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The art of the verbal message in Somali society

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INTRODUCTION

The paper which we present here has two aims: firstly to give a brief account of the art of the verbal message which flourishes in the Somali nomadic interior, and secondly to record an oral tradition about an episode in the life of one of the greatest Somali poets, Raage Ugaas (*Raagé Uǵáas*).

Our two aims are complementary, as the account of the art of the verbal message provides the background to the recorded text, which in turn illustrates how the art is practised.

THE SOMALI ORAL ART

The extensive and conscious cultivation of the art of speaking is one of the most striking features of Somali culture. Its highest form is found in the alliterative oral poetry which has attracted the attention of several scholars¹⁾ and is regarded by the Somalis as the mainstay of their national heritage, a sentiment now much reinforced by modern patriotism and the drive towards unification of all Somali speaking territories.²⁾

Quotations from poems and alliterative proverbs, characterised by their pithiness and condensed imagery, adorn the prose style of sermons and speeches at assemblies, arbitration tribunals and political meetings. Outside the rigid framework of alliteration and poetic rhythm, the speech of everyday life is

¹⁾ Such as K. BERGHOLD, E. CERULLI, J. W. C. KIRK, M. MAINO, L. REINISCH, and MARIA VON TILING-KLINGENHEBEN. For bibliographical details see our *Hikmad Soomaali*, Oxford University Press, 1956, pp. 28-30 and *Somali poetry — An introduction* by B. W. ANDRZEJEWSKI and I. M. LEWIS, The Clarendon Press, Oxford 1964, pp. 59-60. To these bibliographies the second and third volumes of E. CERULLI's *Somalia — Scritti vari editi ed inediti* should be added. They were published in 1959 and 1964 respectively by Istituto Poligrafico dello Stato in Rome and contain a very valuable collection of Somali poems.

²⁾ See *The modern history of Somaliland — From nation to state* by I. M. LEWIS. This book also contains bibliographical notes on works about Somali social background.

often elaborate and decorative; a style enlivened by striking images and wit is considered an indubitable sign of intelligence and strength of personality.

The power of verbal expression does not come to Somalis as a natural gift alone. Care is taken to develop it in the young and children are taught tongue-twisters to improve their diction; countless riddles help them to acquire a quick wit, alertness and the gift of instant riposte. Jokes whose humour is centred on a subtle distinction of meaning or homonymy serve the same purpose and an ability to invent such jokes spontaneously and to fit them to a particular situation gives the speaker immediate rewards. In the Somali social life there is hardly a better method of getting out of an embarrassing or difficult situation than by bringing verbal humour to one's rescue. Even in very serious discussions humour has a high place. 'A wise elder finishes his words of truth with a jest,' says a Somali proverb.

Home made verbal intelligence tests are frequently applied in such matters as assessing the alertness and wisdom of one's prospective son-in-law, a partner in adventurous enterprise or for sounding out one's opponents. An outsider, hearing such a test, would at first be puzzled at the simplicity of the questions, but he would then find that they contain a 'catch' which a slow-witted person would not notice.

In everyday conversations, especially in delicate matters, veiled allusions inevitably precede direct talking. They provide an emollient in a proud and warlike society, where serious friction can have disastrous effects, by giving the speaker the opportunity of testing the other person's attitude towards the matter which is to be discussed openly later on. In this way the speaker gives the listener a 'pre-view' of the matter in hand and waits for his reaction. If this is unfavourable, he may modify his approach or drop the matter altogether, saving himself the humiliation of rejection. If encouraged, he will proceed and the successful conclusion of the business in hand is made even more enjoyable by the mutual intellectual pleasure of encoding and decoding into the imagery of parable and allusion a prosaic matter of everyday life: it is as satisfying to both sides as playing chess or guessing the answers to riddles.

This way of conducting a serious discussion is frequently used in such situations as requests for help, proposals of marriage and feelers for possible alliances and business deals. In Europe such a procedure is rare, except in diplomacy, but among the Somalis of the nomadic interior it would be considered brutish and uncultured to handle the delicate aspects of interpersonal relations in a direct, condensed and unadorned style.

In the colonial period of Somali history the quality and intelligence of European administrators were often assessed by the Somali public according to whether they understood the traditional Somali technique of discussion. Those who were too impatient or not enlightened enough to learn it were very

unpopular, while gnomic and verbose administrators, on the other hand, often enjoyed immense prestige and won the eulogistic epithet *rāggii horé* 'the excellent men of old times'.

VERBAL MESSAGES IN THE NOMADIC INTERIOR

Until the advent of modern education only a small proportion of the rural population was literate.³⁾ They were religious teachers and judges and they used Arabic as a means of written communication much in the same way as Latin was used in Europe in the Middle Ages. To send a letter an illiterate person had to go to one of them and have the message translated and written in Arabic. Then he had to find someone who would take the letter to its destination and if the recipient was also illiterate, he had to ask the local teacher or judge to translate it for him back into Somali. Both the illiterate sender and the illiterate recipient felt obliged to reward their translator generously and in a society where money was scarce and gifts in kind often consisted of whole live animals, this method of correspondence was both expensive and tedious. Apart from this, there were isolated localities where a literate person could not be found and it was only natural that the custom of sending verbal messages was well established in the nomadic interior and continues even to-day.

Carriers of messages are not difficult to find in the rural districts. There is a constant movement of individuals and groups of people, which in more recent times has been intensified and accelerated by the traffic of trade lorries and buses. It is the common experience of any one travelling in the nomadic interior to be asked to deliver verbal messages, parcels or even money to people in the place of his destination or at stopping points on the way.

The Somali ethics and social etiquette demand that the carrier of a message should deliver it truthfully and conscientiously. He has in fact the same responsibility as a person entrusted with some one else's property: to break this trust would be considered as a mean and unworthy act. If the message is complex a conscientious carrier normally learns it by heart even if the subject matter seems to him to be of no apparent importance and this oral 'postal service' functions with astonishing reliability, speed and accuracy.

In matters of special importance messages are sometimes in poetic form. The rhythm and the rigid requirements of alliterative verse preserve the message from distortion, contamination or omissions. Some of the best poems of Sayyid

³⁾ See 'Speech and writing dichotomy as the pattern of multilingualism in the Somali Republic' by B. W. ANDRZEJEWSKI in the *Report of the C.C.T.A./C.S.A. symposium on multilingualism — Brazzaville 1962*, Commission for Technical Co-operation in Africa, Publication N° 87, pp. 177-81.

Muhammad Abdille Hassan (*Mahammed 'Abdillé Hasán*) the leader of the 1899–1920 insurrection, were in fact messages sent to his allies and enemies.⁴⁾ Other Somali poets also fired and still fire their poetic darts at each other through messengers.⁵⁾

AN INVISIBLE ENVELOPE FOR THE ORAL LETTER

In spite of all its advantages the 'oral post' can sometimes be a very inconvenient mode of communication. As the carrier of the message has to know its contents, there is no privacy of correspondence and difficulties arise when the sender has a secret to communicate. A similar situation occurs when the contents are embarrassing to either the sender or the recipient: like everybody else, the Somali people do not want others to know things which show them in an unfavourable light.

To counteract these disadvantages some people use ingenious methods of putting their messages into code. This is not at all difficult when both the sender and the recipient foresee the need of such a method of communicating. The code is then quite simple depending on the substitution of relevant items. Place names and personal names, for example, are substituted by other ones and the technique familiar from fables and parables is used. Thus an unwritten letter is given an invisible envelope.

There are situations, however, when the sender had not foreseen the necessity of encoding his message and the recipient receives it without a warning that it is in code. It is in a situation like this that the ability to invent an ad hoc device for concealing the real message is not only considered as a useful asset but as a sure sign of superior intelligence.

MESSAGES BETWEEN RAAGE UGAAS AND HIS FATHER

As an illustration of the use of encoded messages we have chosen a story taken from the cycle of oral traditions about Raage Ugaas who is considered by the Somalis to be one of their greatest poets.⁶⁾ He was a son of the sultan (*yqàas*) of the Maalinguur clan of the Ogaadeen and died sixty eight years ago at the age of about seventy. During his long and eventful life he distinguished

⁴⁾ A good example of this is his poem 'A message to the Ogaadeen'. The text and the English translation are found on pp. 92–102 of *Somali poetry — An introduction*, op. cit.

⁵⁾ For an example of such an exchange see our article 'A Somali poetic combat', in *Journal of African Languages*, Vol. 2, 1963, part I, pp. 15–28; part II, pp. 93–100; part III, pp. 190–205.

⁶⁾ Two of his poems have been translated into English in *Somali poetry — An introduction*, op. cit. pp. 64–66.

himself not only as a poet but as a man of piety and wisdom and a skilful negotiator in disputes between clans. In his youth, as can be seen from our story, he spent some time as an itinerant student, leading a humble and ascetic life in spite of the exalted position of his family.

To make this narrative fully meaningful to readers not familiar with the Somali society and language, it is essential to say something about the institution of *hér*, about the Islamic precepts concerning the state of cleanliness necessary for prayers and about the way in which the text itself is transcribed and presented.

The word *hér* denotes a group of students who are given advanced training in *'ilmi* i.e. Muslim theology and law and are led by an experienced and often eminent teacher. In the nomadic interior the disciples follow their master from village to village and this 'itinerant college' depends for its support on the generosity of the inhabitants. The teacher normally spends some hours daily giving direct instruction to the members of his college, but much of his time is devoted to preaching to the villagers, leading their prayers, blessing them and their livestock, giving advice, arbitrating in disputes, dividing inherited property and celebrating marriages. While he does this his students eagerly watch him and learn by example, thus combining theory with practice.

As they walk with their master, the students also have ample opportunity to practise an ascetic way of life, much valued in Muslim spiritual training. When they come to a poor village, especially during a drought, they suffer even greater hardship than the nomads themselves, as they have to behave with dignity, never asking for alms or hospitality in an importunate manner and they normally refrain from complaining even to each other if they suffer from hunger or thirst.

Another aspect of Somali life which is relevant to our narrative concerns the obligation, universal in Islam, to be in a state of ritual purity before prayers. There is a large number of possible occasions when ritual defilement can occur and among the most common of them is the passing of urine, faeces or wind. To be restored to the state of purity a person has to perform prescribed ablutions. If, however, he does not incur defilement between two or more of the five daily prayers, his last ablutions are still valid and he need not perform them again. For obvious reasons the state of ritual purity seldom remains unbroken for a period covering more than three or four consecutive prayer times. It can last from the first prayer in the early morning till the fifth prayer in the late evening only when the person had nothing to eat or drink for a long time. In our narrative this item of common knowledge is used by Raage Ugaas in encoding his message.

Our text of the story about the exchange of messages between Raage Ugaas and his father is written down from a tape recording made by Musa H. I.

Galaal. The transcription of the Somali sounds and accentual features is the same as in our *Hikmad Soomaali*⁷⁾ and in *The declensions of Somali nouns* by B. W. Andrzejewski.⁸⁾ There is only one innovation, namely the use of the oblique sign / which indicates that the acute accent ' which precedes it is to be interpreted as 'high tone' combined with 'even strong stress', even if the syllable thus marked is immediately followed by a pause. An accentual unit of this kind is rare and has been found only in verbal forms in the narrative style. It is a notional equivalent of the conjunction *oo* (*joo, yoo*) 'and' added to the verb, e.g. *márkaasíu daajáa/ tá higtá ú gudbaa* 'then he passes on and turns to the next one', where *daajáa/* has the same meaning as *daajaa jôo* 'he passes on and ...'

In our translation we have kept as closely to the original as the English usage permits. The only notable exception to this is the expression *saláadda aan grooryáadii weysiistó* (§ 2 of the story) literally 'the prayer (for) which I perform(ed) ablutions in the early morning'. We have translated it, in spite of its obscurity, as 'the ablutions which I performed for the early morning prayers', a meaning which is suggested by the context and which would ordinarily be expressed by *weysáda aan saláadda grooryáadii ú weysiistó*. It seems that it would be wrong to assume that the obscurity of the original at this point is due to a fault or distortion in the oral transmission of the story. The trend of the narrative indicates that Raage intended to make his message unintelligible to the bearer and thus the stylistic obscurity might have been intentional.

Somali Text

§ 1. *Wáha La yjdi, Raagé Ugaas oo béri yár ayáa hér ra'áy. Hértu na wáhay barán jirtay 'ilmiga. Dabadeed wáha La yjdi Rqage ayáa hértii uu ká digán jiray gár tallawday oo arládii Raagé dádkpódu degganáa má aháan e arló kalé oo shishé ú gudubtay. Márka-asáa Rqage hértii ayáa gaajootáy oo, má aragtaa, yár dibaatootáy.*

Translation

§ 1. It is said that Raage Ugaas when he was young joined an itinerant college whose students were learning theology and law. Afterwards, it is said, the college in which Raage was studying went further than was expected and passed into another, more distant region which was not where Raage's people were encamped. Then the members of the college became hungry, you see, and experienced a little hardship.

§ 2. *Bérigáa ayáa Rqage wáhuu maalin maalmáha ká mid ah arkay nin dálkpódi ú so'dá. Ninkii búu farriin jaray.*

Wáhuu yjdi, 'War, ninyohòw, sòw arládu ku má so'otid?'

'Háa.'

'Arládu haddaad tagtó wáhaad árki doontuu aabbáháy. Farriin búan Kúu jarayaa, ee farriinta wáhuu dónayaa ínuud igá gaadsíisaa.'

Ninkii ayáa yjdi, 'Hawráarsan.'

Wáhuu yjdi, 'Aabbáháy wáhaad kú tidqahaa: Waa nabád qabaa sí wanaagsán na wáh búan ú bartaa. Hálkáa iyo hálkáa iyo hálkáa na waa márayaa. Hértu na waa ís ká 'aajimáad qabtaa waa nu wanaagsánahay sí wanaagsán na wáh búannu ú barannaa. Wáhaan ínuu Kúu shéegayaa saláadda aan grooryáadii weysiistó ayáan 'ishé⁹⁾ kú tukádaa. Íntaa ínuu aabbáháy igá gaadsíi.' búu yjdi.

§ 3. *Ninkii báa legáy], arládii búu qabtáy], Rqagé aabbíhí ayúu arkay. Rqagáa Lagá waraystáy]:*

Wáha La yjdi, 'Hértii Rqage kú jiráy má aragtay?'

Wáhuu yjdi, 'Árkay.'

Wáha La yjdi, 'Raagé má aragtay?'

Wáhuu yjdi, 'Árkay.'

Wáha La yjdi, 'Bal, ká wárran.'

Wáhuu yjdi, 'Waa wanaagsánáa/ wáh ná waa bgránayjáy] wáa ná fii'náa], farriin na waa í sóo jaray.'

§ 2. At that time Raage one day saw a man who was going to his part of the country. He gave him a message.

'Listen, man,' he said, 'aren't you going to that region?'

'Yes.'

'If you get there you will see my father. I shall give you a message for him and I want you to deliver it to him from me.'

'Agreed,' said the man.

'What you will tell my father,' he said, 'is this: I am safe and I am learning things well and I am at such and such a stage in my studies. The members of the college are in good health; we are all right and are learning things well. I shall just say to you that for the evening prayers I use the ablutions which I performed for the early morning prayers. — Convey just that to my father from me.'

§ 3. The man went. He reached the place and saw Raage's father. He was asked about Raage.

'Have you seen the itinerant college in which Raage is?' was said to him.

'I have seen it,' he said.

'Have you seen Raage?' was said to him.

'I have seen him,' he said.

'Well, tell us the news about him,' was said.

'He was all right,' he said, 'he was learning things, he was well and he gave me a message.'

⁷⁾ Op. cit., see pp. 1-27.

⁸⁾ Published by the School of Oriental and African Studies, London 1964 (Agents: Luzac Co, Ltd., 46, Russell St. London W.C. 1.), pp. 18-23 and 105-117.

⁹⁾ In this context the form 'ishé is rather uncommon. Normally 'isháa or 'ishúha would be used.

'Oo bal farrintuu Ku soo faray noo shëeg.'

Wuhu yiidi, 'Wuhu i yiidi: aabbahay wahaad ku tidaahaa waan wagna-aysinnahay hertii na way is ka 'aafimaaad qabtaa/ si wagnaagsan na waha bannu u barannaa/ halkaa iyo halkaa na waan digtaa, kitaabka 'aynkaaas ah ayaaan akhristaa. — Wuhu uun kaloo i soo faray: Salaaadda aan grooryadii weysiistoo ayaaan 'ishaa ku tukadaa.'

§ 4. Raage aabbihay ayaa arrinkii ku jekeray. Hoos buu ugu fiirsaday.

Wuhu yiidi, 'Tolow, Raage muhuru ugu dan leeygahay: salaaadda aan grooryadii weysiistoo ayaaan 'ishé ku tukadaa?'

Odagii ayaa markii dambé gartay/:

Wuhu yiidi, 'Wuu gaajooday oo salaaaddu groortii weysiistoo ilaa 'ishé La gaado, illeen waa nin aan waha 'unin e ayuu salaaaddii uu isagii grooryadii weysiistay ayuu 'ishé ku gaadaa. Markaa wuhu Raage ii shéegayaa, wuu gaajooday, si huu buu hertii ugu gaajooday.'

Ninkii buu ku yiidi, 'Ninyohow, haggag, farrintii aad Raage iigu keentay na maqlay oo gartay. Waha saan Ku weydiinayaa, walialow, goormaad noqonaysaa?'

'Tell us the message which he gave you.'

'He said to me: Tell my father we are all right, the members of the college are in good health and we are learning things well. I am working on such and such part of my studies and I am reading such and such a book.¹⁰ — Oh, and he also gave me another message: I use for the late evening prayers the ablutions which I performed for the early morning prayers.'

§ 4. Raage's father thought about the matter. He looked at the bottom of it.

'What does Raage mean by: I use for the late evening prayers the ablutions which I performed for the early morning prayers?' he said to himself.

Afterwards the old man understood:

'He became hungry,' he said, 'and as for the ablutions which he performs for the early morning prayers which are still valid for the late evening prayers, well then, he is a person who has not eaten anything and he uses the ablutions which he performed in the early morning for the late evening prayers. Thus what Raage is telling me is that he became hungry, that he became very hungry in the itinerant college.'

'All right, man,' he said to the man, 'I have heard the message and I have understood it. I shall ask you a question: Brother, when are you returning?'

Ninkii baa yiidi, 'Adigu, daksaaan u noqonayaa muddo yar ka ba'di.'

'Haggag. Wahaan djonayaa,' biuu yiidi, 'walaal, markaad tegayso Raage farrin baan Kuu sii farayaa inaad i soo marto.'

'Waa yahay.'

§ 5. Ninkii baa markii wakhtigii uu noqon lahaa soo galay Raage aabbihay soo maroo wuhu yiidi:

'Dee, waa adigii yiidi Raagaaan waha Kuu sii farayaa je waaan jeedaa.'

Raage aabbihayisaa ninkii ku yiidi, 'Wahaan djonayaa inaad Raage salaamaad igu gaadsiiso. Wahaanad tidaahaa: Dalkii waa is ka 'aafimaaad qabaa, meel heblaa na waannu naal. Wahaan kaloo Kaa djonayaa inaad qumbahaa subagga iyo soddonkaa 'qd ee saafka ah u geysso.'

Ninkii ayaa Raage waha Loogu diibay qumbé subag ah iyo soddon 'qd oo saaf ah. Ninkii baa alaabtii qaaday.

Raage aabbihayisuu ku yiidi, 'Waa yahay. Alaabtatan ii diibtay Raage na waan gaadsiinayaa. Waha kale ma i faraysaa?'

'Waha kale Ku fari maayee wahaad ku tidaahaa: Aabahaa wuhu Ku yiidi, maanta bishu na waa soddon balligu na waa noo buuhaa.'

'Haa, hawraarsan. Ma saasaan ku idaahaa?'

'Waa yahay.'

¹⁰) Ghee and dried cooked meat which keep for a long time are favourite provisions of Somali travellers.

'I am returning very soon,' he said, 'after a little while.'

'All right. I want you to come and call on me when you set out.' He said, 'I shall give you a message for Raage.'

'Agreed.'

§ 5. When the time came when the man would return he called on Raage's father.

'You told me you were going to send a message to Raage,' he said. 'I am on my way now.'

'I want you to give my greetings to Raage,' said Raage's father. 'Tell him that the people are in good health and that we are staying in such and such a place. I also want you to take to him that vessel of ghee and those thirty pieces of dried meat.'¹¹)

A vessel of ghee and thirty pieces of dried meat were handed to the man for Raage. The man took the things.

'All right. I shall take to Raage these things which you have handed to me,' said the man to Raage's father. 'Are you giving me any other instructions?'

'I shall not give you any other instructions except that you should say to him: Your father said that today the month has reached its thirtieth day and the water pond is full for us.'

'Agreed. Shall I say just that?'

'Yes.'

§ 6. *Nínkii aláabtii bùu Raagé ú qaaday òo wàa tegay. Márkii uu hértii Ráage lá dígán jíráy ggaadíy ayàa Ráage nínkii ú yimi ýòo wúhhu yídi:*
 'Bal wárran. Réerkayággii má arag-tay?

Wúhhu yídi, 'Árkay.'

'Kòw.'

Wúhhu yídi, 'Aláabatán waan Kúu sídaa.'

Aláabtii bùu ká qaaday.

Wúhhu yídi, 'Dádkii na waa is ká nabád qabaa, méel hebláa na wàa yídi.'

Ráagàa aláabtii qaaday. Márkuu aláabtii wáh yár lá so'dùu Ráage sóo noqdóo wúhhu yídi, nínkii wúhhu kú yídi:

'Aabbahày aláabatán Kúu sóo díib, laakiin jarríin ma Ku sóo faráy?'

Nínkii bàa yídi, 'Wúhhu i sóo faráy: Dádkii na waa is ká nabád qabaa, méel hebláa na wàan naal. Bíshu na máanta waa sóddon bálligu na waa nóo byuúhaa. Íntáa Ráagé kú déh úun, bùu yídi.'

'Háa. Ma sàasùu Kú yídi?'

§ 7. *Ráagàa is ká tegáy. Aláabtii bùu qaaday. Ráage ayàa qumbíhii juráy, wúhhu arkay qumbíhii òo labá taako ú dímantaháy. Hílbíhii na wùu tíriyáy], wáha wèjyáan, sáddeh iyo labaatán ayùu ká dígay.*

Ráagàa nínkii kú sóo noqdóo wúhhu yídi:

§ 6. The man took the things for Raage and went. When he reached the college in which Raage studied, Raage came to the man and said:

'Tell me the news. Have you seen our family?'

'I have,' he said.

'Well?'

'I am carrying these things for you,' he said.

Raage took the things from him.

'The people are safe,' he said, 'and were staying in such and such a place.'

Raage took the things and when he walked away with them for a little while, he returned and said to the man:

'My father handed to you these things, but did he give you any message to deliver?'

He asked me,' said the man, 'to say this: The people are safe and we are staying in such and such a place. Today the month has reached its thirtieth day¹²⁾ and the water pond is full for us. Tell Raage just that, he said.'

'Indeed. Did he say that to you?'

§ 7. Raage went away and took the things. He opened the vessel and saw that the level was down by two hand-spans. He also counted the pieces of meat and he found them to be twenty three.

Raage returned to the man and said:

'War, nínjohow, hoolhii aabbahày iigú sóo káa díibáy qàar bàa igá maqán.'

Nínkii bàa naháy òo wúhhu yídi:

'War, gwòwqí La nqar! Mahàad kú oggataay in qaar Káa maqánygháy?'

Wúhhu yídi, 'Dee, aabbáháy bàa íi sheegáy.'

'Oo sídfe aabbahàa Kuugú sheegay?'

'Farríintii aabbahày íi sóo káa faráy bàan ká gartay, bùu yídi.'

Kólkáa sídàa ayàa Ráage farríintii aabbíhii ú sóo faráy nínkii iyádóo aan nínkii garánéyn uu Ráage ú gartay.

Haqíqdu na wáhay ahayd, márkuu Ráagé aabbíhii kú yídi nínka Ráagé wáhaad tíqaaahaa 'bíshu waa sóddon,' ma'núhu wúhhu ahaa 'hílbúhu waa sóddon.' 'Bálligu waa nóo byuúhaa' ma'néheedu na wúhhu ahaa 'qumbúhu wàa byuúhaa.' Ráage na farríintii Lóo sóo faráy ée qafílláyð ayùu árrinka ká gartay.

'Listen, man, some of the things which my father handed to you for me are missing.'

The man was startled and said:

'May his grandfather burn in Hell!¹³⁾ How did you find out that some of your things were missing?'

'My father told me,' he said.

'And how did your father tell you?'

'I understood it from the message which my father gave you for me,' he said.

It was thus that Raage then understood the message which his father sent to him, while the man did not.

The truth was that when Raage's father said, 'the month has reached its thirtieth day,' the meaning was that there were thirty pieces of meat, and when he said, 'the water pond is full for us,' the meaning was that the vessel was full. And Raage understood the locked message which was sent to him.

¹²⁾ Lit. 'the lunar month is thirty'. This is the usual way of describing the day of the month.

¹³⁾ This is a common expression indicating great surprise, used here as an aside. It is not considered at all offensive to the person to whom it is addressed.