable a process that is clearly akin to an identification. Typical contexts for the occurrence of specificational sentences are the *wh*-questions (*who is the director?*/French: *qui est le directeur?*) and their answers (*John is the director – the director is John*/French: *John est le directeur – le directeur c'est John*). While in English and French *wh*-questions in non-verbal sentences are answered most often with formally neutral (non focused) sentences, it appears that in some languages answers to *wh*-questions can focus the constituent containing the new information (cf. Jaggar 2001: 494–496., 2006 for Hausa). This seems to apply to Zarma, in particular for the specificational sentences, where answers to *wh*-question can be formally neutral or focalized, as seen in the following:

- (6a) Kwaara fo nòo kà ti Fàransà kwaara dunk-ãa?
town INDF IP CONJ COP France town main-DEF
'What is the capital city of France?'
- (6b) Pàarí (nòo) (gà) ti Fàransà kwaara dunk-ãa.
Paris IP CONJ COP France town main-DEF
'It is Paris that is the capital city of France.'
- (6c) Fàransà kwaara dunk-ãa Pàarí nòo.
France town main-DEF Paris COP
'The capital city of France is Paris'/'Paris is the capital city of France.'
- (7a) May (noo) (gà) ti Bàlki nǎa?
who IP CONJ COP Balki mother.DEF
'Who is the mother of Balki?'
- (7b) Hàdiizà (noo) (gà) ti Bàlki nǎa.
Hadiza IP CONJ COP Balki mother.DEF
'It is Hadiza that Balki's mother.'
- (7c) Bàlki nǎa Hàdiizà nòo.
Balki mother.DEF Hadiza COP
'Balki's mother is Hadiza/Hadiza is Balki's mother.'

In sentences (6–7), a variable is given ('capital of France'/'mother of Balki') for which a value is sought (sentences (a) with a *wh*-word) or specified (sentences (b-c)). In Zarma (and contrary to English), sentences (6b) and (7b) are the most natural (pragmatically neutral) answers to the *wh*-questions, despite formally having a focused constituent. Nonetheless, it is also possible to answer the *wh*-question with a formally neutral sentence, as seen in (6c) and (7c). Despite being formally neutral, these sentences seem to be very confident, matter-of-factly answers to a query, but they have no particular focus on a constituent. According to Declerck (1988: 19), in a specificational sentence the variable is usually a definite NP which however has no reference,

while the specified NP is both definite and referential. For this reason, in specification sentences (but also in identity statements and equational sentences) the two NPs are generally reversible (cf. also Declerck 1988: 40–47). Nonetheless, in Zarma the reversed order of sentence (7c), i. e., *Hàdiizà Bàlki nǎa nòo* ‘Hadiza is Balki’s mother’, would answer a different *wh*-question, namely *may gà ti Hàdiizà?* ‘who is Hadiza?’⁵

2.3 Identity statements (or equivalent designations)

According to Declerck (1988: 95), the vast majority of “NP1 + NP2” sentences centered on a copula are nominal or specificational predications. There are however other minor types, including the identity statements which he says can be paraphrased as “NP1 refers to the same person/thing as NP2”. For this reason, we also sometimes refer to them more explicitly as predications for equivalent designations. The most oft-cited examples of equivalent designations in English include *the morning star is the evening star* and *Clark Kent is Superman* (cf. also Mikkelsen 2005: 55f. and the references cited, Declerck 1988: 40–43, 110–112). The predication of equivalent designations in Zarma can be illustrated in the following:

- (8a) Ìbraahim gà ti Hiimà.
Ibrahim CONJ COP Hima
‘Ibrahim is Hima.’
- (8b) Ìbraahim kulù Hiimà nòo.
Ibrahim all Hima COP
‘Any Ibrahim is a Hima.’

Sentence (8a) gives two alternative names (of the William ~ Bill type), so that anyone called Ibrahim can also be called Hima and vice versa. The two NPs in a predication of equivalent designations may naturally appear in either order. For some reason yet unclear to us, identity statements in Zarma are mostly presented in a focused construction with copula *ti*, as in (8a). Nonetheless, it is also possible to use the formally neutral sentence with copula *nòo*, as seen (8b), but then the word *kulù* ‘all’ is obligatory.

2.4 Equational sentences

According to Declerck (1988: 110), another type of predication involving two NPs is what he calls “descriptively-identifying” sentences, that is, descriptive identification sentences the purpose of which is to give additional information about a person or some entity, usually visible to the interlocutors. These sentences are otherwise also referred to simply as identificational or equational sentences. Declerck illustrates this type of predication for English with the following sentences:

- (9a) Who is this man?
(9b) ‘This man is John’s brother’.

⁵ Neutral specificational sentences can also be found in contexts of underlying, non-explicit *wh*-questions. For example, in a translated child story (originally from Hausa, cf. Abdoulaye/Barmou/Bida 2020: 191) a protagonist replies to some children who said they are looking for “Ali the Leper”: *...àmma jìrày-õ aràn bàabà nòo* ‘...but the leper is your father’ (lit. ‘but leper-the your father be’).

According to Declerck, although sentence (9b) answers the *wh*-question in (9a) it nonetheless does not specify a value for a variable (in other words, the speaker does not select the correct referent from a set). Indeed, unlike a variable NP, the subject NP *that man* in (9b) has a precise reference. According to Declerck (1988: 100), sentence (9b) responds more precisely to the request "tell me a little more about X" because "X" is already clearly identified (visible in the immediate context or identified through a proper name). Examples of equational predications in Zarma are as follows:

(10a) Āy wôo Àali nòo.
1SG TOP Ali COP
'I am Ali.'

(10b) Wôo Muusà nòo.
DEM Musa COP
'This one is Musa.'

Sentences (10a–b), respectively, answer the questions *may gà ti nîn?* 'who are you?' and *may nòo wonè?* 'who is this (person)?' Our informants insist that there is no need to use the focused version of the sentences, contrary to the case of specificational predications, as seen in Section 2.2 (see discussion of data (6–7)). Also, descriptive identification sentences, as illustrated in (10), are clearly tied to the utterance context since the referent is generally visible to the interlocutors. In this respect, descriptive identification sentences are functionally very close to the deictic identification sentences described in the next section but which nonetheless represent a distinct type of predication.

3 The one-term predication for deictic identification

Many languages, especially in West Africa, have complete predications containing a single NP and a particle that in some languages is the same as the copula one finds in two-term nominal predications and related constructions (for Hausa cf. Jaggar 2001: 459; Newman 2000: 160, 545). In explicit discussions, these sentences are generally considered to be a reduction of two-term predications where one of the NP is deleted or implied (cf. Abdoulaye/Barmou/Bida 2020 for references on this analysis) or a truncated cleft (for example, cf. Lefebvre 1992 on Fongbe; also cf. Heath 1998: 147 for a discussion on the related construction in Koyra Chiini). In this article, we apply to Zarma the approach in Abdoulaye (2007) and Abdoulaye/Barmou/Bida (2020) who consider that one-term predications are basic and are mainly used to identify non-discursive entities visible in the immediate environment of the speaker. At the logical level, they contain a NP subject argument and an identificational predicate in a structure "NP + Predicate".

The following subsections present, respectively, the basic use of the one-term predications in Zarma (Section 3.1), the morphosyntactic differences between one-term and two-term predications (Section 3.2), and the use of the one-term predication in Zarma focused constructions (Section 3.3).

3.1 Contexts of use for the one-term predication

Abdoulaye (2007: 243–245) and Abdoulaye/Barmou/Bida (2020: 197), based on the discussions in Stassen 1997: 76–81, 100–120f. (but also cf. Welmers 1973: 309f.), proposed the

existence of a basic type of single-term predication used to identify an entity present in the immediate environment of the speaker. Researchers on Hausa and Zarma have generally lumped these predications with other non-verbal predications under various labels such as constructions with a “copula” (Green 2007; Jaggar 2001: 459), a “stabilizer” (Newman 2000: 160; Nicolai/Zima 1997: 17f.), a “predicative particle” (Caron 1991: 123), a “presenter/presentative” (White-Kaba 1994: xvii), etc. One-term predications have also been derived from focus-fronting constructions through deletion of the out-of-focus clause (or truncated cleft; cf. Lefebvre 1992: 54, footnote 2, Oumarou Yaro 1993: 142 for Zarma). This section shows that in Zarma, one-term “NP + *nôo*” predications are basic constructions and can be distinguished from two-term “NP1 + NP2 + *nôo*” predications based on some exclusive contexts of use. Two such contexts are illustrated in the following (for similar data also cf. Hamani 1981: 340; Oumarou Yaro 1993: 140f):

- (11a) À kurɲè nôo.
3SG husband IP
'It's her husband.'
- (11b) Wo-din à kurɲè nôo.
DEM-there 3SG husband COP
'That is her husband.'
- (11c) Kwaayi nôo!
shirt IP
'It is a shirt!'
- (11d) ?Wo-nè kwaayi nôo!/ ?hày-õ wôo kwaayi nôo!
that-here shirt COP thing-DEF TOP shirt COP
'?This is a shirt!/?'This thing is a shirt!'

In example (11a) a person visible in the speech setting is identified directly without first being referenced through an NP in the utterance. It is for this reason that Abdoulaye (2007) and Abdoulaye/Barmou/Bida (2020) characterize one-term predications as having a “deictic identification” function, a terminology we adopt here for Zarma as well. Sentence (11a) can be said without a prior utterance or it can follow a question like *may nõo?* ‘who is it?’, which is also a one-term predication. In some discussions, sentence (11a) would be considered a reduced version of sentence (11b), where a demonstrative pronoun refers to the (to be) identified entity (cf. for example Caron 1991: 125 and Jaggar 2001: 450 on this analysis for Hausa). However, although they are semantically very close, the two sentences in (11a-b) do not strictly have the same functions in discourse. For example, if a local Person A approaches a visiting Person B, who is watching – in an intrigued way – a neighborhood woman arguing with a man, Person A can explain the situation (without an explicit request from Person B) using the sentence (11a), but not really sentence (11b). Sentence (11b) is nonetheless grammatical and would be used when the information is being presented to an interlocutor that did not ask a question or did not seem overly interested on the referent, or when multiple persons or objects are serially presented (cf. *this is Abdu, this is Ali, and this is Musa*). Likewise, in (11c) the one-term predication can be used in the suspenseful context of the opening of a gift package. In this context, a two-term predication, with a demonstrative pronoun or a generic noun, would be inadequate, as seen in (11d).

Another context of use for the one-term predication concerns the replies to identificational confirmation questions (such as *is it Abdu?*). When the answer is positive, only the one-term predication is possible. However, when the answer is negative, both the one-term and the two-term predications are possible, albeit with distinct discourse functions. This is illustrated next:

- (12) Abdù nòo?
Abdu COP
'Is it Abdu?'
- (13a) Òhoo, Abdù nòo.
yes Abdu COP
'Yes, it is Abdu.'
- (13b) *Òhoo, wo-nè Abdù nòo.
yes DEM-here this Abdu COP
'Yes, this is Abdu.'
- (14a) Haa'àn, mânti Abdù nòo.
No NEG Abdu COP
'No, it is not Abdu.'
- (14b) Haa'àn, wo-nè mânti Abdù nòo.
no DEM-here NEG Abdu COP
'No, this is not Abdu.'

Given the *yes/no* question in (12), a positive reply can only be a one-term predication, as shown in the contrast in (13a-b). When the reply is negative, the answer can be a one-term predication, as shown in (14a), or a two-term predication (with a demonstrative pronoun or a generic noun such as *bòrãa* 'person' as the subject NP), as shown in (14b). The two replies, however, do not have the same functions. The one-term predication utterance in (14a) would be final, unlikely to be followed by another commentary about the person seen. By contrast, the two-term predication utterance in (14b) is more likely to be followed by commentaries about the actual person seen (who is not Abdu) or about Abdu (for example, to say how he is different from the person seen). Without any commentary, the reply in (14b) would also sound rude (say, if the speaker wants to signal that the referent is obviously not Abdu and there was no need to ask the question). In fact, when the stimulus prompting the question in (12) is not visual but, say, auditory (speaker hears some noise and inquires about it), then only the answer in (14a) is possible, whether or not a further commentary is made. In conclusion, one can say that there are contexts where only the one-term predication is adequate.

Besides the identification function in the immediate context of the speaker, one-term predications can also be used in reference to reported bygone (past) contexts or to contexts in the discourse itself, as it can happen with most deictic markers (Diessel 1999: 110; Dixon 2003: 62f.; Fillmore 1997: 103). Cases of such non-deictic use of the one-term predication are illustrated in the following:

- (15) Zànk-ăa [kaŋ nòo] mà kàa ne.
child-DEF that IP SBJV come here
'May the child in question come.'

(Hamani 1981: 438)

(Cf. original French translation: 'que l'enfant [dont il s'agit] vienne ici')

- (16a) Ì nêe Hàdiizà nà Moorù kar. Àmma wà à nâŋ.
 3PL say Hadiza SEP Moru hit but SBJV.PL 3SG leave
 À izè nôo.
 3SG son IP
 ‘It is said that Hadiza hit Moorù. But leave her alone. It’s her son.’
- (16b) Ì nêe Hàdiizà nà Moorù kar. Àmma wà à nâŋ.
 3PL say Hadiza SEP Moru hit but SBJV.PL 3SG leave
 Moorù à izè nôo.
 Moru 3SG son IP
 ‘It is said that Hadiza hit Moorù. But leave her alone. Moorù is her son.’

Sentence (15) contains a one-term predication inside a relative clause, where the relative pronoun is followed by *nôo*. This sentence can be used in a situation where the speaker does not directly see the child in question. For sentences (16), in a context where everybody knows that Moru is the son of Hadiza, then sentence (16a), with a one-term predication in the last clause, is strongly preferred over sentence (16b) where Moru is identified as the son of Hadiza. Indeed in (16a), the speaker is not informing his interlocutors that Moru is the son of Hadiza but he/she is simply providing a justification for her action. By contrast, with (16b) the speaker is informing the interlocutors that Moru is the son of Hadiza. This is confirmed by the fact that the word *zàma* ‘since it’s the case that’ would be appropriate in (16a) with the one-term predication (*zàma à izè nôo* ‘since it’s her son’) but not in (16b) with the two-term predication (*zàma Moorù à izè nôo* ‘since Moru is her son’).

Further uses of the one-term predication can be found in contexts of emphatic explanations or when a list of nouns is provided to illustrate the reference of a universal expression in a sentence. This is illustrated in the following (cf. also Abdoulaye/Barmou/Bida 2020: 206 for Hausa):

- (17a) Ay miilà ni gà maa Zarma cìinè nôo.
 1SG think 2SG IPF understand zarma language IP
 ‘[It is that] I thought you understood Zarma.’
- (17b) À mà ciya àlfagà nôo, kiristà nôo, follayzè nôo,
 3SG SBJV say Muslims IP Christians IP Folla IP
 I kulù nôo gà koy hari ŋwaaray dòo.
 3PL all IP IPF go rain prayer place
 ‘Whether Muslims, Christians, or Folla followers, all go pray for rain.’

In (17a) the speaker is trying to explain why he first spoke Zarma to the interlocutor. Sentence (17b) presents a series of one-term identification predications enumerating the elements of a category of people (the different religious groups).

Based on these data, we conclude that one-term predications in Zarma have distinct uses and are therefore different from two-term predications. In the introductory part, we have seen that general discussions already consider that in specificational and equational predications and in identity statements, it is the copula which is the logical predicate. Along these lines, in this article we will consider that in Zarma, *nôo* is the logical predicate in one-term predications, the single NP being the subject. Zarma hence confirms the analysis already proposed for Hausa where an element *neel/cee* functions both as copula (or logical predicate) in two-term predica-

tions and as logical predicate in one-term predications. In this regard, it should also be noted that in fact many languages in West Africa, contrary to Hausa and – to some extent – Zarma, have a special predicate restricted to one-term predications. For example, according to Welmers (1973: 309f.) in Fante (Akan, Kwa), the deictic identification predicate is *yè* (which he glosses as ‘be described as’; e. g., *ɔ̀yè kyéw* ‘it’s a hat’) while the equational copula is *ni* (e. g., *mí kyéw ní yí* ‘this is a hat’). Other languages with distinct predicates and copulas for one-term and two-term predications include Gulmancema (Gur; cf. Abdoulaye/Moussa Tchiombiano (in prep.)) and Fongbe (Gbe, Kwa; cf. Ndayiragije 1992: 64f.; Lefebvre 1992: 54, footnote 2). The following subsection shows that besides the exclusive contexts of use, one-term predications in Zarma also have distinctive morphosyntactic properties.

3.2 Formal characteristics of one-term predications in Zarma

Abdoulaye/Barmou/Bida (2020) show that in Hausa, one can distinguish one-term predications from two-term predications based on their morphosyntactic properties. It turns out that in Zarma the formal properties of one-term predications are even more marked than they are in Hausa. Indeed in Zarma one can speak, first of all, of a quasi-specialization of the copulas in the sense that copula *ti* seems to be excluded from the positive one-term predications. For example, *ti* cannot replace *nôo* in sentence (1a), nor build a sentence pragmatically equivalent to (1a). The specialization, however, is not total since *nôo* also appears in two-term predications and, as we will see shortly, copula *ti* does appear in negative one-term predication (see discussion of data (18–19) below).

The second formal difference between one-term and two-term predications concerns the form of negation. Indeed, as previous studies have pointed out (cf. Bernard/White-Kaba 1994: 240; Oumarou Yaro 1993: 139, 141), the one-term “NP + *nôo*” predication uses the negative structure “*màn-ti* + NP + *nôo*”, whereas the two-term “NP1 + NP2 + *nôo*” predication uses the simpler structure “NP1 *màn-ti* NP2”. This is illustrated in the following:

- (18a) Ni walla *màn-ci* bàrkàrkô, ni yaa *mùnaafici* nôo.
 2SG indeed NEG-COP beggar 2SG TOP swindler COP
 ‘You are not a beggar, you are a swindler.’

(Adamou Idé 2021: 244)

- (18b) Maabè *màn-ci* bòro kulù tã̀m, maabè mò *bùrcin_cirày* noo.
 griot NEG-COP man all slave griot TOP person-free COP
 ‘A griot is nobody’s slave, a griot is a free man.’

(Adamou Idé 2021: 224)

- (19) Àlbòrò nôo, *màn-ti* wàybòrò nôo
 man IP NEG-COP woman IP
 ‘It’s a man, it’s not a woman.’

(Lit. ‘[it] not be [the case] it’s a woman.’)

(Bernard/White-Kaba 1994: 240)

- (20a) Ǻy *màn ci* bònkòon-òo.
 1SG NEG COP chief-DEF
 ‘I am not the chief.’

(Oumarou Yaro 1993: 139)

- (20b) Mân-ci bònkòon-òo nòo.
 NEG-COP chief-DEF IP
 ‘It’s not the chief.’
 (Lit. ‘[it] not be [the case] it’s the chief.’)
 (Oumarou Yaro 1993: 139)

- (20c) À mán-ci bònkòon-òo nòo.
 3SG NEG-COP chief-DEF IP
 ‘It’s not the chief.’
 (Lit. ‘it not be [the case] it’s the chief.’)⁶

In examples (18a–b), taken from an epic text, each sentence begins with a negative nominal predication without copula *nôo* followed by a positive nominal predication with *nôo*. In nominal predications, negation consists of the addition of the negation marker *mân-* and the replacement of copula *nôo* by copula *ti*. In example (19), a positive one-term predication is followed by almost the same predication but in the negative. As we can see, the negation of the one-term predication adds the negation marker *mân-*, the copula *ti*, but copula *nôo* is also retained. Given this unusual structure, Oumarou Yaro (1993: 139) proposes that in the negation of two-term predications, as in (20a), the negation marker *mân-* and the copula *ti* are separate words, while in the negation of one-term predications, as in (20b), the two elements are fused into one word. According to him, in (20b) “[*mânci*] est une forme figée qui fonctionne en bloc comme marque de négation associée au morphème [*nôo*]” (‘*mânci* is a fixed expression that globally functions as a negation marker associated with the morpheme *nôo*’ – our translation). In this analysis, we would not have two copulas *ti/ci* and *nôo* in (20b), but a negation marker *mânti* and the copula *nôo*. Nonetheless, another plausible analysis would be to consider (20b) as a bi-clausal sentence, with a zero-market impersonal reading, as indicated in the translations. In this analysis, one would have a copula *ti/ci* and the predicate *nôo*, each in its own clause. This seems to be born out by the fact that speakers accept a third person singular pronoun in an impersonal use, as seen in (20c) (also cf. the same analysis proposed for a similar example in Heath 1999: 147 for Koirra Chiini). These negation-marking pattern for two-term predications seems to hold well only with a regular noun (or pronoun) as subject NP. Indeed, when a demonstrative pronoun functions as NP1 in a two-term predication (as illustrated in (11b) above), then the sentence can follow the negation pattern for two-term “NP1 + NP2 + *nôo*” predications – as expected – or, in a less expected way, follow the negation pattern for one-term “NP + *nôo*” predications. This is illustrated in the following:

- (21a) Wo-din mán-ti à kurjè.
 DEM-there NEG-COP 3SG husband
 ‘That’s not her husband.’
- (21b) Wo-din mán-ti à kurjè nòo.
 DEM-there NEG-COP 3SG husband IP
 ‘That’s not her husband.’

⁶ While predicate/copula *nôo* can be characterized as a non-verbal particle, probably derived from an emphatic demonstrative as we suggest, copula *ti*, by contrast, can be characterized as a verbal copula, given its position before the specified NP, although we do not know its ultimate origin. It is very likely that the construction illustrated in (20b) derived from the construction illustrated in (20c) through deletion of the impersonal subject pronoun.

(21c) Āy yaa, m̀an-ti cawandikò ǹo.
 1SG TOP NEG-COP teacher COP
 ‘(As for me,) I am not a teacher.’

(21d) Wàagâa, m̀an-ti kwaara beeri ǹo.
 Waga NEG-COP town big COP
 ‘As for Waga, it’s not a big city.’

Sentence (21a) is the negation of (11b), regularly using the negation pattern for two-term predications. However, and unexpectedly, sentence (11b) can also be negated with sentence (21b), using the negation pattern for one-term predications. We believe this may be due to the fact that the expansion of *ǹo* from one-term predications to the two-term predications is still an on-going process. Indeed, in topicalization constructions, even with a full nominal (or pronominal) subject, it is possible to revert to the negation pattern of one-term predications, as seen in sentences (21c-d). A similar continuum between one-term and two-term predication can be seen in French where one can have a marked topicalization with the expletive *ce* (*[en ce qui concerne] Ouaga, ce n’est pas une grande ville* ‘as for Waga, it’s not a big city’), a clear two-term predication (*Ouaga n’est pas une grande ville* ‘Waga is not a big city’), or a predication without marked topicalization but also using the expletive *ce* (*Ouaga c’est pas une grande ville* ‘Waga is not a big city’; the literal equivalent of which – ??*Waga it’s not a big city* – would seem at least cumbersome in English).

Finally, a third formal indication of the difference between one-term predications and two-term predications is the fact that in Zarma, the localization copula *gõo* ‘be.at’ can be recruited to express two-term predications, but not one-term predications. Indeed, Sibomana (2008) gives a list of secondary uses of copula *gõo*, including uses as a nominal or equational predication copula, but not as a one-term predication predicate. This is illustrated in the following examples:

(22a) Abdù goo z̀anka.
 Abdu COP child
 ‘Abdu was a child.’ (translated as ‘Abdu is a child’ in Sibomana 2008: 33)

(22b) À gõo ni wànde b̀oŋ, ni si nêe ni bà sindà.
 3SG COP 2SG spouse on 2SG NEG say 2SG part NEG.exist
 ‘(Since) she is your wife, you can’t say it’s not your business.’

(22c) Waat-õo k̀aŋ Kantù gõo Kantù.
 time-DEF that Kantu COP Kantu
 ‘(At the time) when Kantu was his real self.’

(22d) *Abdù gõo./ *Gõo z̀ankà.
 Abdu IP IP enfant
 ‘It’s Abdu.’/‘It’s a child.’

Examples (22a–c) illustrate, respectively, a nominal predication, a specificational sentence and an identity statement. As we can see, copula *gõo* ‘be.at’ is acceptable in all these sentences. However, sentence (22d) shows that copula *gõo* cannot be used as a predicate in a one-term deictic identification predication, regardless of the word order (though the sentence can have the existential meaning ‘Abdu exists/is around’). Abdoulaye/Barmou/Bida (2020: 201f.) report a similar situation in Hausa where the locative copula *-̀ana* ‘be.at’ can be recruited to express

the two-term predications, but not the one-term predication. If the one-term predications were derived from two-term predications through deletion of NP1, there would be no straightforward explanation why the deletion is not possible with copula *gõo*.

In conclusion, we can say that one-term predications in Zarma have morphosyntactic properties that distinguish them from two-term nominal or identificational predications. This reinforces the analysis that both types of predication are basic and independent types. The following subsection presents an important secondary use of the one-term predication.

3.3 Use of the one-term predication in constituent focus of verbal predications

Some previous studies, notably Abdoulaye (1992, 2007), Abdoulaye/Barmou/Bida (2020), Creissels (2006: 357), have explicitly argued that it is the one-term predication for deictic identification that appears to be used in constituent focus-fronting in many languages. As noted in Section 3.2, in Zarma, too, previous studies (cf. Bernard/White-Kaba 1994: 240; Oumarou Yaro 1993: 139, 141) have noted the common negative marking between the one-term predications and the focus constructions. This fact and the relative syntactic flexibility of the focused constituent indeed seem to indicate that Zarma uses its one-term predication to focus the constituents of verbal predications. This is illustrated next:

- (23a) Màryamà nê Hàdiizà sê à mà portòo feeri.
 Mariama say Hadiza to 3SG SBJV door open
 ‘Mariama told Hadiza to open the door.’

(Sibomana 2008: 93)

- (23b) Ay n` fuw-òo daabù zàma_sè yeeni gõ nô sê.
 1SG SEP house-DEF close because cold be there for
 ‘I closed the door because it is cold.’

(Sibomana 2008: 95)

- (23c) Fèegy-õo màna sùb-õo ñwãa.
 sheep-DEF NEG.PFV grass-DEF eat
 ‘The sheep did not eat the grass.’ (Sibomana 2008: 94)

- (23d) Abdù, (*áy ga tàmmâa,) fatta kwaayi si.
 Abdu 1SG IPFV think go.out shirt NEG.exist
 ‘Abdu, I believe, went out without a shirt.’

- (24a) Màryamà nô nê Hàdiizà sê à m` portòo feeri.
 Mariama IP say Hadiza to 3SG SBJV door open
 ‘It was Mariama that told Hadiza to open the door.’

(Sibomana 2008: 93)

- (24b) Zàma_sè yeeni gõ nô sê nô ay n` fuw-òo daabù.
 Because cold be there for IP 1SG SEP house-DEF close
 ‘It’s because it is cold that I closed the door.’

(Sibomana 2008: 95)

- (24c) Man ti feegy-òo nôo n` sùb-oo nwà.
 NEG COP sheep-DEF IP SEP grass-DEF eat
 ‘It wasn’t the sheep that ate the grass.’

(Sibomana 2008: 94)

- (24d) Abdù nòo, äy ga tàmmâa, fatta kwaayi si.
 Abdu IP 1SG IPFV think go.out shirt NEG.exist
 ‘It’s Abdu who, I believe, went out without a shirt.’

In these examples, sentences (24) are the focused version of the pragmatically neutral sentences in (23). As can be seen, in Zarma, copula *nòo* can be used to mark any sentence constituent in focus-fronting. So, sentences (24a–d), respectively, show the focalization of a subject NP (*Màryamà*), a subordinate causal clause, the subject NP of a negative clause (*feegyò* ‘the sheep’), and another subject NP (*Abdù*). It may be noted that sentence (24c) shows that negative focus constructions use the same negation strategy as does the one-term predication for deictic identification, as noted in previous studies. Sentence (24d) also shows that the fronted constituent and the copula can be separated from the rest of the sentence by parenthetical material, thus underscoring the relative independence of the one-term predication, even when it is integrated into a focus-fronting construction (for similar facts in Hausa also cf. Abdoulaye 1992: 42f.; Abdoulaye/Barmou/Bida 2020: 205). It can be noted that non-focused subjects cannot be set off from the rest of the sentence by parenthetical materials, as seen in (23d). This conclusion aligns Zarma with Hausa and other African languages. Indeed, Welmers (1973: 312–328) shows that in a number of languages (most notably Igbo, Kpelle) there is a tendency, to varying degrees, for a predicate used specifically in one-term predications to also be used in focus-fronting constructions, instead of the copula/predicate used in two-term non-verbal predications.

In Hausa, Abdoulaye (2007) and Abdoulaye/Barmou/Bida (2020: 209) have shown that in focused constructions, the copula and the constituent-fronting are two independent parameters, each with its own semantic contribution, with the copula marking deictic identification or its derived functions (such as exhaustive listing) and the fronting marking emphasis or contrast. In Zarma, most researchers only discuss examples of focalization where copula *nòo* is present and, therefore, they seem to assume that it is obligatory (cf. Oumarou Yaro 1993: 108–115; Sibomana 2008: 93–97). However, Hamani (1981: 408, 460) gives examples of focused constituents without the *nòo* copula, as illustrated next:

- (25a) Äy dây tàamu. => Tàamu äy dây.
 1SG buy shoes shoes 1SG buy
 ‘I bought shoes.’ ‘It’s shoes that I bought.’
- (25b) Äy di muusù. => Muusù äy di.
 1SG see cat cat 1SG see
 ‘I saw a cat’ ‘It’s a cat that I saw.’

Hamani himself does not discuss possible semantic differences between presence and absence of *nòo* in sentences (25). While trying to see whether or not there are any such differences, in fact several of our informants simply rejected the focused sentences without copula *nòo* as ungrammatical. We will therefore consider for the moment that the question remains open. Regarding *wh*-questions, too, the opinions seem divided or inconsistent. For example, Sibomana (2008 : 103) says that *nòo* can be omitted only with the locative copula *gõo* ‘be.at’, but he also gives an example with *ifo sêe* ‘why’ without *nòo*. In his main discussion of the question, Oumarou Yaro (1993: 116–118) only lists examples with *nòo*, which therefore seems to be obligatory for him. On the other hand, elsewhere he gives examples of fronted

interrogative pronouns without *nôo*. Here are some examples of *wh*-questions with and without copula *nôo* from both Oumarou Yaro and Sibomana (see also the example in (4d) above):

- (26a) May noo nà fèejì dây iz-ôo sê?
 who IP SEP sheep buy son-DEF for
 ‘Who (it was who) bought a sheep for his son?’
 (Oumarou Yaro 1993: 117)
- (26b) May sè nôo Muusà ga fèejì dây?
 who for IP Moussa IPFV sheep buy
 ‘For whom is Musa going to buy a sheep?’
 (Oumarou Yaro 1993: 117f.)
- (27a) May ni di?
 who 2SG see
 ‘Who did you see?’
 (Oumarou Yaro 1993: 214)
- (27b) Ifòo ni nêe?
 what 2SG say
 ‘What did you say?’
 (Oumarou Yaro 1993: 215)
- (27c) Ifòo sè ni g` miilà kan kòkiy-ă gòo fu?
 what for 2SG IPFV think that child-DEF be.at house
 ‘Why do you think that the child is at home?’
 (Sibomana 2008: 103)

Sentences (26a-b) show *wh*-questions where the fronted pronoun is followed by copula *nôo*. Sentences (27a-c) illustrate the rare cases where copula *nôo* can be omitted after the interrogative pronoun. Once again, and unlike in the case of Hausa, the data are incomplete and inconsistent and we will not try to see if there is a difference in interpretation between presence and absence of the copula.

In conclusion, after Hausa (cf. Abdoulaye/Barmou/Bida 2020), Zarma also validates the existence of a type of non-verbal predication with a single term that has the deictic identification as its basic function. Abdoulaye/Barmou/Bida (2020) argue that in this construction, the unique NP is the subject and the copula-like particle is the logical predicate. The one-term predication is therefore comparable to other non-verbal predications with a single term, such as the presentative or the existential predications. The various non-verbal constructions and the verbal constituent focus constructions seen in this paper can be summarized as in Table 1.

Functions	Constructions
Positive one-term deictic identification	NP + <i>nôo</i>
Negative one-term deictic identification	<i>màn-ti</i> + NP + <i>nôo</i>
Positive two-term predication	NP1 + NP2 + <i>nôo</i>
Negative two-term predication	NP1 + <i>màn-ti</i> + NP2
Focused non-verbal subject or complement	NP1 + (<i>nôo</i>) + (<i>kà</i>) + <i>ti</i> + NP2 NP2 + (<i>nôo</i>) + (<i>kà</i>) + <i>ti</i> + NP1
Subject focus of verbal predications	Subject + <i>kà</i> + Clause
Constituent focus of verbal predications	NP + <i>nôo</i> + Clause
Negative focus of verbal predications	<i>màn-ti</i> + NP + <i>nôo</i> + Clause

Table 1: Summary of copular constructions in Zarma

4 Conclusion

As an important component of the grammar of languages, non-verbal predications have been the subject of many typologies. This paper describes for Zarma a relatively neglected type of predication that we have referred to as the one-term predication for deictic identification. Indeed, this type of predication has a predicative particle with one logical argument as subject and is used primarily to directly identify a person, thing, or entity perceived in the immediate environment of the speaker. In many languages, including Zarma, the predicate used in one-term non-verbal predications is also used as copula/predicate in two-term nominal or equative predications and identity statements. Nonetheless, for Zarma, this paper shows that the one-term predication cannot be reduced to a two-term predication (with a deleted or understood term, or as a truncated cleft), given the fact that it has exclusive contexts of use and also some distinctive morphosyntactic features. The paper also shows that it is the one-term predication that is recruited in the formation of fronted constituent-focus constructions, a fact that is in line with similar findings in a number of languages, notably neighboring Hausa. This study is the more significant given the fact that many languages in West Africa have a distinct predicate used in one-term predication and a different copula/predicate used in two-term non-verbal predications.

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Abbreviations

1	1st person
2	2nd person
3	3rd person
CONJ	conjunction
COP	copula
DEF	definite
EMP	emphatic
INF	infinitive
IPFV	imperfective
NEG	negative
PL	plural
PFV	perfective
PROG	progressive
SG	singular
SBJV	subjunctive
SEP	separator
TOP	topicalization.