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**Sentence particles in the Somali language
and their usage in proverbs**

Semitica et Semitohamitica Berolinensia

for my wife Tatiana Saburova

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Preface

This book is the text of my Ph.D. thesis which was submitted to and accepted by the Institute of Asian and African Studies of Moscow State University in 2000. I am grateful to Professor Viktor Porkhomovski who talked me into writing it and provided me with most valuable supervision. I am indebted to Professors Nelly Gromova and Irina Toporova, as well as to Assistant Professor Yuliya Suyetina, for their useful advice and comments.

Since its first presentation the text of the thesis has been slightly shortened and some revisions have been made thanks to the insightful suggestions of Professors Giorgio Banti and Rainer Voigt, who read the manuscript. I wish to thank them both for their generosity to a colleague.

I am also thankful to Abdirahman Farah ‘Barwaaqo’ for his unwavering readiness to answer my numerous questions.

It is a special pleasure to express my gratitude to Sheila Andrzejewski who edited the English text of the manuscript and made a number of wise notes, which I took into consideration.

Finally I have to thank the German Research Society which provided me with a grant and Dr. Mohamed Mohamud Handule who financially supported the publication of this book.

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One of the Somali proverbs demonstrating the syntactical mode of the

formation of the comparative degree, described in 4.7.2, goes: *Subax iyo sadar, subax baa badan* – Days (lit.: mornings) are more than lines (in the Koran) [i.e. by reading a line a day one can learn the whole Sacred Book]. I have to acknowledge that during forty years, my daily learning of “the book” of the Somali syntax has left as yet many unread pages.

It is possible that this work, which reflects my current notion about one of the most important aspects of the Somali syntax, that is, the actual division of the sentence, contains hypotheses which need further consideration. But I have no doubt as to the correctness of the absolute majority of the observations and conclusions made here.

0. Introduction

0.1. The place of Somali in the genetic classification of African languages.

Somali belongs to the eastern group of the Cushitic languages, which are a part of the Afroasiatic (Hamito-Semitic) language family. This language is spoken by the nomadic Somali people who inhabit the Horn of Africa. In colonial times the territory of the Somalis was divided into several parts. In 1960 two of these, British Somaliland and Italian Somalia, were united as the independent Somali Republic, which after the Revolution of 1969 was transformed into the Somali Democratic Republic. This existed until 1991 when the President (and in fact dictator) Mohamed Siad Barre was overthrown, and since then there have been no nationwide structures in Somalia. In several regions self-proclaimed states have appeared, and other areas have fallen under the control of the leaders of military-political groupings created according to clan (tribal) affiliations.

Thousands of Somalis who left the country after the collapse of the state have settled in Europe and North America. Traditionally Somalis also inhabit the southern part of Jibouti, the Ethiopian province of Hararge and Bale (Ogaden), now Somali Region, and the north-east of Kenya. According to different estimates the number of people speaking Somali is between 4 and 10 million (Saed, 1984; Strani mira, 1989; Orwin, 1994).

The nearest linguistic relatives of Somali are Bayso, Boni, Rendille, Arbore, Elmolo and Dasenech, the speakers of which live in the north-west of Kenya and the

south-west of Ethiopia. Apart from Somali, the main East Cushitic languages are Oromo and Afar, spoken by the neighbours of the Somalis in the Horn of Africa.

0.1.1. In contemporary africanistics the Somali language is regarded as a bundle of closely related dialects. Lamberti (1986) distinguishes five main dialects and dialect groups: the group of Northern dialects spoken mainly by nomads; *May* together with *Digil*, the dialect groups of the settled population occupied in agriculture between the Jubba and Shabelle rivers; the dialects of *Benadir* spoken mainly by Somalis living along the southern coast of the Indian Ocean; and *Ashraf*, used by the residents of Mogadishu and also by Somalis living in Merka and on the coast between these two towns.

The Northern dialects (*Isak*, *Darod*, *Majarten* and others) and *Benadir* are usually called the *Maxaad-tiri* dialects spoken by the majority of Somalis. They are the bases for the so-called Standard Somali which has been rapidly forming since the introduction of the Somali script in 1972.

0.2. The aims of the investigation

The aims of this investigation are:

- 1) To determine the semantic and functional characteristics of the sentence particles and their role in the actual division of the sentence;
- 2) To consider the specificity of the realization of focus in different types of clichés;
- 3) To reveal the system of rheme-making in synchrony (on the material of non-clichéized sentences) and in diachrony (on the material of proverbial structures).

An investigation of the problems related to the functioning of the sentence particles in Somali cannot be done without referring to information from practically all sections of the grammar of this far from fully investigated language. For this reason an analysis of the sentence particles has to be preceded by a number of related aspects of the Somali language.

0.3. A short sketch of the Somali language

0.3.1. Somali, mainly in its "Northern variant", as determined by Hyman (1981), is a tonal accent language which assigns accents to vowels. Three tones are distinguished: high, low and falling, but the prosodic characteristics of Somali speech are not designated in the adopted system of script. The absence of diacritical marks makes it impossible to differentiate the meaning of those words which differ only by tone or tonal accent (for details see Kapchits, Keenadiid, 1996). In linguistic literature (Andrzejewski, 1955, 1964, 1968, 1979; Lamberti, 1983; Banti, 1984; Saeed (1984, 1999) tones are marked in the following way: high tone á, falling tone à or â; the low tone is not marked.

In Somali the lexical meaning, number and gender of some nouns can be differentiated only by tone:¹

gées (side) – *gèes* (horn),

Soomáali (a Somali) – *Soomaali* (Somalis),

damèer (he-donkey) – *daméer* (she-donkey).

¹ The examples have been taken from Zorc, Issa (1990).

Tone is also used as a grammatical marker, differentiating in particular the subject and non-subject when the former is not marked by *baa*.

0.3.2. Nouns and verbs are the main classes of words in Somali, and only they are characterized by inflexion which is almost completely suffixal (however see below concerning the preverbal particles). Some words with attributive meanings belong to the class of verbs:

dheer – to be long,

cad – to be white, etc.

The others form a not very numerous class of unchangeable attributes:

dhexe – middle,

hoose – lower,

shanaad – fifth, etc.

The majority of words with adverbial meaning belong to the class of nouns:

hoos-ta – bottom,

si-da – mode, mean.

Cardinal numerals, demonstrative and personal (emphatic) pronouns and some others are subclasses of nouns. All of them, in particular, can adjoin a definite article. Particles, including sentence particles, make a special class of words.

0.3.3. In Somali, as in many languages, nouns have a lexical-grammatical (classifying) category of gender – masculine and feminine. The categories of number, case, definiteness and possession are inflectional.

Singular and plural forms are distinguished. There are three persons in the singular and four in the plural: 1st person exclusive (a speaker and somebody else,

but not a listener), 1st person inclusive (a speaker and other people, including a listener), 2nd person and 3rd person.

Nouns are divided, according to the regular formation of their plurals, into six (Bell, 1953) or seven (Andrzejewski, 1979; Puglielli and Ciise, 1984; Orwin, 1995; Saeed, 1999; et al.) classes or declensions. The formation of the plural is mainly suffixal (in only one class is it gemination):

míis (table) – *miisas* (tables),

nín (man) – *niman* (men), etc.

The majority of nouns change gender in the plural (the so-called principle of polarity). Some, however, do so only formally. When defined, they adjoin the articles of the opposite gender, but in fact retain the original one (see 0.3.11 and 2.5.3).

The use of morphological markers added to the noun (or to the last word of a noun phrase), and/or tone, enables four cases to be distinguished: nominative (subjective), general oblique (objective)², genitive and vocative. Subjects which are not marked as logically accented by means of *baa* or *waxaa* are in the subjective case.

(1) *Nín baa* naagi aragtay – A woman (nom.) saw a man.

Subjects which are logically accented are in the general oblique case:

(2) *Náag báa nín aragtáy* – A woman (obl.) saw a man.

Many forms of the nominative, general oblique and genitive cases are homonymic. The specific markers of the nominative are *-i*, *-u*; of the genitive *-eed* (fem. sing.), *-ood* (fem.pl.); and of the vocative *-ow* (masc.), *-oy*, *-ey* (fem.). These

² This term was introduced by Zholkovsky (1971). Andrzejewski (1964, 1979), who described the case system in Somali, called the objective case ‘absolute’.

case markers depend on the usage of sentence particles, and are obligatory only in a few positions (see 1.2 and 2.2). In all other positions the form of the general oblique case can be used.

Somali nouns have the category of definiteness. An indefinite article is marked by zero, while a definite article is added to a noun as a suffix, and marks its gender. The form of the article depends on the last phoneme of its stem.

The variants of the definite article for masculine nouns are *-ka*, *-ga*, *-ha*, *-a*:

dal – *dalka* (the country),

derbi – *derbiga* (the wall),

habro – *habraha* (the old women),

ubax – *ubaxa* (the flower).

The variants of the definite articles for feminine nouns are *-ta*, *-da*, *-sha*:

naag – *naagta* (the woman),

lo' – *lo'da* (the cows),

kuul – *kuusha*³ (the necklace).

In the article *-dha* (*gabadh* – *gabadh-dha* with the meaning of ‘the girl’), the consonant *dh* (a voiced retroflex plosive) has emerged as a result of the assimilation of the consonant of the article *-ta* to the final consonant of the stem. In the adopted system of writing, the *dh* of the article is omitted.

An important characteristic of Somali nouns is their incapacity to govern more than one dependent noun. This noun is marked by the genitive case.

³ The phoneme *sh* is the result of the fusion between the final *l* of the stem and the consonant sound of the article *-ta*.

0.3.4. The Somali verb is characterized by the inflectional categories of person, number, tense, mood, and its morphology also marks the sentence type in which it occurs (affirmative, interrogative, negative, etc). Conjugation by person (1st, 2nd and 3rd) and number (singular and plural) is mainly suffixal. The above-mentioned attributive verbs make some plural forms by gemination:

wiil yar (a boy who is small) – *wiilal yaryar* (boys who are small),

or by a combination of gemination and suffixation:

wuu weynaa (he was big) – *way waaweynaayeen* (they were big).

Some linguists relate the Somali attributive verbs to the class of adjectives which are used in combination with the verb *ahaan* – to be. Convincing arguments disproving such a conclusion have been set out by Antinucci and Puglielli (1980).

Five archaic verbs (*ahaan* – to be, *odhan* – to say, *iman* – to come, *aqoon* – to know, *ooli* – to be in a place) have a prefixal-suffixal conjugation (as in Semitic languages).

There are seven tenses: present general, present progressive, past general, past progressive, past habitual, past independent and future. The verbal forms of the past habitual and future tenses are formed analytically, with the help of auxiliary verbs. In some tenses the verb conjugation depends on the choice of a sentence particle and its place in the sentence (see the corresponding sections of chapters 1, 2 and 3).

0.3.5. An important feature of the Somali syntax is a special category of preverbs (*u* – to, towards, for, *ku* – in, on, at, to, into, by means of, *ka* – at, from, away, out of, about, *la* – with, together with) which belong to the system of preverbal

particles and serve as conductors of the government from verb to objects. Their place is fixed in regard to the predicate and other particles, which precede the verb, but not in regard to other components of the sentence. This means that the position of the preverb is determined by the verb and is in no way bound up with the place occupied by the objects themselves.

As well as the preverbs in preposition to the verb, there are short subjective and objective pronouns and adverbial particles. The use of objective pronouns is obligatory if there are valencies for them. The absence of the object in a position where it is syntactically necessary indicates the 3rd person singular or plural and is expressed by a zero marker (more details about this will be given in connection with the theory of the origin of the sentence particle *baa*⁴). There can be only one short objective pronoun in preposition to the verb.

0.3.6. The numerous class of particles in Somali also includes sentence, negative, interrogative and conjunctive ones. In connection with sentence particles only the latter will be mentioned, as the types of sentences originated with the help of negative and interrogative particles are not examined in this book.

The conjunctive particles (conjunctions) are always placed between coordinated members with the exception of the enclitic conjunctions *ee* – and (in a certain context), *na* – and, *se* – but, and. The subordinate conjunctions *maxaa yeelay* and *waayo*, with the meaning of ‘because’, as well as *hase yeeshee* (variants: *hase yeelee* and *hase ahaate*) – ‘but’, link only full independent sentences.

⁴ From now on, the abbreviation SP will replace the term ‘sentence particle’ in combination with *waa*, *baa* (*ayaa*) and *waxaa*.

The copulative conjunction *iyoo* – ‘and’ only connects nouns (*wiil iyoo gabadh* – a boy and a girl; *shan iyoo toban* – five and ten, i.e. fifteen).

The conjunction *ama* – ‘or’ can link nouns:

(3) *Guriga ama xafiiska kaalay* – Come home or to the office.

The complex conjunction *ama...ama* – ‘either...or’ can connect verbs:

(4) *Ama tag ama joog* – Either go away or stay

and nouns:

(5) *Ama lacag ama dehab* – Either money or gold.

The conjunction *oo* – ‘and’ can link verbs:

(6) *Way maqleen oo garteen* – They heard and understood

while the conjunctions *oo* and *ee* link homogeneous attributes, *oo* being used with indefinite and *ee* with definite nouns: *Faras qurxoon oo orod dheer* – A beautiful (and) fast horse; *Faraskii sarkaalka ee weynaa* – The big horse of the officer (lit.: the horse of the officer and big). The conjunctions *na*, *se* – ‘and’, ‘but’ can occupy any place in a sentence and often adjoins a sentence particle.

0.3.7. There are three series of personal pronouns: full emphatic (*aniga* – I, *adiga* – you sing., *isaga /asaga, usaga* in some dialects/ – he, *iyada* – she, *annaga* – we excl., *innaga* – we incl., *idinka* – you pl., *iyaga/ayaga* – they); clipped emphatic (*ani* – I, *adi* – you sing., etc.) and short subjective (*aan* – I, *aad* – you sing., *uu* – he, *ay* – she, *aan/nu* – we excl., *aynu* – we incl., *aad /variant aydin/* – you pl., *ay* – they). The pronouns can take all cases except the vocative. The nominative case marker of the emphatic pronouns is the morpheme *-u*, which is always optional. The full

emphatic pronouns can play the roles of the subject and object of the predicate of the main clause. They adjoin the definite article, and follow the general rules for nouns.

If a short subjective pronoun is present in the main clause it usually immediately follows a sentence particle. The functions of the subjective pronouns and the rules of their combination with the sentence particles are investigated in detail in the main part of this work.

The preverbal markers of the object are the short objective pronouns (*i* – me, *ku* – you, thee, *na* – us excl., *ina* – us incl., *idin* – you pl., *is* – self) and the so-called second objective pronouns, whose role is played by the possessive pronouns without articles (*kay* – my, *kaa* – your sing., *kayo* – our excl., *keen* – our incl., and *kiin* – your pl.) When a certain object is designated the presence of the corresponding short pronoun is obligatory. In the *Maxaad-tiri* dialects the 3rd person, both singular and plural, of the short objective pronouns is expressed by a zero marker. The short objective (non-zero) pronouns exclude each other by one and the same verb. Where it is necessary to designate two objects simultaneously the second set of objective pronouns is used:

(7) *Wuu iiga (i+u +ka) kaa warramay* – He told me about you (sing.) [lit.: yours].

The same thought can be expressed with the help of the full (emphatic) pronouns: *Wuxuu aniga iiga warramay adiga*. However, it must be noted that this introduces an amendment to the rule about the compulsory supplementing of any explicitly expressed objects with the corresponding short objective pronouns: here the second full pronoun *adiga* – ‘you’ is not supplemented with the corresponding short

one, because *ku* – ‘you’ is incompatible with *i* – me).⁵ The short objective pronouns belong to the system of preverbal particles which determines their place in the sentence.

0.3.8. A sentence particle together with the indefinite personal pronoun *la* – ‘one’, ‘someone’ forms a construction which corresponds to the passive voice in other languages.

(8) *Geelii waa la xaday* – The camels were stolen [lit.: Somebody stole the camels]. Here the pronoun *la* is the subject and is identical to the 3rd person masculine singular.

0.3.9. The pronoun *ay* – ‘she’, in the meaning of the impersonal subject, can be attributed to the short subjective pronouns:

(9) *Waa [ay] tahay* – All right [lit.: She is].

The pronoun *ay* is used mainly with the sentence particles *waa* and *waxaa*. In constructions with *waa* it is dropped even if it is the only representative of the subject, as in example (9), and not

(10) **Way tahay*.⁶

In combination with the SP *waxaa* it conforms to the rules concerning the use of the subject pronouns with this sentence particle (see chapter 3):

(11) *Waxaa jirta in Golaha Ammaanka ee UQM uu ka kooban yahay xubno joogto ah iyo kuwo ku-meel-gaar ah* – The fact [lit.: She] is that the UN Security

⁵ See 0.3.5.

⁶ An asterisk before an example means that it violates a certain grammatical rule and therefore is not correct; an asterisk before a word means that it is not used in contemporary Somali.

Council consists of permanent and non-permanent members;

(12) *Taasuna waxay [waxaa + ay] tahay in dad badan oo Soomaali ahi ay ka guureen dalkooda* – So it [lit.: she] is that many Somalis have left their country.

It is necessary to add that sometimes *ay* is substituted by the pronoun *uu* – ‘he’ or the homonymic *ay* with the meaning of ‘they’ (for example *Waa [uu] yahay*, with the same meaning as in 9).

0.3.10. On the whole, the order of words in an independent simple affirmative sentence in Somali is defined by the placing of the following main components, of which the first two are obligatory:

- 1) A verb (more exactly, a predicate in general) with preceding particles;
- 2) A sentence particle;
- 3) Nouns (a subject and objects, including objects in the role of an adverbial modifier of place, manner etc.) followed by their attributes;
- 4) Adverbial modifiers of time;
- 5) A short subjective pronoun.

It should be noted, however, that

- a) the sentence particle always precedes the predicate⁷;
- b) the subjective pronoun almost always precedes the predicate and always follows the sentence particle, often immediately;
- c) in the framework of the above-stated rules, nouns and adverbial modifiers can in practice occupy almost any place in regard to other components and each other

⁷ There is an exceptional case of the usage of the SP *weeye* in a compound nominal predicate (see the chapter about the SP *waa*).

(Zholkovsky, 1966, pp.143-144).

Within the limits of the above-mentioned rules, the order of words depends on the choice of sentence particle, the placement rules of which are described in the corresponding sections of the book.

0.3.11. The predicate agrees with the subject in gender, person and number, but not every form distinguishes all these categories. Only the forms of the 3rd person singular are opposed by gender (masculine and feminine). It is true that Bell (1953) considers that in the plural there are also verbal forms of both masculine and feminine gender. The latter, in his opinion, are generated by conjugation of the verbs, the subjects of which are plural feminine nouns differing from the corresponding masculine singular forms either by tone (when undefined) or by an article:

awr-ka (burden camel) – *awr-ta* (burden camels);

dibi-ga (ox) – *dibi-da* (oxen);

orgi-ga (he-goat) – *orgi-da* (he-goats);

carab-ka (Arab) – *carab-ta* (Arabs).

Besides this small group there are feminine plural nouns which are normally used in the singular:

marti-da – guests;

Soomaali-da – Somalis;

Xabashi-da – Ethiopians etc. and also the plural forms of some nouns borrowed from Arabic:

nijaar-ka (carpenter) – *nijaariin-ta* (carpenters);

askari-ga (soldier) – *askar-ta* (soldiers) and others.

Nevertheless, in all the cases given above the derivation of the verbs results in forms identical to those which emerge when the subjects are expressed by the feminine nouns in the singular.

Thus verbs in the plural mainly tie up with plural nouns, and verbs in the singular of the corresponding gender, with singular nouns. The regular exclusions are connected to the use of the SPs *baa* and *waxaa*.

Depending on the role of the subject in the sentence (whether it is the rheme or not), there are two types of agreement of subject with predicate: “complete” (type I) and “clipped” or “restricted” (type II).

Type I is characterized by the maximum distinction of all categories in all forms (persons, genders, numbers, modalities). It occurs when the logical accent is not placed on the subject (i.e. when the sentence contains the SP *waa* or when the SP *baa* or *waxaa* joins a short subjective pronoun).

Type II does not distinguish numbers in the forms of the 3rd person of the usual verbs and singular persons of the attributive verbs (apart from the 3rd person feminine in any of the Past Tenses). It is used when the verb agrees with the subject of the main clause which is stressed by the SP *baa* (*ayaa*, *yaa*) or *waxaa* (i.e. when a sentence contains the SP *baa* or *waxaa* without a short subjective pronoun).

0.4. Sentence particles and the focus system in the Somali language.

The sentence particles from the paradigm of *waa* (variant – *aa*), *baa* (variants – *ayaa/yaa/aa*) and *waxaa*, by means of which the focus system in the overwhelming

majority of Somali dialects is realized, is investigated in this work. Focus (in other terminologies rheme, comment) plays an important role in Somali grammar. It is understood as a component of the actual division of the sentence which contains new information about the theme (topic), that is the initial point of the message or, according to Mathesius (1939), “the starting point of the utterance”.

However, I am aware of the vulnerability of the notion that a theme does not contain any novelty but is only “a binding link” between the sentence and the context. As has been shown in the works of Russian and other linguists, information is created by the dynamic combination of the theme and the rheme, i.e. by the proposition as a whole (Krušel’nickaya, 1956; Halliday, 1970; Nikolayeva, 1978; Ševlyakova, 1980; Padučeva, 1988).

According to Chafe (1976), the old information (‘given’) becomes apparent in a weaker and more softened form than the new (‘new’). In addition, a certain unit can be given or can be new, depending on whether the speaker thinks that it is present in the consciousness of the listener at the moment of the utterance of the sentence. The works of the representatives of the Czech school (Fibras, 1966 et al.) have investigated the notion of communicative dynamism, the lower degree of which is inherent in the given and the higher degree in the new.

While I am well aware that fruitful results can be obtained from a many-sided approach to investigating the problems of focus, I consider it necessary to concentrate, at the present stage of Somali language studies, on the immediate task, that is the elucidation of the surface manifestations of the mechanism of rheme-

making. This task is worked out through two interrelated plans: synchrony (on the material of non- clichéized sentences) and diachrony (on the material of proverbial structures).

0.4.1. The presence of a sentence particle in practically every independent simple affirmative sentence is a distinguishing feature of the Somali syntax. The sentence particle predicatises the sentence, which would otherwise turn into an attributive construction, and places a logical accent on one of its members:

(13) *Ninkii yimid* – The man who came, but

(14) *Ninkii waa yiimid* – The man came or

(15) *Ninkii baa yimid* – The man came or

(16) *Waxaa yimid nin* – A man came.

The meaning of what is said here is that in Somali the so-called actual division of the sentence is grammatically obligatory, is expressed by a special particle and is inseparable from the predication itself.

The predicative SP *waa* makes the verb (the predicate) into the rheme. The nominative *baa* and *waxaa* (each in its own way) attract attention to every dependent member of the first rank (DFR) – subject, objects or adverbial modifiers of time, manner etc.

Thus the sentence particle in Somali realizes several types of focus: predicative, agent- and patient-actantial, and circumstantial.

In some sentences it is possible to use two particles: *baa* (*ayaa*) and *waxaa*. The combination of the SP *waa* with *baa* or *waxaa* is prohibited.

In some texts, especially the folkloristic ones often used in this investigation,

one may come across phrases which seem to refute this postulate:

(17) *Cigaal Shiidaad waa fuley baad barateen* – You have learnt [that] Igal Shidad is a coward.

But here the compatibility of the sentence particles *waa* and *baa* (used with the short subjective pronoun of the 2nd person singular *aad*) is imaginary. The first part of the sentence (*Cigaal Shiidaad waa fuley*), which has the shape of an independent syntagm and for this reason contains a sentence particle, plays the role of an object which is here stressed by *baa* – the single sentence particle of the whole sentence.

(18) *Waxaad u baratay waa baaskaa* – What will ruin you is what you have got accustomed to [lit.: The thing to which you have got accustomed will ruin you]. (Proverb)

This proverb contains only one sentence particle – *waa*. As for the lexeme *waxaad*, which coincides in form with the sentence particle used with the short subjective pronoun of the 2nd person singular *aad* (*waxaa* + *aad* = *waxaad*), it can be seen from the literal translation that it consists of the word *wax*, which means ‘a thing’ and the same short subjective pronoun (*wax* + *aad* = *waxaad*).

(19) *Waxaan daacad ahayni dib bay ka xumaadaan* – He who acts treacherously harms himself [lit.: What is not honest harms itself]. (Proverb)

In this proverb the form *waxaan*, which looks like the SP *waxaa* together with the short subjective pronoun of the 1st person singular *aan* (*waxaa* + *aan* = *waxaan*), creates the illusion of the presence of the two sentence particles *waxaa* and *baa*, the latter adjoining the short subjective pronoun of the 3rd person plural *ay* (*baa* + *ay* =

bay). But in fact *baa* is the single sentence particle here, while *waxaan* presents a synthesis of the word *wax* from the previous example used as the plural (things) and the negative particle *aan* ($wax + aan = waxaan$ – the things which are not). It is also necessary to take into account that the sentence particles *baa* and *waxaa* follow each other in this order when they are used in the same sentence.

Sentence particles always precede the predicate, *waa* precedes it immediately.

0.4.2. Another focus system is found in the *May* and *Digil* dialects; it is characterized by the absence of verb focusing (and correspondingly the SP *waa*) and by the non-combinability of the SP *baa* and its variants *ba*, *iyaa*, *aya*, *ya* and others with short subjective pronouns.

The dialects of the *Ashraf* group (*Shingaani*, *Merka*, *Gendershi*) use sentence particles differently from the *Maxaad-tiri* dialects.

They are also absent in some affirmative sentences using archaic grammatical (verbal) forms, mainly in proverbs.

In the opinion of Cushitologists (Andrzejewski, 1975; Banti, 1984; Saeed, 1984; Tosco, 1996; Orwin, 1997 and others) the focus system in Somali fulfils the same syntactic function as the cleft constructions in other Afrasian languages of the Horn of Africa. But as was pointed out by Griefenow-Mewis (1998), in the Oromo language there are at least two “optional” focus markers (one for the subject, the other for the predicate) as well as the emphatic particle *uma*, which tends to turn into a focus marker for an object. Forms of expressing focus which resemble those in Somali have been observed in some West African languages, in particular in *Songai* (Vinogradov, 1977).

0.4.3. In my dissertation I called *waa*, *baa* (*ayaa*) and *waxaa* ‘phrase particles’. This term had been introduced by the pioneer of Somali studies in Russia, Zholkovsky (1971). It is also used by the German Cushitologist Griefenow-Mewis (El-Solami-Mewis, 1987). Giorgio Banti suggested that I substitute ‘phrase particles’ by ‘sentence particles’, which I did. This term had already been applied by Mohamed Haji Rabi in his paper at the 8th Congress of the Somali Studies International Association, held in Hargeisa in 2001.⁸

Other western specialists in the Somali language use the terms ‘indicator’ (Bell, 1953), ‘indicator particles’ (Andrzejewski, 1956, 1964; Antinucci and Puglielli, 1980), ‘focus particles’ (Lamberti, 1983), ‘focus markers’ (Heine and Reh, 1983; Tosco, 1993) and ‘classifiers’ (Saeed, 1984). Griefenow-Mewis proposes the differentiation of ‘focus markers’ (which she equates with sentence particles) from ‘focus particles’. In her opinion, the first fulfils a mainly grammatical function, the second a lexical one.

0.4.4. In the majority of Somali dialects (*Maxaad-tiri* and others) the development of the system of focus with the usage of the SP *baa* and its variants Lamberti explains by the absence from the preverbal particles of the short objective pronouns of the 3rd person singular and plural. In the dialects which have the full set of these pronouns there is no SP *baa*.

Indeed, examples of the usage of a) the SP *waa* with, let us say, the short subjective pronoun *uu* – ‘he’ and b) the short objective pronouns which fulfil the

⁸ Mohamed Haji Rabi. Somali Syntax: Some Common Features. This article was published in ‘War Destroys, Peace Nurtures’, Lawrenceville, 2004.

function of the direct and indirect objects, result in the following meanings:

(20) *Wuu i arkay* – He saw me;

Wuu i siiyey – He gave (it) to me;

(21) *Wuu ku arkay* – He saw you (sing.);

Wuu ku siiyey – He gave (it) to you (sing.);

(22) *Wuu arkay* – He saw (it/ him/ her/ them);

Wuu siiyey – He gave (it) to (him/ her/ them);

(23) *Wuu na arkay* – He saw us (excl.);

Wuu na siiyey – He gave (it) to us (excl.);

(24) *Wuu ina arkay* – He saw us (incl.);

Wuu ina siiyey – He gave (it) to us (incl.);

(25) *Wuu idin arkay* – He saw you (pl.);

Wuu idin siiyey – He gave (it) to you (pl.).

Naturally in all these sentences the logical accent is placed on the predicate.

When the sentence particle is used it cannot turn the object into the rheme even with the help of the emphatic pronouns (see 0.3.7), which in the role of objects are obligatorily supplemented with short objective pronouns (with the exception of pronouns of the 3rd person singular and plural), and therefore are not necessary elements of the verbal constructions. However, the pronouns *isaga*, *iyada* and *iyaga* help to differentiate the objects of the 3rd person masculine and feminine singular from the 3rd person plural:⁹

⁹ According to Bell, the pronoun *iyada* means the 3rd person feminine singular and plural, and *iyaga* the 3rd person masculine plural.

(26) *Aniga wuu i arkay* – He saw me;

Aniga wuu i siiyey – He gave (it) to me;

(27) *Adiga wuu ku arkay* – He saw you (sing.);

Adiga wuu ku siiyey – He gave (it) to you (sing.);

(28) *Isaga wuu arkay* – He saw him;

Isaga wuu siiyey – He gave (it) to him;

(29) *Iyada wuu arkay* – He saw her;

Iyada wuu siiyey – He gave (it) to her;

(30) *Annaga wuu na arkay* – He saw us (excl.);

Annaga wuu na siiyey – He gave (it) to us (excl.);

(31) *Innaga wuu ina arkay* – He saw us (incl.);

Innaga wuu ina siiyey – He gave (it) to us (incl.);

(32) *Idinka wuu idin arkay* – He saw you (pl.);

Idinka wuu idin siiyey – He gave (it) to you (pl.).

(33) *Iyaga wuu arkay* – He saw them;

Iyaga wuu siiyey – He gave (it) to them.

In the words of Lamberti (1983, p.106), in such syntactical structures “...it is difficult to draw the hearer's attention to an element of the sentence other than the verb. If its object pronoun has disappeared, as is the case for the 3rd person in Somali, then it is impossible.” Therefore the *Maxaad-tiri* and some other dialects needed “a device which would allow them to draw the hearer's attention, if necessary, to a part of the sentence expressed within the verbal complex by the pronoun \emptyset ” (ibid., p.107).

The SP *baa* and its variants have become such a tool.

Without disputing what has been said about the short objective pronouns of the 3rd person and of the emphatic pronouns which make up for their absence, I have to note, however, that this is equally true in regard to all other pronouns which play the role of objects. As has been shown above, in *waa* structures it is also not possible to make any of them the rheme.

It is true that Zorc and Issa (1990, p.79) give an example where the question *Yaa macallinka arkay?* (Who saw the teacher?) is followed by the answer *Aniga waan arkay* (It was I who saw); *Adiga waad aragtay* (It was you who saw) etc., that is with the logical accent on the word (in this case the object, expressed by an emphatic pronoun) which is followed by the SP *waa* (not *baa*) with the corresponding short subjective pronouns. This, however, contradicts my own observations of the speech performance of Somalis and published accounts by other researchers into the Somali syntax. It seems that the natural answer to the question *Yaa macallinka arkay?* would be *Anigaa (aniga + baa) arkay* (It was I who saw); *Adigaa (adiga + baa) arkay* (It was you who saw) etc.

So the problem is settled by the SP *baa* (in this case in combination with the subjective pronouns, the rules of usage of which are given in detail in the chapters relating to each of the sentence particles) supplemented by emphatic pronouns:

(34) *Aniga buu i arkay* – He saw me;

Aniga buu i siiyey – He gave (it) to me;

(35) *Adiga buu ku arkay* – He saw you (sing.);

Adiga buu ku siiyey – He gave (it) to you (sing.);

(36) *Isaga buu arkay* – He saw him;

Isaga buu siiyey – He gave (it) to him;

(37) *Iyada buu arkay* – He saw her;

Iyada buu siiyey – He gave (it) to her;

(38) *Annaga buu na arkay* – He saw us (excl.);

Annaga buu na siiyey – He gave (it) to us (excl.);

(39) *Innaga buu ina arkay* – He saw us (incl.);

Innaga buu ina siiyey – He gave (it) to us (incl.);

(40) *Idinka buu idin arkay* – He saw you (pl.);

Idinka buu idin siiyey – He gave (it) to you (pl.).

(41) *Iyaga buu arkay* – He saw them;

Iyaga buu siiyey – He gave (it) to them.

It is obvious that the hypothesis connecting the origin of the SP *baa* with the lack of the short subjective pronouns of the 3rd person singular in the majority of Somali dialects needs additional argumentation.

Chapter 1. The sentence particle *waa*

1.1. The functions of the particle *waa*

As was pointed out in 0.4.1, the SP *waa* predicatises the sentence and places the logical accent on the predicate. In other words it turns the verb-predicate into the logical predicate (rheme) underlining the new information about the logical subject (theme) which it contains.

(42) *Cabdi waa soo jeedaa* – Abdi is awake;

(43) *Inammadii waa yimaaddeen* – The boys came.

1.2. The subject in a sentence with the SP *waa*

The logical subject (theme) in a Somali sentence is not obligatorily marked out. In a construction with the SP *waa*, the word which plays the role of the logical subject gravitates towards the beginning of the phrase. If it is a noun, as a rule it has a definite article (the usage of *waa* assumes a previous acquaintance with the subject). The subject is in the nominative case, which “marks” subjects which are not logical predicates (rhemes)¹⁰ and almost always adjoins the morphological markers *-u*, *-i* (in Present and Future Tenses) or *-ii*.¹¹

(44) *Geedkanu/i waa weyn yahay* – This tree is big;

¹⁰The subject which has the logical accent is in the absolutive (objective) case – see Banti (1984).

¹¹ The same marker is also added to other DFRs in Past Tenses: *Buuggii* (= *Buug-ga-ii*) *aad i siisey waan akhristay* – I have read the book you gave me.

(45) *Awrkii waa dhintay* – The camel [i.e. the camel about which something is already known] has died.

For comparison:

(46) **Awr waa dhintay* – (A certain) camel has died, although this sentence can be correct in, for example, such a “quantifier” context (Bell, 1953, p.26) as:

(47) *Xoolaha, awr waa dhintay, saddex waa lumeen, inta kalese waa nabad qabtaa* – Of the stock, a camel has died, three are lost and the rest are healthy.

The definite article here marks the word *xoolaha* – ‘stock’ about which something is known. But *awr* also does not mean ‘a certain (that is indefinite) camel’, it means ‘one camel’. As has been rightly observed by Zholkovsky (1971, pp.131-32), when quantities are meant, ‘one’ as well as ‘three’ are quite definite things.

The definite article in the *waa* structures is not joined to subjects represented by proper names (being in fact nouns, they sometimes join articles: *Ibraahimkii kale* – another Ibrahim; *Peterkii kowaad* – Peter the First):

(48) *Ibraahim waa ku jecel yahay* – Ibrahim loves you.

As for the morphological subject markers, they are joined to the article of the subject, the short form of the possessive pronoun (if it is the last part of the subject), or the last word of the subject group (even if it is a verb of the subordinate clause):

(49) *Ninka iyo naagtu waa dirireen* – The husband and wife have quarrelled;

(50) *Ninka iyo naagtiisu waa kala tegeen* – The husband and [lit.: his] wife have divorced [lit.: have gone in different directions];

(51) *Hashaad raadsaneysaani waa joogtaa* – The she-camel you are looking for is here.

1.3. The particle *waa* with short subjective pronouns

Like the other sentence particles *waa* can be used with short subjective pronouns. They are joined to the particle *waa*, often merging with it and creating the following series of forms:

Singular:

1 st pers.	<i>waa + aan = waan</i>
2 nd pers.	<i>waa + aad = waad</i>
3 rd pers. masc.	<i>waa + uu = wuu</i>
3 rd pers. fem.	<i>waa + ay = way</i>

Plural:

1 st pers. (excl.)	<i>waa + aan(nu) = waan(nu)</i>
1 st pers. (incl.)	<i>waa + aynu = waynu</i>
2 nd pers.	<i>waa + aydin = waydin</i>
	<i>waa + aad = waad</i>
3 rd pers.	<i>waa + ay = way</i>

The short subjective pronouns mainly serve to clarify the relations between subject and predicate, for example:

(52) *Waa tegey* may mean either ‘I went’ or ‘He went’, while

(53) *Waa tegeysaa* may be understood as ‘You (sing.) are leaving’ or as ‘She is

leaving’, because in *waa* structures in all tenses the regular verbs in Somali have homonymic forms in the 1st person singular and 3rd person masculine singular, and both regular and irregular verbs in the 2nd person singular and 3rd person feminine singular. At the same time each of the following examples:

(54) *Waan tegey*,

(55) *Wuu tegey*,

(56) *Waad tegeysaa*,

(57) *Way tegeysaa*

has only one precise meaning, namely: I went, He went, You (sing.) are leaving and She is leaving, respectively.

For example, in such a sentence as

(58) *Cali waa arkay*, it is not clear whether *Cali* (Ali) is the subject or object, and therefore this sentence may mean ‘I/He saw Ali, or Ali saw (it)’, while

(59) *Cali waan arkay* and *Cali wuu arkay* can be understood only as ‘I saw Ali’ and ‘Ali saw (it)’.

In the presence of a substantive subject a short subjective pronoun duplicates it, acting as if it were a “surplus structure”:

(60) *Sayid Maxamed taas wuu diidey* – Said Mohamed refused it [lit.: Said Mohamed he refused it].

In such cases a short subjective pronoun is usually omitted:

(61) *Sayid Maxamed taas waa diidey*.

However, the usage of the SP *waa* with a short subjective pronoun is almost

always optional.

1.3.1. The SP *waa* without a short subjective pronoun is used in the constructions with the indefinite personal pronoun (subject) *la* (see 0.3.8):

(62) *Wax kasta oo uu doonaba waa la siin jirey* – He used to be given everything he wanted.

1.4. The order of words in a sentence with the particle *waa*

The order of words in a sentence with the SP *waa* conforms in general to the scheme designated in 0.3.10, with the peculiarity that *waa*, as a rule, immediately precedes the verb:

(63) *Dhul nin dhintey iyo nin noolba waa deeqaa* – The earth is enough for the dead and the living. (Proverb)

1.4.1. Between *waa* and the verb, short subjective pronouns (which usually merge with it) can be placed, as well as the following:

1) The indefinite personal pronoun *la* and the preverbs (otherwise called the markers of the prepositional government or – see 0.3.5), which cover only the most general prepositional meanings (more concrete ones, for example ‘near’, ‘after’, ‘between’ etc. are expressed by possessive constructions combined with the corresponding adverbial nouns):

(64) *Waan u dhiibey* – I handed (it) over (to him);

(65) *Isaga way ku qososhaa* – She laughs at him;

(66) *Halkan way ka shaqeeyaan* – They work here;

(67) *Waannu la nimid* – We (excl.) brought (it) [lit.: came with it].

2) Short objective pronouns:

(68) *Waad i taqaannaan* – You (pl.) know me;

(69) *Wuu ku dhowraa* – He respects you (sing.);

(70) *Way na aragtay* – She saw us (excl.);

(71) *Way ina qabsadeen* – They caught us (incl.);

(72) *Waannu idin toosiney* – We (excl.) woke you up;

(73) *Waad is barateen* – You got to know each other.

3) Possessive (or the second objective) pronouns *kay* – my, *kaa* – your (sing.), *kaya* – our (excl.), *keen* – our (incl.) and *kiin* – your (pl.):

(74) *Wuu kuu kay ammaanay* – He praised me [lit.: my] to you (sing.);

(75) *Wuu ii kaa ammaanay* – He praised you (sing.) [lit.: your] to me;

(76) *Wuu kuu kaya ammaanay* – He praised us (excl.– lit.: our) to you (sing.);

(77) *Wuu kuu keen ammaanay* – He praised us (incl. – lit.: our) to you (sing.);

(78) *Wuu ii kiin ammaanay* – He praised you (pl.) [lit.: your] to me;

(79) *Wuu idiin kay ammaanay* – He praised me [lit.: my] to you (pl).¹²

4) The adverbial particles *soo* – in this direction, *sii* – in that direction, *wada* – together, *kala* – separately:

(80) *Way soo gashay guriga* – She entered the house [in which the speaker was];

(81) *Way sii gashay guriga* – She entered the house [the speaker stayed outside];

¹² These examples have been taken from Warsama, Abraham (1951), with the exception of (76).

(82) *Ergooyinkii way wada hadleen* – The delegations negotiated (something)

[lit.: talked together];

(83) *Geelu way kala dideen* – The camels scattered.

5) Nouns with adverbial meaning without an article, i.e. *ag* – ‘near’, ‘beside’;

hoos – ‘under’; *hor* – ‘in front of’, ‘before’; *dhex* – ‘inside’, ‘between’ and others:

(84) *Wuu i ag fadhiyaa* – He is sitting beside me;

(85) *Bahalku wuu ku hoos jirey dhulka* – The animal was sitting under the earth;

(86) *Way iga hor martay* – She passed ahead of [lit.: in front of] me.

6) Nouns without an article which form stable combinations with a verb, practically merging with it¹³, which is confirmed by the fact that it is impossible to insert between them and the verb the conjunction *na* (or *se*), and by their incapacity, in contrast to usual objects, to occupy other positions in a sentence:

(87) *Waan ka qayb galay bannaanbaxii* – I participated [lit.: entered part] in the demonstration;

(88) *Wuu na marti qaaday* – He invited us (excl.) [lit.: took (as) guests];

(89) *Way aqal gashay* – She got married [lit.: entered a house].

7) Attributive combinations (subordinate constructions) which consist of nouns and irregular verbs *ahaan* – ‘to be’, *lahaan* – ‘to have’ and *la’aan* – ‘not to have’: *hodon ahaan* – to be wealthy, *maskax lahaan* – to be clever [lit.: to have brain], *lacag la’aan* – not to have money etc. Bell interprets these constructions as adjectives (attributive verbs, according to my terminology). But their double structure is a

¹³ In modern dictionaries (Zorc and Osman, 1993 and others) they are written together.

syntactic feature; when these verb-adjectives are transferred from the attributive role (as *nin hodon ah* – a wealthy man) to the predicative one (90-92), the verbal part behaves as an independent verb and the nominal part as a noun:

(90) *Wuu hodon yahay* – He is wealthy [lit.: he is a wealthy man];

(91) *Wuu maskax leeyahay* – He is clever [lit.: he has brain];

(92) *Wuu lacag la'yahay* – He has no money.

All the other variants are not correct:

(90a) **Hodon wuu yahay*;

(90b) **Wuu yahay hodon*;

(91a) **Maskax wuu leeyehay*;

(91b) **Wuu leeyahay maskax*;

(92a) **Lacag wuu la'yahay*;

(92b) **Wuu la'yahay lacag*.

It is worth noting that Zholkovsky (1971, p.205) speaks of the undesirability of the usage of these compound forms with the SP *waa* which combines mainly with intransitive verbs, turning them into the rheme. I agree that in the construction with the SP *baa* these forms are more productive:

(93) *Hodon buu yahay* – He is a wealthy man.

But the examples given to confirm the thesis about the undesirability of the usage of the attributive constructions (which the forms under observation in fact are) with the SP *waa*, impose a ban on their usage in general. Thus in concert with others the syntagm described in (77-79) is regarded as a mistake:

(94) *Wuu gadh leeyahay* – He has a beard.

This contradicts the data received from my informants and taken from the published sources (see in particular Bell, 1953, p.81).

8) Attributive constructions consisting of a noun and an attributive verb (usually *wanaagsan/fiican* – to be good, *xun* – to be bad, *badan* – to be numerous, *yar* – to be small, *dheer* – to be long, *gaaban* – to be short etc.):

(95) *Way maskax fiican tahay* – She is clever [lit.: good brained];

(96) *Wuu hadal xun yahay* – He has a wicked tongue [lit.: is bad in speech];

(97) *Faadumo way hadal badan tahay* – Faduma is garrulous [lit.: of much talk];

(98) *Wuu gacan yar yahay* – He is greedy [lit.: small in hand];

(99) *Haramcadku wuu orod dheer yahay* – Cheetah runs quickly [lit.: is long in running];

(100) *Diinku wuu socod gaaban yahay* – Turtle walks slowly [lit.: is short in walking].

9) The conjunctions *na* and *se*, with the meaning ‘and’, ‘but’, whose place in the sentence is not fixed. Being used with a sentence particle, they merge with it:

(101) *Amarkii wuu heley, wuuse yeeli waayay* – He received the order but could not fulfil it.

10) Subordinate clauses in constructions with the SP *waa* and the conjunctive substantive *in*, which is used for conveying the meaning of necessity. The verb of the subordinate clause may be in either the indicative or conjunctive mood:

(102) *Waa in aan iska tagaa* (or *tago*) – I have to go.

Zholkovsky (1971, p.183) justly sees in the link *waa in...* the presence of the

impersonal subject (the pronoun) *ay* (see 0.3.9) and the verb *ahaan* – ‘to be’, which reveal themselves when the situation is transferred into the past tense and the SP *baa* or *waxaa* is introduced:

(103) *Inaan iska tago bay ahayd* (= *Waxay ahayd inaan iska tago*) – I had to go.

1.4.2. In the framework of the above-mentioned limitation (the SP *waa* precedes the verb) the disposition of words can be different. For example, such a sentence as

(104) *Meel walba magaciisu waa gaari jirey* – His name used to be known everywhere, which has a subject, a predicate and an adverbial modifier of place, can have the following variants:

(105) *Magaciisu waa gaari jirey meel walba;*

(106) *Magaciisu meel walba waa gaari jirey;*

(107) *Meel walba waa gaari jirey magaciisu;*

(108) *Waa gaari jirey meel walba magaciisu;*

(109) *Waa gaari jirey magaciisu meel walba.*

It must be noted that in all these versions the SP *waa* can join the short subjective pronoun of the 3rd person masculine singular *uu*, and the subject retains the morphological marker of the subject irrespective of where that subject is situated.

1.5. The particle *waa* and the agreement of the predicate with the subject

It has been noted in 0.3.11 that if in a sentence there is the SP *waa*, the predicate agrees with the subject according to the “complete” type I which is

characterized by the maximum distinction between all categories in all forms (person, gender and number). Let us illustrate this with the example of the conjugations of the verbs of the three main classes (*keen* – bring, *samee* – make and *qabo* – take), the attributive verb *baahan* – ‘be hungry’ and the irregular verb *lahaan* – ‘to have’ in the Present General and Past General tenses, using full (emphatic) pronouns as the subjects:

Present General Tense

Anigu waan keenaa/ sameeyaa/ qabtaa – I bring/ make/ take

Adigu waad keentaa/ sameysaa/ qabataa – You (sing.) bring/ make/ take

Isagu wuu keenaa/ sameeyaa/ qabtaa – He brings/ makes/ takes

Iyadu way keentaa/ sameysaa/ qabataa – She brings/ makes/ takes

Annagu waannu keennaa/ sameynaa/ qabannaa – We (excl.) bring/ make/ take

Innagu waynu keennaa/ sameynaa/ qabannaa – We (incl.) bring/ make/ take

Idinku waad keentaan/ sameysaan/ qabataan – You (pl.) bring/ make/ take

Iyagu way keenaan/ sameeyaan/ qabtaan – They bring/ make/ take

Anigu waan baahan ahay/ leeyahay – I am hungry/ have

Adigu waad baahan tahay/ leedahay – You (sing.) are hungry/ have

Isagu wuu baahan yahay/ leeyahay – He is hungry / has

Iyadu way baahan tahay/ leedahay – She is hungry/ has

Annagu waannu baahan nahay/ leenahay – We (excl.) are hungry/ have

Innagu waynu baahan nahay/ leenahay – We (incl.) are hungry /have

Idinku waad baahan tihii/ leedihiin – You (pl.) are hungry/ have

Iyagu way baahan yihiin/ leeyihiin – They are hungry/have

Past General Tense¹⁴

Anigu waan keenay/ sameeyey/ qabtay – I brought/ made/ took

Adigu waad keentay/ sameysey/ qabatay – You (sing.) brought/ made/ took

Isagu wuu keenay/ sameeyey/ qabtay – He brought/ made/ took

Iyadu way keentay/ sameysey/ qabatay – She brought/ made/ took

Annagu waannu keennay/sameynay/qabannay – We (excl.) brought/made/took

Innagu waynu keennay/ sameynay/ qabannay – We (incl.) brought/ made/ took

Idinku waad keenteen/ sameyseen/ qabateen – You (pl.) brought/ made/ took

Iyagu way keeneen/ sameeyeen/ qabteen – They brought/ made/ took

Anigu waan baahnaa/ lahaa – I was hungry/ had

Adigu waad baahnayd/ lahayd – You (sing.) was hungry/ had

Isagu wuu baahnaa/ lahaa – He was hungry/ had

Iyadu way baahnayd/ lahayd – She was hungry/ had

Annagu waannu baahnayn/ lahayn – We (excl.) were hungry/ had

Innagu waynu baahnayn/ lahayn – We (incl.) were hungry/ had

Idinku waad baahnaadeen/ lahaydeen – You (pl.) were hungry/ had

Iyagu way baahnaayeen/ lahaayeen – They were hungry/ had

¹⁴ In Somali there are no perfect forms, therefore *waan sameeyey* may mean 'I made' and 'I have made'.

It is easy to see that in sentences with the SP *waa* the pronouns agree in accordance with their person, number and gender. In present and past tenses (as well as in all others) the forms of the verbs distinguish five of the eight persons, with the coincidence of the forms of the 1st person singular and the 3rd person masculine singular, the 2nd person singular and the 3rd person feminine singular, and the 1st person plural both exclusive and inclusive. As has already been said, in the absence of the subjects expressed by substantives, short subjective pronouns are used to distinguish them. Verbs in the form of the 3rd person singular are distinguished by gender.

In connection with the description in subsequent chapters of the “clipped” II type of agreement between predicate and subject in sentences with the particles *baa* and *waxaa*, it is necessary to pay attention to the ending *-aa* (a long vowel) of the usual verbs; to their suffixes in the 2nd person singular; to the expanding into a construction with the verb *ahaan* – ‘to be’ of the attributive verb in the Present General, and to the personal forms of the verb *lahaan* – ‘to be’ in present and past tenses.

1.6. *Waa* as a particle introducing a nominal predicate

The SP *waa* can introduce a nominal predicate, usually preceding it immediately:

(110) *Waa faras* – This (is) a horse;

(111) *Tani waa geenyo* – This (is) a mare;

(112) *Ninkaasu waa beerale* – That man (is) a farmer;

(113) *Waa inoo berri* – See you tomorrow [lit.: Here (is) tomorrow for us (incl.)].

1.6.1. A noun in the function of a predicate can adjoin a definite article (it is usually followed by a relative clause):

(114) *Waa ardaygii uu ammaanay* – This (is) the student he praised.

1.6.2. In such constructions with *waa* the short subjective pronoun is not used, even if it is the only manifestation of the subject. The following, for example, is not correct:

(115) **Wuu xiddigiye* – He (is) an astrologer (despite the fact that the correct construction, *waa xiddigiye*, may also mean that an astrologer is in the 1st person singular or the 3rd person masculine singular).

1.6.3. Zholkovsky (1971, p.186) regards *waa* in this role as a special word homonymic to the SP *waa*, being one of the realizations of the Somali verb *ahaan* – to be. The advantage of such an approach lies in the fact that it does not need a special description of the forms *weeye* and *weeyaan* considered as variants of *waa* and fulfilling the same functions. But if this approach is accepted, it becomes necessary to introduce a special particle homonymic to the SP *baa* which can also be used to form constructions with a nominal predicate, a fact not mentioned by Zholkovsky in his work on the Somali syntax.

It should be noted that one of the variants of *weeye* or *weeyey* is the form *waaye*, which could be acknowledged as a link in the chain of the evolution of *waa* *yahay* – yes, fine [lit.: here it is] → *waaye* → *waa* (Sayeed, 1984).

1.6.4. In contrast to *waa*, the particle *weeye* (and its variants *waaye* and *weeyaan*) always follows the nominal part of the compound predicate:

(116) *Doqon weeye (waaye, weeyaan)* – He (is) a fool.

1.7. Sentences without the particle *waa*

The SP *waa* is omitted:

1) In the rather rare cases where the subjective pronoun immediately follows the verb:

(117) *Waa aan soo noqday = Soo noqday aan* – I returned here.

2) When a predicate is in the form of the archaic Past Independent Tense:¹⁵

(118) *Ninkii xoolihii laga xad* – The stock of this man was stolen.

More details about the absence of the SP *waa* (as well as *baa*) in sentences can be found in the chapter on proverbial clichés.

¹⁵ Zholkovsky (1971) calls this the Past Short Tense.

Chapter 2. The sentence particle *baa*

2.1. The functions of the particle *baa*

As well as the predicatising function which it has in common with all other sentence particles, the SP *baa* (in some dialects *ayaa/yaa/aa*)¹⁶ realizes the actantial and circumstantial focuses. Riveting the attention on a subject, an object or any other DFR which in Somali is expressed by a noun (personal names and emphatic pronouns are also nouns, as they can be used with definite articles), the SP *baa* turns that member of the above set which it immediately follows into the rheme. Being marked by *baa* it becomes the logical acme of an utterance, as it were:

(119) *Náag báa nín aragtáy* – A woman saw a man;

(120) *Nín báa naagi aragtay* – A woman saw a man;

(121) *Béri báa nín iyo naagi abeesó arkeen* – One day a man and a woman saw a snake.

2.1.1. The place of the SP *baa* in an affirmative sentence is defined by the following rules:

- 1) It immediately follows the word it emphasises;
- 2) It always precedes a predicate.

But since, as was noted in 0.3.10, nouns and adverbial modifiers can occupy almost any place in regard to each other, the SP *baa* can in practice stand in any place

¹⁶ Because the SPs *ayaa* and *baa* can freely substitute each other in all contexts, the patterns of the usage of *ayaa* are investigated only in exceptional cases, in particular in chapter 3.

to the left of the verb.

2.2. Case and tone in a sentence with the particle *baa*

It was mentioned in 0.3.3. that cases and prosodic decoration (“packing”) of the components of an utterance depend on the choice of sentence particle and its attitude towards them. In the case of *baa* two situations are distinguished:

- 1) The logical accent coincides with the subject of the sentence (119) and
- 2) The logical accent does not coincide with the subject of the sentence (120 and 121).

In the first case (119) the subject (*náag*) is in the oblique (objective) case, indicated by high tone, while in the second (120) it is in the nominative, indicated by low, non-marked, tone and the special morphological marker *-i* (*naagi*). In the example (121), which is a particular realization of the general case (120), its subject consists of two nouns connected by¹ the copulative conjunction *iyó* – and; the first noun (*nín* – a man) is in the oblique case, while the second (*naagi* – a woman) accepts all the exponents of the subjective case.

As for the objects (*nín* – ‘a man’ in the first and second examples and *abeesó* – ‘a snake’ in the third, which also includes the adverbial modifier *béri* – ‘one day’) these are in the general oblique (objective) case irrespective of whether or not they bear the logical accent, i.e. whether or not they are followed by the SP *baa*.

2.3. The particle *baa* with short subjective pronouns

The SP *baa* is used either on its own or in combination with a short subjective pronoun, depending upon the presence or absence of the substantive object in a sentence. If there is a substantive subject, *baa* may be used either with or without a short subjective pronoun, but if there is no substantive subject, it may be used only with such a pronoun:

(122) *Muus buu ninkii cunay* – A man ate a banana, or

(123) *Muus baa ninkii cunay* – with the same meaning, but

(124) *Muus buu cunay* – He ate a banana.

In sentences with the indefinite personal pronoun *la*, the SP *baa* and all other sentence particles are used without short subjective pronouns:

(125) *Awr baa la dabray* – A burden camel was hobbled [lit.: Somebody hobbled a burden camel].

2.3.1 The short subjective pronouns combine with *baa*, making the following series of forms:

Singular:

1st pers. *baa + aan = baan*

2nd pers. *baa + aad = baad*

3rd pers. masc. *baa + uu = buu*

3rd pers. fem. *baa + ay = bay*

Plural:

1st pers. (excl.) *baa + aan(nu) = baan(nu)*

1 st pers. (incl.)	<i>baa + aynu = baynu</i>
2 nd pers.	<i>baa + aydin = baydin</i>
	<i>baa + aad = baad</i>
3 rd pers.	<i>baa + ay = bay</i>

The SP *baa* serves to place the logical accent on the marked-out member of a sentence, while the short subjective pronouns clarify the relation between subject and predicate. The usage of the SP *baa* with and without the short subjective pronouns has some peculiarities.

2.3.2. As was partially shown in 2.1, the SP *baa* without a short subjective pronoun turns any one of categories a), b) or c) below into the rheme of a sentence:

a) the subject (or subjective group):

(126) *Awr baa dhintey – A burden camel has died;*

(127) *Libaaxii aan dhaawacay baa cararay – The lion I wounded ran away;*

b) a direct or indirect object:

(128) *Maskii baa naagtii dishey – The woman killed a snake;*

(129) *Faarax baa Cali ku dhuftay ul – Ali hit Farah with a stick;*

(130) *Ul baa Cali ku dhuftay Faarax – Ali hit Farah with a stick;*

c) an adverbial modifier:

(131) *Berri baa walaalkay iman doonaa – My brother will come tomorrow.*

It is evident that in the example (128) *naagtii* – ‘the woman’ is the subject and *maskii* – ‘the snake’ the object, because the verb conjugates in the feminine gender and *naagtii* is the sole feminine noun here. But the example (129) can be understood

as ‘It was Farah whom Ali hit with a stick’ and ‘It was Farah who hit Ali with a stick’, since there are two nouns of the 3rd person masculine singular (*Cali* and *Faarax*) and one noun (*ul* – a stick) of the 3rd person feminine singular. The form of the predicate indicates that the subject is one of the masculine nouns, *Cali* or *Faarax*, and the situation can be made clear by the intonation of the speaker.

(132) *Fáarax báa Cáli ku dhuftáy ul* – It was Farah who hit Ali with a stick;

(133) *Fáarax báa Cali ku dhuftay ul* – It was Farah whom Ali hit with a stick.¹⁷

Moreover if the subject is expressed not by a proper name, as in the last examples, but by another noun with an article or a demonstrative pronoun (*-kan/tan* – this, these and *-kaas/taas*, *-keer/teer*, *-koo/too* – that, those), or if it is followed by an adjective (an attributive verb), or is represented by a feminine noun without an article which ends in a consonant, it can adjoin special morphological marks which help to distinguish it from the object¹⁸:

(134) *Awrka baa orgigu raacaa* – The he-goat (always) follows the camel;

(135) *Libaaxaas baa ninkani diley* – This man has killed that lion;

(136) *Nin xoog leh baa nin tabar yari legday* – A weak man fought down a strong one;

¹⁷ As was noted in 0.3.1 the Somali system of writing does not use diacritical marks, hence the ambivalence of sentences like these and of structures which include words which differ only by tone, e.g. *Inan buu dhalay* – A boy was born to him/A girl was born to him [lit: He gave birth to a boy/girl].

¹⁸ A short but pithy article on this subject was written by Banti (1984).

(137) *Maalin maalmaha ka mid ah gabadh baa islaani la kulantay* – Once upon a time an old woman met a girl.

A subject stressed by the SP *baa* does not adjoin morphological markers because it is not in the nominative case (see 2.2):

(138) **Ninkani baa libaaxaas diley* – This man killed that lion.

It should be noted that the examples (128-131) and (134-137) disprove the assertion of Heine and Reh (1983, p.28) that “the usage of a subjective pronoun becomes obligatory if a noun followed by the focus marker is not the subject of the sentence”. The cases of the obligatory usage of the short subjective pronouns with the SP *baa* will be described below; here I shall only stress that they help to distinguish a subject from an object:

(139) *Cali Faarax buu ku dhuftay ul* – this has only one meaning, namely ‘It was Farah whom Ali hit with a stick’.

2.4. The order of words in a sentence with the particle *baa*

Let us examine, using several examples, the order of words in an independent affirmative sentence with the SP *baa* without a short subjective pronoun. If there is a subject in the 3rd person (singular or plural), an adverbial modifier of place and a predicate (for instance, ‘Ahmed came from Mogadishu’), the following variants are possible:

(140) *Axmed baa Muqdisho ka yimid* – Ahmed came from Mogadishu;

(141) *Axmed baa ka yimid Muqdisho* – Ahmed came from Mogadishu;

(142) *Muqdisho Axmed baa ka yimid* – Ahmed came from Mogadishu;

(143) *Muqdisho baa Axmed ka yimid* – Ahmed came from Mogadishu.

In examples (140-142) the logical accent is placed on the subject, and in example (143) it is on the modifier of place. If *baa* marks any other DFR besides a subject, the order of words defined in (143) is the only one possible. The following, for example, are prohibited:

(144) **Axmed Muqdishu baa ka yimid*;

(145) **Muqdishu baa ka yimid Axmed*.

Therefore, in a sentence with the SP *baa* without a short subjective pronoun, the placement of the members of the sentence is defined by the following rules:

- 1) The subject cannot follow the predicate;
- 2) The order: subject/ another DFR/ *baa* is prohibited;
- 3) The order: another DFR/ *baa*/ subject is not desirable.

In practice the same rules function in cases where there are a larger number of members, as here in the patterns of the realization of the sentence ‘Ali brought a book for Farah’:¹⁹

(146) *Cali baa u keenay Faarax buug*;

(147) *Cali baa u keenay buug Faarax*;

(148) *Cali baa buug u keenay Faarax*;

(149) *Cali baa buug Faarax u keenay*;

(150) *Cali baa Faarax buug u keenay*;

¹⁹ In fact this is only one of the three possible interpretations of the meaning of this paradigm, the other two being (depending on the logical accent) It was Ali who brought a book for Farah and What Ali brought for Farah was a book.

- (152) *Cali baa Faarax u keenay buug;*
 (153) *Faarax Cali baa buug u keenay;*
 (154) *Faarax Cali baa u keenay buug;*
 (155) *Faarax baa Cali u keenay buug;*
 (156) *Faarax baa Cali buug u keenay;*
 (157) *Faarax buug Cali baa u keenay;*
 (158) *Faarax buug baa Cali u keenay;*
 (159) *Buug Cali baa Faarax u keenay;*
 (160) *Buug Cali baa u keenay Faarax;*
 (161) *Buug baa Cali u keenay Faarax;*
 (162) *Buug baa Cali Faarax u keenay;*
 (163) *Buug Faarax Cali baa u keenay;*
 (164) *Buug Faarax baa Cali u keenay.*

Other variants, for example,

- (165) **Cali Faarax baa u keenay buug;*
 (166) **Cali buug baa u keenay Faarax;*
 (166) **Cali Faarax buug baa u keenay;*
 (167) **Faarax buug baa u keenay Cali*

are not possible due to the limitations mentioned above.

2.4.1. But if the subject of a sentence is the 1st or 2nd person singular or plural, i.e. the full emphatic pronouns *aniga* – I, *annaga/innaga* – we (excl./incl.), *adiga* – you (sing.) and *idinka* – you (pl.), the SP *baa* without a short subjective pronoun can follow only the subject. By replacing the subject *Cali* – Ali of the previous example

with the pronoun *aniga* – I, we get a lesser set of variants of the sentence with the meaning ‘It was I who brought a book for Ali’:

(168) *Aniga baa u keenay Faarax buug;*

(169) *Aniga baa u keenay buug Faarax;*

(170) *Aniga baa buug u keenay Faarax;*

(171) *Aniga baa buug Faarax u keenay;*

(172) *Aniga baa Faarax buug u keenay;*

(173) *Aniga baa Faarax u keenay buug,*

(174) *Faarax aniga baa buug u keenay;*

(175) *Faarax aniga baa u keenay buug;*

(176) *Faarax buug aniga baa u keenay;*

(177) *Buug aniga baa Faarax u keenay;*

(178) *Buug aniga baa u keenay Faarax;*

(179) *Buug Faarax aniga baa u keenay.*

Any other order of words, including non-subject/ *baa*/ subject is not possible:

(180) **Faarax baa aniga u keenay buug;*

(181) **Faarax baa aniga buug u keenay;*

(182) **Faarax buug baa aniga u keenay;*

(183) **Buug baa aniga u keenay Faarax;*

(184) **Buug baa aniga Faarax u keenay;*

(185) **Buug Faarax baa aniga u keenay.*

2.4.2. It was stated above that the SP *baa* is also used with short subjective

pronouns; in this case the SP *baa* places the logical accent on any DFR which immediately precedes it, and the pronouns themselves (-*aan*, -*aad*, -*uu* etc.) indicate the subject of the utterance:

(186) *Odeygu Laas Caanood buu tegay* – The old man went to Las Anod;

(187) *Kal hore bay la socotay adhigii Caasha* – Asha pastured sheep and goats last year;

(188) *Lug baannu ku nimid* – We (excl.) came on foot [lit.: with a foot];

(189) *Wiilkii baa/bay walaashiis seexisey* – The boy was put to bed by his sister;

(190) *Maroodi baa beerta baabi'iyay* – An elephant trampled down the field.

These examples demonstrate the main rules of the usage of the SP *baa* with a short subjective pronoun, which becomes necessary in the following circumstances:

- a) if the subject is followed by another (emphasised) DFR (186)
- b) if the subject is placed behind the predicate (187);
- c) if it is the single manifestation of the subject (188);
- d) the SP *baa* may not adjoin a short subjective pronoun if it precedes a substantive subject of the 3rd person singular or plural (189; cf. 154, 155, 157);
- e) a short subjective pronoun is not used if the SP *baa* immediately follows the subject (190), therefore the following sentence is not correct:

(191) **Maroodi buu beerta baabi'iyey* – An elephant trampled down the field.

2.4.3. The order of words in a sentence with the SP *baa* and a short subjective pronoun is defined by the above set of rules, and is exemplified here by the variants of the realization in Somali of the sentence ‘Mohamed bought (for himself) a loaf of

bread’, which consists of a substantive subject of the 3rd person, an object and a predicate:

(192) *Maxamed kimis buu soo iibsaday;*

(193) *Kimis buu Maxamed soo iibsaday;*

(194) *Kimis buu soo iibsaday Maxamed.*

In the variants (192) and (194) the usage of the short subjective pronoun is obligatory because otherwise rules a) and b) would be violated, and in the example (193) the short subjective pronoun can be omitted. The variant below is impossible due to the limitations indicated at the beginning of this paragraph:

(195) **Moxamed buu kimis soo iibsaday.*

2.4.4. The placement order of the components of a sentence which has a substantive subject of the 3rd person, a direct and an indirect object is as follows, using ‘Ahmed bought a loaf for Faduma’ as the example:

(196) *Axmed Faadumo buu kimis u soo iibiyey;*

(197) *Axmed Faadumo buu u soo iibiyey kimis;*

(198) *Axmed Faadumo kimis buu u soo iibiyey;*

(199) *Axmed kimis buu Faadumo u soo iibiyey;*

(200) *Axmed kimis buu u soo iibiyey Faadumo;*

(201) *Axmed kimis Faadumo buu u soo iibiyey;*

(202) *Faadumo buu Axmed u soo iibiyey kimis;*

(203) *Faadumo buu Axmed kimis u soo iibiyey;*

(204) *Faadumo buu kimis u soo iibiyey Axmed;*

- (205) *Faadumo buu kimis Axmed u soo iibiyey;*
 (206) *Faadumo buu u soo iibiyey Axmed kimis;*
 (207) *Faadumo buu u soo iibiyey kimis Axmed;*
 (208) *Faadumo kimis buu Axmed u soo iibiyey;*
 (209) *Faadumo kimis buu u soo iibiyey Axmed;*
 (210) *Faadumo Axmed kimis buu u soo iibiyey;*
 (211) *Kimis buu Axmed u soo iibiyey Faadumo;*
 (212) *Kimis buu Axmed Faadumo u soo iibiyey;*
 (213) *Kimis buu Faadumo u soo iibiyey Axmed;*
 (214) *Kimis buu Faadumo Axmed u soo iibiyey;*
 (215) *Kimis buu u soo iibiyey Axmed Faadumo;*
 (216) *Kimis buu u soo iibiyey Faadumo Axmed;*
 (217) *Kimis Faadumo buu Axmed u soo iibiyey;*
 (218) *Kimis Faadumo buu u soo iibiyey Axmed;*
 (219) *Kimis Axmed Faadumo buu u soo iibiyey.*

Of these great number of variants the most frequently used are those which begin with the subject and in which the objects are divided by the sentence particle or the predicate (196, 197, 199 and 200).

2.5. The particle *baa* and the agreement of the predicate with the subject

In 0.2.11 two types of agreement between the predicate and subject in a simple affirmative sentence were presented: “complete” (type I) and “clipped” (type II). In regard to the SP *baa*, the choice of agreement type depends upon which member of

the sentence it turns into the rheme. If this is an object, an adverbial modifier or any other DFR except the subject, type I agreement is used. It is characterised by the maximum differentiation of all categories in all forms: persons, genders and numbers (0.3.11). But if the subject becomes the rheme (as was shown in 2.4, this happens when the SP *baa* immediately follows the subject and does not adjoin short subjective pronouns), then type II of the agreement is used. The deciphering of some of its indications was given in 0.3.11.

2.5.1. The personal verbal forms in the “complete” type of agreement with the participation of the SP *baa* follow the same pattern as those described in 1.5 for the SP *waa*. To confirm this it will suffice to compare two sets of sentences which differ only by the placement of the logical accent and correspondingly the type of sentence particle.

(220) *Shaqadii waan dhammeeyey* – I finished the work,

Shaqadii baan dhammeeyey – I finished the work;

(221) *Shaqadii waad dhammeysey* – You (sing.) finished the work,

Shaqadii baad dhammeysey – You (sing.) finished the work;

(222) *Shaqadii wuu dhammeeyey* – He finished the work,

Shaqadii buu dhammeeyey – He finished the work;

(223) *Shaqadii way dhammeysey* – She finished the work,

Shaqadii bay dhammeysey – She finished the work;

(224) *Shaqadii waannu dhammeyney* – We (excl.) finished the work,

Shaqadii baannu dhammeyney – We (excl.) finished the work;

(225) *Shaqadii waynu dhammeyney* – We (incl.) finished the work,

Shaqadii baynu dhammeyney – We (incl.) finished the work;

(226) *Shaqadii waad dhammeyseen* – You (pl.) finished the work,

Shaqadii baad dhammeyseen – You (pl.) finished the work;

(227) *Shaqadii way dhammeeyeen* – They finished the work,

Shaqadii bay dhammeeyeen – They finished the work.

2.5.2. The conjugation of a verbal predicate in a sentence of which the rheme is its subject (“clipped” type of conjugation), results in different forms. It is convenient to demonstrate these with the example of the verbs of the three main classes (*keen* – bring, *samee* – make and *qabo* – hold), the attributive verb *baahan* – ‘be hungry’ and the irregular verb *lahaan* – ‘to have’, in the Present General and Past General Tenses, using full (emphatic) pronouns as the subjects:

Present General Tense

*Aniga baa*²⁰ *keená/ sameeyá/ qabtá* – It is I who bring/ make/ take

Adiga baa keená/ sameeyá/ qabtá – It is you (sing.) who bring/ make/ take

Isaga baa keená/ sameeyá/ qabtá – It is he who brings/ makes/ takes

Iyada baa keentá/ sameysá/ qabatá – It is she who brings/ makes/ takes

Annaga baa keenná/ sameyná/ qabanná – It is we (excl.) who bring/make/take

²⁰ In oral communication the SP *baa* usually merges with the preceding emphatic pronouns, making the forms *anigaa*, *adigaa*, *isagaa*, *iyadaa*, *annagaa*, *innagaa*, *idinkaa* and *iyagaa*. It is appropriate to remind the reader that in the position before the SP *baa*, the subjects, including those which are expressed by the emphatic pronouns, do not assume case suffixes (morphological markers)].

Innaga baa keenná/ sameyná/ qabanná – It is we (incl.) who bring/ make/ take

Idinka baa keená/ sameeyá/ qabtá – It is you (pl.) who bring/ make/ take

Iyaga baa keená/ sameeyá/ qabtá – It is they who bring/ make/ take

Aniga baa baahan/ leh – It is I who am hungry/ have

Adiga baa baahan/ leh – It is you (sing.) who is hungry/ have

Isaga baa baahan/ leh – It is he who is hungry/ has

Iyada baa baahan/ leh – It is she who is hungry/ has

Annaga baa baahan/ leh – It is we (excl.) who are hungry/ have

Innaga baa baahan/ leh – It is we (incl.) who are hungry/ have

Idinka baa baahan/ leh – It is you (pl.) who are hungry/ have

Iyaga baa baahan/ leh – It is they who are hungry/ have

Past General Tense

Aniga baa keenáy/sameeyáy/qabtáy – It was I who brought/made/took

Adiga baa keenáy/sameeyáy/qabtáy – It were you (sing.) who brought/made/took

Isaga baa keenáy/ sameeyáy/ qabtáy – It was he who brought/made/took

Iyada baa keentáy sameysáy/ qabatáy – It was she who brought/made/took

Annaga baa keennáy/sameynáy/qabannáy – It were we (excl.) who brought/made/took

Innaga baa keennáy/sameynáy/qabannáy – It were we (incl.) who brought/made/took

Idinka baa keenáy/sameeyéy/qabtáy – It were you (pl.) who brought/made/took

Iyaga baa keenáy/sameeyéy/qabtáy – It were they who brought/made/took

Aniga baa baahnaa/ lahaa – It was I who was hungry/ had

Adiga baa baahnaa/ lahaa – It was you (sing.) who were hungry/ had

Isaga baa baahnaa/ lahaa – It was he who was hungry/ had

Iyada baa baahnayd/ lahayd – It was she who was hungry/ had

Annaga baa baahnayn/ lahayn – It was we (excl.) who were hungry/ had

Innaga baa baahnayn/ lahayn – It was we (incl.) who were hungry/ had

Idinka baa baahnaa/ lahaa – It was you (pl.) who were hungry/ had

Iyaga baa baahnaa/ lahaa – It was they who were hungry/ had

In contrast to structures with the SP *waa* and sentences in which the SP *baa* marks objects and adverbial modifiers, when the logical accent is placed on the subject the difference between the 2nd and 3rd persons singular and plural in all tenses of the regular verbs, and in the past tense of the attributive verbs and the verbs *lahaan* – ‘to have’, *la'aan* – ‘not to have’ and *ahaan* – ‘to be’, disappears. In connection with this it is necessary to point out a mistake made by the authors of a Somali text-book (Zorc, Issa, 1990, p.203), which is otherwise good in general. In the conjugation paradigm of the auxiliary verb *jiri* in the Past Habitual Tense, its form in the 2nd person singular is given as **jirtey* instead of *jirey*: **Markabkan adigaa lahaan jirtey* – It was you to whom this ship used to belong.

The final vowel of the regular verbs in the Present Tense shortens. The

attributive verbs *lahaan* – ‘to have’, *la'aan* – ‘not to have’ and *ahaan* – ‘to be’ in the Present General are characterised by the syncretism of the agreement markers in all persons singular and plural. The same verbs in the Present General lose the differentiation in gender in the 3rd person singular. The syntactical parallelism which is observed in the conjugation of “adjectival verbs” such as *baahan* – ‘to be hungry’ in *waa* structures and in sentences with the SP *baa* with the accent on the subject, is one of the arguments for considering them as special (attributive) verbs and not as adjectives (Antinucci, Puglielli, 1980).

2.5.3. In constructions in which the subject is the rheme the agreement in gender (where it is possible) usually remains:

(228) *Ninkii baa yimid* – The man came;

(229) *Nimankii baa yimid* – The men came;

(230) *Gabadhii baa halkaas joogsatay* – The girl stopped there;

(231) *Gabdhihii baa halkaas joogsaday* – The girls stopped there.

In the first example the subject is a noun of the 3rd person masculine singular; in the second, the 3rd person masculine plural; in the third, the 3rd person feminine singular; and in the fourth, the 3rd person masculine plural. Because *baa* emphasizes the subject in each example, the verbs have the form of the 3rd person singular of the corresponding gender.

The deviations in gender-agreement are connected with the ability of the Somali nouns of certain classes to change into the opposite gender in the plural. This is true first of all in regard to masculine nouns whose stem ends in a consonant

(Bell's 2nd class), the vowel *-e* or the diphthong *-ey/ay* (6th class). As was demonstrated by this researcher (Bell, 1953) the feminine gender of these nouns, recognised by their article, is formal, and therefore the verbal predicate is conjugated in the masculine. This can be seen in the following pairs of sentences in which the roles of subjects are played by the nouns of the 2nd and 6th classes and the predicate has the form of the 3rd person masculine singular:

(232) *Siraadkii baa jabay* – The lamp has broken;

(233) *Siraaddadii baa jabay* – The lamps have broken;

(234) *Odaygii baa bukooday* – The old man got ill;

(235) *Odayaashii baa bukooday* – The old men got ill.

2.5.4. The verbal predicate can also be conjugated according to the same scheme when the subject is in the form of a plural noun of Bell's 5th class, which consists of recent borrowings from Arabic:

(236) *Maxbuuskii baa cararay* – The prisoner escaped;

(237) *Maxbuusyadii baa cararay* – The prisoners escaped.

But the majority of the nouns of this class, including the subject in the example (236), form their plural in one of two ways: by reduplicating the last consonant of the stem, adding the vowel *-o* and changing the gender, like the nouns of the 2nd class, or else by inserting an additional vowel in the stem according to the “broken” Arabic paradigm. The gender of the form constructed in the second way is perceived as a “real” feminine, and therefore agreement takes place according to the feminine gender:

(238) *Maxaabiistii baa carartay* – The prisoners escaped.

Nevertheless there are some speakers of this language who even with such a

subject conjugate the predicate in the masculine:

(239) *Maxaabiistii baa cararay* – The prisoners escaped.

2.6. The particle *baa* in special syntactic constructions

Some special syntactic constructions are generated with the help of the SP *baa*.

It is used in particular:

1) To convey, from the attributive to the predicative role, the verbs *ahaan* – ‘to be’, *lahaan* – ‘to have’ and *la’aan* – ‘not to have’ which are used in relative constructions with nouns: *oday fariid ah* – a wise old man [lit.: an old man who is wise], *nin gadh leh* – a bearded man [lit.: a man who has a beard], *islaan indho la’* – a blind old woman [lit.: an old woman who has no eyes].

(240) *Odaygu fariid buu yahay* – This old man is wise [lit.: is a wise man];

(241) *Ninkani gadh buu leeyahay* – This man has a beard;

(242) *Islaantaasi indho bay la’ayd* – That old woman was blind [lit.: had no eyes].

2) With words of the adverbial type which, in combination with the preverb *u*, transmit the meaning of direction (*sare...u* – up, *hoos...u* – down, *gees...u* – to the side, *hor...u* – forward, *dib...u* – backward²¹):

(243) *Sare buu u kacay* – He jumped up;

(244) *Sanduuqii cuslaa hoos buu u dhacay* – The heavy box fell down;

(245) *Sagaaro gees bay u orodday* – The dik-dik ran to the side;

²¹ This may also mean ‘again’: *Warqaddii dib buu u akhristay* – He re-read the letter.

(246) *Hor baanu u dhaqaaqnay* – We (excl.) moved forward;

(247) *Gaarigu dib buu u tegey* – The car went backward.

3) With the noun *si*, carrying the meaning of manner, which is used with attributive verbs and is governed by the preverb *u*:

(248) *Si xun buu u dhaawacmay* – He injured himself badly;

(249) *Si wanaagsan buu ii (= i+u) galay* – He treated me [lit.: He entered into me] well.

4) With the noun *aad*, which carries the meaning of intensity ('very') and requires the preverb *u*:

(250) *Aad baan u aqaan Axmed* – I know Ahmed very well;

(251) *Caasha aad bay u quruxsan tahay* – Asha is very beautiful.

5) With the attributive construction *si aad ah* – 'very much', the elements of which were described in 1), 3) and 4) and which is also governed by the preverb *u*:

(252) *Si aad ah baannu u saaxiibnay* – We (excl.) became very (good) friends.

6) In the construction which is regularly used to convey the comparative degree:

(253) *Cabdi iyo Ciise, Ciise baa dheer* – Issa is taller than Abdi [lit.: Abdi and Issa, Issa is tall].

2.7. Sentences without the particle *baa*

The SP *baa* can be omitted:

1) In sentences with the preverb *ka* which is used to convey the comparative degree:

(254) *Hawadu maanta (baa) ka xun tii shaleyto* – Today the weather is worse

than it (was) yesterday.

2) In comparison constructions with attributive verbs which are often used in proverbs:

(255) *Maalin iyo habeen (baa) kala mudan* – Night cannot be compared with day.

3) In the second of two sentences divided by the conjunctions *ama...ama* – either...or, in cases where their subjects bear the logical accent and their predicates and objects are common to both sentences (they can be omitted in the second one):

(257) *Ama Cali baa geela raacaya ama Faarax (baa geela raacaya)* – Either let Ali pasture the camels or (let) Farah (pasture the camels).

Chapter 3. The sentence particle *waxaa*

3.1. The functions of the particle *waxaa*

Like *baa*, the SP *waxaa* predicatises a sentence and realizes in it the actantial and circumstantial focuses. However, it is usually used in more complicated structures:

(258) *Maanta warqadihii aqoonsiga ahaa waxaa dhiibey danjireyaasha dalalka afrikaanka ah u jooga Moosko* – Today the ambassadors of the African countries in Moscow have presented their credentials [lit.: Today the ambassadors who stay in Moscow for the countries which are African (have) presented the papers which were recognition].

Here the rheme which coincides with the subject of the sentence follows the verbal predicate, and the theme (the adverbial modifier of time and the object) precedes the SP *waxaa*.

(259) *Soomaaliya ee ku taalla Geeska Afrika waxay deris la tahay Keenya, Itoobiya iyo Jabuuti* – Somalia, which is situated in the Horn of Africa, is a neighbour of Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti.

The rheme of this sentence is the the indirect object which follows the verb, and the theme is the subjective group which precedes the SP *waxaa*.

(260) *Dhallinyaro badan oo karti lihi waxay wax ku baran jirtey Jaamacadda Muqdisho* – Many able young people used to study at the University of Mogadishu.

The logical accent in this sentence is placed on the adverbial modifier of place,

and the subject, which is expressed by a noun with the following relative clause [lit.: young people who are many and who are able], is not emphasised.

In all the examples the SP *waxaa* can be substituted by the SP *baa*:

(261) *Danjireyaasha dalalka afrikaanka ah baa maanta dhiibay warqadihii aqoonsiga ahaa;*

(262) *Keenya, Itoobiya iyo Jabuuti bay Soomaaliya deris la tahay;*

(263) *Jaamacadda Muqdisho bay wax ku baran jirtay dhallinyaro badan oo karti lihi.*

The result obtained is close to but not identical with the transformed structures. In my opinion, as well as the stylistic differences in the second set of examples, the strengthening of the logical accent on the marked components can be observed. In the *waxaa* structures it is probably redistributed in favour of the logical subject (the theme). The hypothesis that the theme and the rheme in the sentence with the SP *waxaa* strive for a balance seems to be confirmed by the possibility of introducing into these sentences an additional sentence particle (*ayaa* or *baa*). The truth is that if in one and the same sentence two sentence particles with the same functions start to act in opposite directions, the left part (the theme) and the right part (the rheme) become equally emphasised. This means that the theme changes into the rheme, resulting in the presence of two rhemes in the sentence (which is equal to the disappearance of the logical predicate altogether). Nothing remains but to assume (and, as will be shown, there are grounds for this) that one of the two particles is the main one, and the other is subordinate.

3.2. The particle *waxaa* with the short subjective pronouns

As is obvious from the examples (258-260), the SP *waxaa*, like the other sentence particles, can be used either with or without the short subjective pronouns. In adjoining the short subjective pronouns it originates the following sequence of forms:

Singular

1 st pers.	<i>waxaa + aan = waxaan</i>
2 nd pers.	<i>waxaa + aad = waxaad</i>
3 rd pers. masc.	<i>waxaa + uu = wuxuu</i>
3 rd pers. fem.	<i>waxaa + ay = waxay</i>

Plural

1 st pers. (excl.)	<i>waxaa + aan(nu) = waxaan(nu)</i>
1 st pers. (incl.)	<i>waxaa + aynu = waxaynu</i>
2 nd pers.	<i>waxaa + aydin + waxaydin</i> <i>waxaa + aad = waxaad</i>
3 rd pers.	<i>waxaa + ay = waxay</i>

3.2.1. The usage of the SP *waxaa* with or without a short subjective pronoun depends upon which member of the sentence is its logical predicate (rheme). There are two possibilities:

1) If the subject is a logical predicate it follows the verbal predicate, and a short subjective pronoun never joins the SP *waxaa*:

(264) *Cigaal Shiidaad waxaa u soo gurgurtay xaggiisa wiil yar oo uu dhalay oo afar ilig oo yaryari ay u soo baxeen* – A little son for whom four small teeth had just come through crept up to Igal Shidad.

2) If any other DFR is a rheme, the subject precedes the verb and the SP *waxaa* adjoins the short subjective pronouns obligatorily:

(265) *Wiil-Waal wuxuu qabay dhowr haween oo mid uu dhowaan guursaday* – Wiil-Waal had several wives, one of whom he had married recently.

Sentences with the SP *waxaa* and the particle *weeye* (var. *waaye*, *weeyaan* – see 1.6.4) are an exception:

(266) *Niyadaydu waxaa weeye inaan socdaal ku maro Afrika* – I want [lit.: My desire is] to make a trip to Africa.

3.2.2. If the subject is not a logical predicate (rheme) it adjoins (where this is possible) a morphological marker of the subject:

(267) *Ninkaasi/u wuxuu damcay inuu iibiyo xoolihiisa oodhan* – This man intended to sell all his stock.

The presence in a sentence of a substantive subject is not obligatory:

(268) *Waxay tegeen magaalo kale oo suldaan kale uu u taliyo* – They went to another town which was governed by another sultan.

3.3. The particle *waxaa* and the agreement of the predicate with the subject

The agreement of the predicate with the subject in sentences with the SP *waxaa* and the word order depend upon which of its components the sentence particle is

concerned with.

3.3.1. If *waxaa* marks any member of the sentence besides the subject (the subject is not the rheme) the agreement occurs according to the “complete” type, which is characterised by the maximum distinction between persons, genders and numbers, as with the SP *waa*. In this case the normal word order is as follows: the subject/ *waxaa* + a short subjective pronoun/ the verbal predicate/ the member of the sentence which is the rheme:

(269) *Odeyaashu waxay caddeeyeen in loo baahan yahay in nabad la gaaro* –

The elders announced the necessity of establishing peace.

An inverted formation of this sentence is also possible: *waxaa* + a short subjective pronoun/ the verbal predicate/ the subject/ the rheme:

(270) *Waxay caddeeyeen odeyaashu in ... etc.*

The SP *waxaa* with a short subjective pronoun always precedes the predicate though not always immediately; objects, adverbial modifiers of time, place and so on can be placed between them:

(271) *Laanqayrta Casi waxay dadka baahan u geysaneysaa kaalmo degdeg ah*

– The Red Cross is delivering urgent aid to needy people;

(272) *Axmed wuxuu maalintii dambe igu martiqaaday tuuladii uu ku noolaa* –

Next day Ahmed invited me to the village in which he lived;

(273) *Ardo ka kala socotay dalal badani waxay Moosko ku yeesheen shir*

cilmibaaris ah – Students from many countries have held a scientific conference in Moscow.

3.3.2. If the SP *waxaa* marks a subject (i.e. the subject is a rheme) the predicate

agrees with it according to the “clipped” type. But in comparison with the agreement by the SP *baa* emphasising a subject, here a special form is retained only by the 3rd person feminine singular of all types of verbs (except the attributive verbs and the irregular verbs *ahaan* – ‘to be’, *lahaan* – ‘to have’ and *la’aan* – ‘not to have’, all personal forms of which are the same in the Present Tense):

Present General Tense

Waxaa keená/ sameeyá/ qabtá aniga – It is I who bring/ make/ take

Waxaa keená/ sameeyá/ qabtá adiga – It is you (sing.) who bring/ make/ take

Waxaa keená/ sameeyá/ qabtá isaga – It is he who brings/ makes/ takes

Waxaa keentá/ sameysá/ qabatá iyada – It is she who brings/ makes/ takes

Waxaa keená/ sameeyá/ qabta annaga – It is we (excl.) who bring/make/take

Waxaa keená/ sameeyá/qabta innaga – It is we (incl.) who bring/ make/ take

Waxaa keená/ sameeyá/ qabtá idinka – It is you (pl.) who bring/ make/ take

Waxaa keená/ sameeyá/ qabtá iyaga – It is they who bring/ make/ take

Waxaa baahan/ leh aniga – It is I who am hungry/ have

Waxaa baahan/ leh adiga – It is you (sing.) who is hungry/ have

Waxaa baahan/ leh isaga – It is he who is hungry/ has

Waxaa baahan/ leh iyada – It is she who is hungry/ has

Waxaa baahan/ leh annaga – It is we (excl.) who are hungry/ have

Waxaa baahan/ leh innaga – It is we (incl.) who are hungry/ have

Waxaa baahan/ leh idinka – It is you (pl.) who are hungry/ have

Waxaa baahan/ leh iyaga – It is they who are hungry/ have

Past General Tense

Waxaa keenáy/sameeyáy/qabtáy aniga – It was I who brought/made/took

Waxaa keenáy/sameeyáy/qabtáy adiga – It was you (sing.) who brought/made/took

Waxaa keenáy/sameeyáy/qabtáy isaga – It was he who brought/made/took

Waxaa keentáy/sameysáy/qabatáy iyada – It was she who brought/made/took

Waxaa keenáy/sameeyáy/qabtáy annaga – It was we (excl.) who brought/made/took

Waxaa keenáy/sameeyáy/qabtáy innaga – It was we (incl.) who brought/made/took

Waxaa keenáy/sameeyáy/qabtáy idinka – It was you (pl.) who brought/made/took

Waxaa keenáy/sameeyáy/ qabtáy iyaga – It was they who brought/made/took

Waxaa baahnaa/ lahaa aniga – It was I who was hungry/ had

Waxaa baahnaa/ lahaa adiga – It was you (sing.) who were hungry/ had

Waxaa baahnaa/ lahaa isaga – It was he who was hungry/ had

Waxaa baahnayd/ lahayd iyada – It was she who was hungry/ had

Waxaa baahnaa/ lahaa annaga – It was we (excl.) who were hungry/ had

Waxaa baahnaa/ lahaa innaga – It was we (incl.) who were hungry/ had

Waxaa baahnaa/ lahaa idinka – It was you (pl.) who were hungry/ had

Waxaa baahnaa/ lahaa iyaga – It was they who were hungry/ had

Being the rheme the subject does not adjoin morphological markers:

(274) *Magaalada waxaa ku yaal masjid qurxoon* (not *qurxooni*) – A beautiful mosque is situated in the city.

The normal order of words: *waxaa*/ the verbal predicate/ the subject (the rheme). Objects and adverbial modifiers are placed either before the sentence particle (a preferable variant) or between it and the verb:

(275) *Shaleyto Diinsoor waxaa ka yimid nin aanan marna arki jirin* = *Shaleyto waxaa Diinsoor ka yimid nin* etc. = *Waxaa shaleyto Diinsoor ka yimid nin* etc. – Yesterday a man whom I have never seen came from Dinsor.

In a sentence with the indefinite impersonal pronoun *la*, any component which follows the verb becomes its rheme:

(276) *Waxaa la sheegay inay dhoofeen* – They say [lit.: Somebody said] that they have left;

(277) *Soomaaliya waxaa laga helaa Geeska Afrika* – Somalia is situated [lit.: Somebody finds it] in the Horn of Africa.

In (276) a subordinate clause is the rheme, while in (277) it is a modifier of place.

Since in a sentence with the SP *waxaa* the part which follows the verb is the rheme, constructions like:

(278) **Wuxuu u yimi* – He came to (him/her/them) or

(279) **Waxaa u yimid* – (Somebody) came to (him/her/them)

are not possible.

It is necessary to note that the rule saying that if an object is not explicitly expressed it is meant (cf. for example *Wuu u yimid* – He came to him/her/them; *U tag* – Go to him/her/them), here does not work.

3.4. Special cases of the usage of the particle *waxaa*

The SP *waxaa* fulfils a number of special functions:

1) It introduces direct speech with the help of the verb *odhan* – ‘to say’, which belongs to a small group of the Somali “irregular” verbs:

(280) *Wuxuu yidhi: “Berri baan imaneyaa”* – He said: “I shall come tomorrow”.

The second part of this construction (as in this example) can have its own sentence particle. It should be noted that the verb which introduces direct speech can be repeated:

(281) *Dabadeedna dhakhtarkii yidhi, wuxuu yirhi: “Haddaad jirran tahay waa inaad guriga joogtaa oo shaqada ka fadhiisataa”* – Then the doctor said: “If you are ill stay at home and do not go to work”.

In the first usage, *yidhi* is the verb of the relative clause of which the subject is the word ‘doctor’, and in the second it is the verb of the main sentence with the same subject [lit.: Then the doctor who said, he said: “If you are ill ... etc.”].

2) It is a component of the formula *waxaa la yidhi* – It was said [lit.: Somebody

said] which opens every Somali folktale or proverb:

(282) *Waxaa la yidhi, waxaa jirey oday wax garad ah oo la yidhaahdo Oday-Biiqe* – They say, once upon a time there lived a sage whose name was Oday-Biiqe.

(283) *Waxaa la yidhi, laba ma dhergaan: cilmidoon iyo hantidoon* – They say, two persons will never be sated: he who craves for knowledge and he who craves for wealth. (Proverb)

3) In combination with the subjective pronoun of the 2nd person singular or plural and a verb in the Present General Tense, it conveys the meaning of the imperative mood; the usual method of forming this is the basic form of the verb for the 2nd person singular, and the same form plus the suffix *-a* for the 2nd person plural:

(284) *Muus keen!* – Bring (sing.) a banana!

alternatively

Waxaad keentaa muus! – Bring a banana! [lit.: You bring a banana].

(285) *Guriga gala oo iska nasta!* – Enter (pl.) the house and have a rest!

alternatively

Waxaad gashaan guriga oo iska nasataan – Enter the house and have a rest!
[lit.: You enter the house and have a rest].

3.5. Two points of view on the particle *waxaa*

Some specialists in the Somali language (Bell, 1953; Abraham, 1962; Saeed, 1983 and others) do not attribute *waxaa* to the sentence particles²². In their opinion

²² It is interesting to note that Andrzejewski (1964) who also used to share this point of view, changed it after he had come to know the work of Zholkovsky (1971) – see Andrzejewski (1975).

syntagm formed with the help of *waxaa* belongs to one of the three types of two-part verbless (“cleft”) sentences. The first part of such a sentence consists of the word *waxa* – ‘the thing’, ‘the things’ with a relative clause for which it is a subject, and the second part is a noun or nominal group; it is implied that there is a copula ‘to be’ and the SP *waa* in the sentence:

(286) *Waxaan dooneyaa [waa] caano geel* – I want camel’s milk [lit.: The thing which I want (is) camel’s milk].

(287) *Wuxuu noo loogay [waa] laba wan* – He slaughtered for us two rams [lit.: The things which he slaughtered for us (were) two rams].

(288) *Waxaa naga cararay [waa] dameer iyo saddex qaalmood* – A donkey and three young she-camels ran away from us [lit.: The things which ran away from us (were) a donkey and three young she-camels].

The first part of the sentence is indeed constructed as a relative clause: if it has its own subject a short subjective pronoun is introduced (–*aan* in 286 and –*uu* in 287), and the verb of the relative clause, the subject of which is a determinatum (in this case *waxa*, understood as ‘the things’), always takes a singular form (288).

Such an attitude to *waxa(a)* can be justified by the fact that reference back to the patterns of the formation of subordinate clauses saves the need to formulate special rules for the agreement of a verbal predicate with a subject. Nevertheless one reservation has to be made: where there is a coincidence of the feminine subject with the rheme, the predicate agrees not with *waxa* but with this subject, i.e. the verb takes the form not of the masculine but of the feminine gender:

(289) *Qumbe subag ah waxaa keentay Maryam* – Miriam brought a pot of butter.

The truth is that Lamberti (1982, p.67), who is also an adherent of the traditional approach, with the subject of the 3rd person singular feminine conjugates the verb according to the masculine gender (*Waxaa yimid iyada* – She came). This raises in my mind a serious doubt which paradoxically is shared by Saeed, another advocate of the interpretation of *waxaa* as a word with the meaning of a thing: *Waxa jabtay* (note the feminine!) *silsiladdii* – The chain broke (Saeed, 1983, p.82). On the other hand it seems as if Saeed does not see the difference between the word *waxa* (*wax* – a thing + the article *-a* as in this example) and the lexeme *waxaa*, which has one morpheme (a mora²³) more and which in reality is used for the building of the sentence types under discussion irrespective of any of the theories.

Moreover, the fact that in a verbless sentence the role of the “empty” word is played only by *waxaa* (its synonyms do not have this possibility) means that we are dealing not only with the free usage of the word attached by a relative clause, but with a special type of affirmative sentence.

Indeed, in such sentences as, for example:

(290) *Waxay ka hadleen nabadda* – They talked about peace [lit., according to Bell et al, The thing which they talked about (was) peace] it is impossible to substitute the word *waxa* – ‘the thing’ by, let us say, *arrinta* – ‘the problem’, in order to make what is seemingly an equivalent sentence ‘The problem they talked about (was) peace’. A Somali sentence built in such a way is grammatically incorrect:

(291) **Arrintay ka hadleen nabadda*

²³ A mora is a short vowel sound; a long vowel is equal to two moras and is marked by the reduplication of the corresponding letter: *a-aa*, *e-ee*, *i-ii* etc.

while in the correct version:

(292) *Arrintay ka hadleen waa (= waxaa weeye²⁴) nabadda* there is a sentence particle.

Therefore the rules for the building of an independent sentence must contain instructions for the usage of *waxa* and for the types of agreement with it; this is equal to the introduction into the description of one more sentence particle – *waxaa*.

3.5.1. Also worth mentioning is the “half-semantic” argument which Zholkovsky (1971, p.196) adduced in favour of ranking *waxaa* within the category of sentence particles: “*Waxaa* introduces not only those second parts of the sentence which to some extent are ‘things’ and answer the question ‘who?’ or ‘what?’ , but also the designations of place, time, condition and even subordinate clauses of the “adverbial participle” type: *Waxay guriga weeraareen annagoo meel kale fadhinna*. This, to follow the traditional treatment of *waxaa*, would mean in literal translation ‘The thing [which] they attacked the house we [who] place another were’²⁵ This example demonstrates that *waxa* is used not as a semantic but as a special inflectional quantity demanding any member of the first rank to follow the predicate. It is evident that in such cases there is no question of a “restoration” of, as it were, the omitted element – it is”.

3.5.2. It is worth noting, however, some peculiarities, which distinguish *waxaa* from the other sentence particles. First of all *waxaa* can adjoin attributes (for example *kale* with the meaning of ‘another’ or ‘also’):

²⁴ For *weeye* see the chapter dealing with the SP *waa*.

²⁵ A literary translation would be ‘(When) they attacked (our) house we were in another place’.

(293) *Wuxuu kaloo (kale + the conjunction oo) dooneyaa inuu la yimaaddo qof ii cusub* – Besides he wants to come [lit.: that he should come] with a person whom I do not know.

Secondly the part of the sentence preceding *waxaa* (as in the case of *waa*, but not *baa*) can adjoin the markers of the subject:

(294) *Muuska adduunka ugu macaani wuxuu ka baxaa Soomaaliya* – The sweetest bananas in the whole world grow in Somalia.

For comparison:

(295) *Muuska adduunka ugu macaani waa mid ka baxa Soomaaliya* and

(296) *Muuska adduunka ugu macaan Soomaaliya buu ka baxaa* with the same meaning.

3.6. Sentences with two sentence particles

In sentences with *waxaa* it is possible to use a second sentence particle, either *ayaa* or *baa*, with each of the sentence particles retaining its functions and the peculiarities of its usage. Because, according to my observations, *ayaa* is used more often in this link with *waxaa* than is *baa*, I shall talk in this section basically about the SP *ayaa*.

3.6.1. The SP *ayaa* (or *baa*) always precedes *waxaa*, often immediately:

(297) *Maalin maalmaha ka mid ah ayaa wuxuu ku soo baxay adhi meel daaqaya* – One day he encountered sheep and goats which were grazing in a certain place;

(298) *Markii ay haraggii ka bixisey bay waxay u geysey suldaankii magaaladii ay ku dhaqmeysay* – After having skinned (the leopard) she took the skin to the sultan

of the city she lived in;

(299) *Maalin asagoo meel fadhiya ayaa waxaa u yimid wiil aabbihiis la diley* –

One day when he was sitting in a place he was approached by a boy whose father had been killed;

(300) *Waa baa waxaa jirey nin wiil caasi ah ilmo ku leh* – Once upon a time

there lived a man one of whose sons was disobedient.

A subject, an object or an adverbial modifier (together with their relative clauses) can stand between the sentence particles *ayaa* and *waxaa*:

(301) *Maalin maalmaha ka mid ah ayaa Cigaal Shiidaad iyo naagtiisii oo*

gurgooda jooga waxaa u soo muuqday niman – One day when Igal Shidad and his wife were at home they saw some men [lit.: men appeared in their presence].

3.6.2. The above examples demonstrate that both *ayaa* and *waxaa* can be used with or without short subjective pronouns. The adjoining of short subjective pronouns with *ayaa* produces the following sequence of forms:

Singular

1st pers. *ayaa + aan = ayaan*

2nd pers. *ayaa + aad = ayaad*

3rd pers. masc. *ayaa + uu = ayuu*

3rd Pers. fem. *ayaa + ay = ayay*

Plural

1st pers. (excl.) *ayaa + aan(nu) = ayaan(nu)*

1st pers. (incl.) *ayaa + aynu = ayaynu*

2nd pers. *ayaa + aydin = ayaydin*

ayaa + aad = ayaad

3rd pers. *ayaa + ay = ayay*

The rules for the usage of *ayaa* with and without short subjective pronouns exactly coincide with those described in the chapter on the SP *baa*, and those related to *waxaa* were expounded in 3.2.1.

3.6.3. In the link with *ayaa* the SP *waxaa* adjoins a short subjective pronoun if the subject of the main sentence is not its rheme. As regards the SP *ayaa*, it is, first of all, used mainly with a short subjective pronoun if it is the only representative of the subject:

(302) *Markay tashadeen ayay waxay yidhaahdeen: “Berrito kaalay”* – After taken counsel they said: “Come tomorrow”.

Secondly, *ayaa* never adjoins a short subjective pronoun if it immediately follows the subject:

(303) *Niman ayaa waxay maqleen in Wiil-Waal deeqsi yahay* – Some men have heard that Wiil-Waal is generous.

It should be noted that here the verbal predicate agrees with the subject in gender, person and number (contrary to the case when *ayaa* or *baa* is the only sentence particle in the sentence), i.e. the agreement occurs as if *waxaa* were the main and *ayaa* (*baa*) the subordinate sentence particle.

Thirdly, *ayaa* can be used with or without a short subjective pronoun if the sentence particle does not emphasise the subject which either precedes or follows it:

(304) *Maalin maalmaha ka mid ah Yoonis Tuug sida caadada u ahayd ayaa*

(=ayuu) *wuxuu u baxay meel fog si uu xoolo u soo xado* – One day Yonis Tug as usual went far (from his house) in order to steal (somebody's) stock;

(305) *Markaas ayaa (=ayuu) wiilkii wuxuu ku soo noqday magaaladii aabbihiis uu u talineyey* – Then the boy returned to the town ruled by his father.

But if the subject of the main sentence is its rheme neither *ayaa* nor *waxaa* can adjoin short subjective pronouns:

(306) *Waa ayaa waxaa jiri jirey nin aad u lo' badan* – Once upon a time there was a man who possessed many cows.

It should be remembered that if *waxaa* had not been present in this phrase the SP *ayaa* could have been used, either with or without a short subjective pronoun:

(307) *Waa ayaa jiri jirey nin aad u lo' badan* or

(308) *Waa ayuu jiri jirey nin aad u lo' badan*.

3.6.4. The usage of the SPs *ayaa* and *waxaa* in the same sentence is never obligatory. By shifting, or softening, the logical accent one of them can be removed, and the remaining one conforms to the rules which govern the separate usage of the sentence particles:

(309) *Suldaankii markuu aqalkii soo galay ayuu wuxuu arkay afadiisii oo gogol fadhida* – When the sultan entered the house he saw his wife sitting on a mat.

The same phrase can be transformed into:

(310) *Markuu aqalkii soo galay suldaankii wuxuu arkay afadiisii oo gogol fadhida* or

(311) *Suldaankii markuu aqalkii soo galay ayuu arkay afadiisii oo gogol fadhida*.

Chapter 4. Sentence particles in proverbs and proverbial phrases

4.1. Some peculiarities of Somali paremias

The Greek word *paremia*, which means ‘saying’, ‘parable’, is used in naming different types of proverbs and sayings. In their own designation the Somalis used only two words: *maahmaah* – ‘a proverb’ and *oraah* – ‘a saying’. Some researchers into the national folklore affirm that these differ as to alliteration (*qaafiyad* in Somali)²⁶, the first supposedly having it and the second not. Others call *maahmaah* a “classical” proverb “which contains wisdom or instruction”, and regard *oorah* as something “akin to a figure of speech” (Aden, 1995). In fact, one of the features of many Somali proverbs and proverbial phrases is the occurrence of a minimum of two words beginning with the same sound. Consonants alliterate more often than vowels; all the vowels are regarded as one sound, and *a*, for example, can make up an alliterative sequence with *o*, *e*, etc. In the proverb *Far keliya fool ma dhaqdo* – One finger cannot wash a face, two words have the alliterative sound *f*, and in the proverb *Oohin iyo aroos ammaah weeye* – A funeral means debt and a wedding means debt, there are three words, the initial vowel of one being a long *oo*, while the other two begin with a short *a*. It should be noted that only full-fledged words, that is nouns, verbs, numerals and proper names, are recognized as alliterative ones, and grammatical words, such as sentence particles, are not included. This is why, in the

²⁶ Alliteration is also typical for Somali poetry.

phonetically very beautiful proverb *Biyo badan bar baa calow ah, hadal badanna bar baa been ah* – Much water is half turbid, much talk is half lies, almost all members of which begin with the consonant *b*, a Somali “hears” not eight, but only six, alliterative phonemes, ignoring *b* in two sentence particles.

4.1.1. In several paremias there is also a partial or complete metrical parallelism. To understand this it has to be pointed out that Somali has a system of quantitative scansion where short vowels are always short, including in close syllables, while diphthongs may be either short or long.

In the above mentioned proverb it can be seen that the two halves scan in the following way:

◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ | — ◡ | — ◡
 ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ | ◡ — | — ◡

The first five syllables and the last two are metrically identical, while the middle ones are reversed.²⁷

4.1.2. A disposition toward syntactic parallelism can also be detected: *Nin aan talin jirin hadduu taliyo, nin aan tegi jirin ayaa taga; nin aan qaybin jirin hadduu qaybiyo, nin aan qadi jirin ayaa qada* – If a man who has never governed starts to govern, a man who has never gone away will go away, and if a man who has never divided (food) starts to divide, a man who has never failed to receive (his part) will not receive it.

Although these are important and interesting features of Somali paremias, they

²⁷ This metrical analysis was made by G.Banti.

cannot serve as a basis for classification. It is enough to look at any extended list of Somali proverbs and proverbial phrases to be convinced of the merely incidental importance of such features: paremias with deep meaning but no alliterated words (*Quraanyo aruurtay bulac bay jiiddaa* – Together ants can carry even a lizard), and well-turned but essentially trivial maxims (*Intaadan falin ka fiirso* – Think before you do anything) will immediately reveal themselves. As for syntactic harmony, it is demonstrated mainly by the binomial paremiological structures.

4.2. Types of Somali paremias

According to the theory of cliché elaborated by Permyakov (1970, 1979 and others), the closeness and openness of clichés and the patterns that express their general meaning are relevant for the classification of any paremiological stock, including that of the Somalis.

From the syntactic point of view Somali paremias are divided into two categories: one-phrase clichés and supra-phrase clichés, the former consisting of one sentence and the latter of two (or more) sentences. At the same time one-phrase clichés can be divided into closed sentences, which consist of permanent members only (the proverb class), and open sentences, which are replenished from the speech context (the proverbial phrase class). Supra-phrase clichés are divided into wellerisms²⁸ where a character delivers an aphorism, and scenes which consist of a dialogue between characters.

²⁸ Named after Sam Weller, a character in Dickens's "Pickwick Papers".

Somali paremias express their meaning in three different ways: indirectly (through an image), directly, and through the context from which they were originally taken. In other words, some paremias are clichés with imaged motivation of the general meaning (i.e. sayings with a transferred meaning, which demand a broader interpretation); others are clichés with direct motivation of the general meaning (i.e. sayings with a direct meaning which do, however, allow a broader interpretation); and yet others are clichés without immediate motivation of the general meaning (i.e. sayings, the meaning of which stems neither directly, nor through the image, from the meaning of their components, but is determined by the context from which the sayings were originally taken and which they recall).

Different combinations of the types of syntactic structure and of the character of the motivation of the general meaning result in twelve types of Somali paremiological clichés (six of one-phrase clichés and six of supra-phrase clichés).

I. Proverbs

1) Proverbs proper (clichés in the form of closed sentences with imaged motivation of the general meaning): *Maroodigu takarta saaran ma arkee kan kale tan saaran ayuu arkaa* – An elephant does not see the gadfly which is sitting on it but sees the one sitting on another elephant.

2) Folk aphorisms (clichés in the form of closed sentences with direct motivation of the general meaning): *Been sheeg, laakiin been run u eg sheeg* – Tell lies, but let your lies resemble the truth.

3) Non-divided sentences (clichés in the form of closed sentences without

immediate motivation of the general meaning): *Timirtii horaba dab loo waa* – There is not yet a fire for the first dates [i.e. until one job is completed one should not start another one]. This refers to a story about a man who was given some dates, and not knowing that they are eaten raw decided to fry them; before he had had time to kindle the fire he was given another handful of dates, and he said these words, which became a proverb.

II. Proverbial phrases

4) Proverbial phrases proper (clichés in the form of open sentences with imaged motivation of the general meaning): *Markii geel loo heeso yuu dameerro u heesaa* – When all (the people) sing for camels, he sings for donkeys [i.e. not to the point].

5) By-words (clichés in the form of open sentences with direct motivation of the general meaning): *Camalkaa xeero buuxduu kaa qadiyaa* – With your obstinacy you can lose a basin of food [i.e. with such a character as yours you can harm yourself].

6) Non-divided phrases (clichés in the form of open sentences without immediate motivation of the general meaning): “*Yax*” *lahaydaa!* – I should have said “Whoa!” This refers to a story about a herdsman whose herd strayed into a forest while he was sleeping, and all were torn to pieces by wild beasts. When he awoke and realized what had happened he grieved for a long time, saying to himself “I should have said “Whoa!” [i.e. stopped the herd in time].

III. Wellerisms

7) Wellerisms with transferred meaning (clichés with imaged motivation of the general meaning; where a character delivers an aphorism): *Goroyo waxay tiri: “Cayaarta lug baan gashanayaa. Haddii ay fiicnaatana waan la soo wada geleyaa, haddii ay xumaatana waan kala wada baxayaa.”* – An ostrich said: “I’ll put only one leg in this game. If it’s good, I’ll put another one in; if it’s bad, I’ll take back the first one”.

8) Wellerisms with direct meaning (clichés with direct motivation of the general meaning; where a character delivers an aphorism): *Shabeel baa beri libaax ku yidhi: “Libaaxow, bal ama boqol nin la xoog noqo, ama boqol nin la xirrib noqo”* – Once a leopard said to a lion: “Oh lion, either be as strong as a hundred men or as cunning as a hundred men”.

9) Contextual wellerisms (clichés without immediate motivation of the general meaning; where a character delivers an aphorism): *Abeeso waxay tidhi: “Aadane abaal ma leh”* – A snake said: “A human being is ungrateful”. This refers to a story about a man who was lying asleep when a snake crept up to him, and when he awoke, although it had done him no harm, he tried to kill it.

IV. Scenes

10) Fablettes (clichés with transferred meaning containing dialogue):

– *Raahow, biyo maxay taraan?*

– *Dabadayda baa laga arki lahaa.*

– Oh frog, is it good to be in water?

– If it had been good I would have had (a fat) bottom.

11) Instantly told (one scene) anecdotes (clichés with direct meaning

containing dialogue):

– *Geeriyey, maxaad ka daawo tahay?*

– *Nin meel waayay baan meel u banneeyaa.*

– Oh, death, who needs you [lit.: whom do you help]?

– He, who is not yet born [lit.: someone who has no place on earth yet].

12) Non-divided scenes (clichés without immediate motivation of the general meaning containing dialogue):

“Sagaaro biyo waa cabta” iyo “Ma cabto”.

– Dik-dik drinks water!

– No, it does not!

The meaning is that a trifle can start a big quarrel, and it refers to two friends who disagreed and nearly killed each other over the question of whether the dik-dik drinks water or not.

4.3. Preliminary notes on research into the sentence particles in proverbs and proverbial phrases

Paremiyas are an indispensable source of materials for the study of the processes connected with the diachronic development of a language. The clichéized form of the paremiyas guarantees the trustworthiness of the information concerning the state of the language at the moment they entered the speech practice of its bearers, and their preservation is secured by their constant functioning which, in its turn, is explained by their signal nature.

As signs and models of certain situations, or certain relationships between objects, paremias are necessary and convenient elements of any language, including Somali. Instead of having to describe in one's own words some everyday situation, or relationship between objects, such as for example 'if a man acts alone, he cannot do much, and his efforts will not be effective' it is enough to bring out from the memory a set form of words (a cliché) and say: *One finger cannot wash a face* (if you are a Somali), *One finger cannot catch a fly* (if you are an Oromo) or *One man on the battlefield is not a warrior* (if you are a Russian).

4.3.1. Paremias occupy a special place in the Somali culture, which has only recently become written. One well-known Somali proverb goes: *Rag waa raggii hore, hadalna waa intuu yidhi* – Real men are the men of old, and real words were those they pronounced. Eloquence based on a deep knowledge of folklore is valued as highly as courage is by the Somalis, and the 'truthfulness' of paremias is considered to be beyond doubt: *Soomaalidu been waa sheegtaa, beense ma maahmaahdo* – Somalis can lie, but their lie will never become a proverb.

For this reason, in Somalia there is a carefully-preserved, though unwritten, 'copyright' of authorship which applies not only to passages of poetry but also to items of folklore. It goes without saying that the names of the creators of the main stock of Somali proverbs are not known, but the originators of 'literary quotations', that is well-turned lines of poetry and witty remarks (indistinguishable sometimes from paremias) of fairly recent origin are known well. It is no wonder that, unlike the indefinite personal construction *Waxaa la yidhi* – It was said, which, as was mentioned in 3.4, opens every proverb and proverbial phrase, the formula when

introducing such a “quotation” includes the name of its author: *Hebel baa yidhi*, or *Hebel wuxuu yidhi* – So-and-so said. The clichés of this type which are also present in my collection are not included in the material investigated in Chapter 4.

4.3.2. It is known that paremias are divided into two communicative types, depending on the aim of the utterance. Proverbs and proverbial phrases in the form of affirmative sentences belong to the first type (*Af macaan gacan macaan baa dhaanta* – A sweet [i.e. generous] hand is better than a sweet [i.e. generous with promises] mouth), while those in the form of negative sentences make up the second (*Doqon iyo naag nimay legdaan kama kacaan* – A fool and a woman will not get off the man they have brought down).

Because I have limited this study to affirmative sentences, paremias which belong to the second type will not be analysed. Although the SP *baa* can participate in the formation of negative constructions (*Calool cir weyn way dheregtaa e indho cir weyn baan (baa+aan) dhergin* – A gluttonous stomach can be sated, gluttonous [i.e. covetous] eyes cannot), in the majority of them there are no sentence particles. This is also true with regard to paremias in the form of interrogative sentences.

As for the variety of paremiological types demonstrated in 4.2, it is possible to limit myself to an investigation of the first six in the list of proverbs and proverbial phrases, that is the closed and open phrase clichés which constitute, according to my calculation, about 90% of the Somali paremiological stock.

Wellerisms and scenes also contain sentence particles, but their function in the separate components of these types of clichés does not differ from what can be

observed in proverbs and proverbial phrases. Moreover, due to the relatively large size of their syntactic structures (which is doubled by the translations), these paremias are not the best illustrative material.

4.3.3. Since the following parts of this chapter deal precisely with proverbs and proverbial phrases the coincidence of the significatum (of these two types of clichés) with the significant (with these two terms usually used for the designation of all types of paremias) turns out to be absolute. In other words I use the terms ‘proverb’ and ‘proverbial phrase’ in their exact meaning, the deciphering of which was given in 4.2. The further subdivision of these paremias into their sub-types seems to be superfluous for the declared goals of the investigation.

4.3.4. The next three parts of this chapter are devoted to particularities of the usage of the sentence particles *waa* and *baa* in proverbs and proverbial phrases, and of *waxaa* in different types of paremias, or to put it another way, to particularities of proverbs, proverbial phrases and some other paremias dependent on the type of sentence particles used in them. In the last part of the chapter I shall discuss paremias without sentence particles.

4.4. The particle *waa* in proverbs and proverbial phrases

In proverbs and proverbial phrases the SP *waa* is met with more rarely than is *baa*; to judge by my collection, it is contained in only about a hundred out of a thousand paremias. Practically all are proverbs, i.e. clichés of the closed type which occur in speech in an invariable form:

(312) *Dameertu geela ha iga didisee waa sii ‘qururuf’ leedahay* – It is not

enough that the she-donkey has dispersed my camels, but she is snorting as well. [Said about a person who has not only made a bad action but is also expressing his discontent];

(313) *Atoor sagaaro intiisa waa ku duq* – Even though a male dik-dik is small, he is old;

(314) *Beeni marka hore waa malab, marka dambana waa malmal* – At first a lie is honey, then it is myrrh [i.e. bitterness].

4.4.1. Proverbial sentences are divided into two classes, particular and general; the former narrates events of a particular, occasional or unique nature, while the latter deals with a certain regularity, a constantly repeated phenomenon, or a stable rule or habit (Permyakov, 1970, p.10).

According to the observations of paremiologists, proverbs possess a higher degree of generalisation than do proverbial phrases, and this is true of the subjects of my research. Somali proverbs are realized in both definite-personal and indefinite personal constructions (with the indefinite personal pronoun *la*). If the predicate of a proverbial sentence is a verb it is as a rule in the Present General Tense.

Somali proverbs, in particular those which include the SP *waa*, belong mainly to generalised paremias. I have ascertained that the level of their generalisation depends on the function fulfilled by the SP *waa*. If it is a focus marker (as in 312) the level of generalisation is lower, if it introduces a nominal predicate (as in 313 and 314) it is higher. Because in the overwhelming majority of paremias the SP *waa* plays precisely this latter role, it can be considered, firstly, as a marker of a proverb

and secondly, with a high degree of probability, as a marker of a generalised, not a particular, paremia.

4.4.2. The not very numerous exclusions are represented by comparative phrases in the form of by-words:

(315) *Waa awr heeryadiisii cuneya oo kale* – Like a burden camel which chews its own pack-pad. [Said about a man who harms himself];

(316) *Waa biyo sare tegey* – Like water which flows upward. [Said about an incredible event];

(317) *Waa sidii waraabe waxartii laysay, oohinna ku dartay* – Like a hyena which ate a kid and (then) mourned over it. [Said about a hypocrite].

Comparative phrases consist of the SP *waa* and a noun in the role of a predicate with the attached relative clause. It is worth noting that in almost all structures of this type the subject of the relative clause is the determined word itself (a burden camel which chews, water which flows or a hyena which ate), which explains the absence of short subjective pronouns. But such pronouns are omitted even where they should have been used, for example, in the following paremia of the same meaning as (316):

(318) *Waa calaacashoo timo ka baxaan* – Like a palm on which hairs are growing.

In the relative clause to the word *calaacasha* – the palm (in the proverb it adjoins the conjunctive *oo* – which) there is its own subject, *timo* – hairs, which should have been echoed by the short subjective pronoun *ay* – they. But in the spoken language such a pronoun is often omitted if it is not the single subject of a

subordinate syntagm. Its absence from the example under observation is explained by this; in speech, paremias acquire a certain perfection of form characterised by laconicism.

Not all phrases of this type end in the conjunction *oo* and the quantifier adjective *kale* with the meaning of ‘like’ (315). If there is no such link it is either implied (316, 318) or substituted by the noun *sida* (= *sidii*) with the same meaning (317).

Being a comparison phrase, this paremiological type is, in fact, an independent syntactic structure. Two factors allow its attribution to by-words: firstly, the openness of its syntactic structure, implying the possibility, even necessity, of being broadened at the expense of the subject (*Moxamed waa awr heeryadiisii cunaya oo kale* – Mohamed is like a burden camel which chews its own pack-pad) and secondly, the direct motivation of the general meaning, which does not cease to be so despite the fact that almost all the words of this cliché are used as metaphors.

4.4.3. The SP *waa* in proverbial structures demonstrates at least two special peculiarities:

1) It mainly introduces a nominal predicate:

(319) *Af daboolan waa dahab* – A closed mouth is gold;

(320) *Adduunyo waa hooska labadiisa gelin* – The world is like a shadow: in the morning it is turned in one direction, in the evening in the opposite one [i.e. it is changeable];

(321) *Ninkii reerkiisa kaa sooraa waa nin, ninkii reer kale kaa sooraana waa nimanyaal* – He who fed you in his house is a man, but he who fed you in somebody

else's house is twice a man [lit.: men].

2) It almost never adjoins short subjective pronouns:

(322) *Been waa ku qadeysiisaa, kumase cashaysiiso* – A lie will give you a dinner, but will not give you a supper [i.e. you will not be able to cheat people twice];

(323) *Hugaagu waa kula baryo tagaa* – A beggar is treated according to his clothes [lit.: Your clothes go begging with you];

(324) *Hadal aadan filayn iyo fallaarba waa ku aammusiyaan* – An unexpected word is like an arrow – it will force you to remain silent.

The explanation of the first peculiarity seems to be concealed in the capacity of these particular structures to create clichés of the general type, which in fact these proverbs are. The second peculiarity is connected with the fact that in proverbs a substantive subject is almost inevitable. As was shown in 1.3 and 1.6.2, with such a subject the usage of *waa* with short subjective pronouns is either optional (where the role of the predicate is played by a verb), or prohibited (where the dominant element of the predicate is represented by a noun). The non-standard behaviour of the SP *waa* in proverbs reveals itself in the omission of the subjective pronouns even in those positions in which their usage is allowed.

4.4.4. The shaping of the subject in proverbial structures with the SP *waa* also differs from that described in Chapter 1.

Firstly, it seldom adjoins the morphological markers of a subject:

(325) *Aammusnaan waa oggolaansho barkeed* – Silence is half a consent;

(326) *Dhagax taabasho iyo tuujin waa isugu mid* – It is all the same to a stone whether you touch it or squeeze it [i.e. it does not matter];

(327) *Aqoonla'aan waa iftiinla'aan* – The absence of knowledge equals the absence of light.²⁹

Secondly, and most strikingly, the subject in proverbs with the SP *waa* is almost always used without the definite article (cf.1.2).

(328) *Laf kaa weyni waa ku jebisaa* – If a bone is bigger than you it will crush you [i.e. if somebody is stronger than you he will defeat you];

(329) *Calool rag waa webi xagaa* – The brain [lit.: stomach] of a man is like a river-bed in the dry season³⁰;

(330) *Hadal waa mergi hadba meel u jiidma* – A word is like sinew: it stretches in every direction.

4.4.5. It was said in 0.3.6 that the compound conjunction *ama...ama* – either ...or links verbs. A closer look at proverbs:

a) confirms this observation:

(331) *Ama buur ahow, ama buur ku tiirsanow* – Either be a mountain or lean on a mountain;

b) widens it by revealing examples of the binomial syntactic structures in the second part of which a verb can be omitted:

(332) *Ama afeef hore lahaw, ama adkeysi dambe* – Either refuse (to do something) at once or put up with it later;

c) changes the conception of the limits of the usage of this conjunction which,

²⁹ We do, however, know a variant of this proverb in which the subject is used with the marker of nominative case: *Aqoonla'aani waa iftiinla'aan*.

³⁰ According to Somali ideas the stomach, with the chest, is the main depository of the intellect. During the dry season heavy rains sometimes fall and fill the dry river-beds.

it becomes clear, can link even independent sentences:

(333) *Nin salaan badani waa sabool ama waa wadaad, ama waa ciidan, ama waa beenaale* – He who is too affable is either a beggar, a mullah, a servant, or a liar;

(334) *Ama waa la muuqdaa, ama waa la maqan yahay* – Either be visible or be absent [lit.: either somebody is visible or somebody is absent, i.e. either do a job well or not at all].

4.4.6. Judging by the material which is at my disposal the rules of the usage of the particle *weeye* in proverbial clichés do not differ from those described in 1.6.4:

(335) *Gowrac hal weeye, halka geelse gooni weeye* – It is one thing to slaughter (cattle in general), quite another to slaughter camels.

The presence of the two particles can be explained by the structure of this cliché, which consists of two independent sentences linked by the conjunction *-se* (*geelse* – lit.: camels-but).

4.5. The particle *baa* in proverbs and proverbial phrases

The SP *baa* is used in paremias far more often than are other sentence particles. *Baa* (and its variants *ayaa/yaa*) is found in all proverbs and proverbial phrases in the form of independent affirmative sentences, with the exception of the relatively small class of paremias with the SP *waa*, the not very numerous clichés with the SP *waxaa* and the even less widespread structures without sentence particles. *Baa* can be seen in all the types of paremias which were defined in 4.2.

4.5.1. Word order in proverbs and proverbial phrases with the SP *baa* is fairly strictly regulated in comparison with the similar non-clichéized structures (see 2.4).

If in a paremia there is a subject, an object and a predicate and the subject is the rheme (i.e. the subject is immediately followed by the SP *baa*), the object occupies the initial position:

(336) *Sir-ma-qabe saab baa biyo u celiya* – For an honest man even a *saab*³¹ holds water.

(337) *Dad nin u taliyey iyo nin tuugay baa yaqaan* – People are known to the man who governs them and to the man who begs from them;

(338) *Rag qabri iyo qawl baa ka hara* – Of a man, a tomb and (good) fame [lit.: a word] remain.

When the subject precedes the object the following word order is allowed:

(339) *Dimbil baa duur wada gubta* – One spark burns a whole forest;

(340) *Bir baa bir goysa* – Iron cuts iron.

The clipped form of the verb with the final short *-a* indicates that the word which precedes the SP *baa* is the subject here, not the word which follows it (see 2.5.2).

(341) *Fakhri baa duco ku bara* – Poverty will teach you to bow [lit.: to bless].

However, of the paremias that I know, not a single one demonstrates another permitted order of the components of a threefold structure (not counting the SP *baa* which fulfils an auxiliary function) with the subject occupying the first position and the object the final one:

(342) **Fakhri baa ku bara duco*.

Thus the considerable difference between paremias of this type, in which the

³¹ *Saab* is an openwork wicker frame for holding a water-jar.

SP *baa* marks the subject, and similar non-clichéized structures, lies in the position of the predicate: in proverbs and proverbial phrases it is always in the final position. The other distinctive sign (less significant but perceptible) reveals itself in the ‘behaviour’ of the object: in paremias it strives for the first place.

4.5.2. Results which are no less interesting can be obtained by observation of the paremias in which an object, or any other DFR except the subject, is the rheme, i.e. of the proverbs and proverbial phrases in which the SP *baa* is used with short subjective pronouns:

(343) *Diqsi biyo ku dabaal bartay fuud buu ku gubtaa* – A fly which has got used to bathing in water will be boiled in soup;

(344) *Baqal fardo la daaqday faras bay is moodda* – A mule which grazes with horses thinks it is a horse too;

(345) *Belaayo ama ‘guur’ ama ‘guurso’ bay ku tiraahdaa* – Misfortune tells you either to move on or to get married.

In all these typical examples the word order is the same: the cliché begins with a subject (in 343 and 344 followed by a relative clause) which is followed by an object and the SP *baa* with a corresponding short subjective pronoun, and ends with a predicate. Thus, out of the three possible interpositions of the components demonstrated in 2.4.3 for the ‘parallel’ non-clichéized structures, in practice only one is realized in proverbs and proverbial phrases. We have not found a single paremia in which a subject would follow a predicate (as in 194), and paremias in which a subject follows an object (as in 193) are very rare:

(346) *Ninba dhuuniguu cuno buu dhiiggiisa leeyahay* – What a man eats gets

into his blood [lit.: Blood of every man has that food which he eats]. This means that if a man has good food he looks good and if he has bad food he looks bad.

In this proverb, with a rather complicated syntactic structure, including inversion (*Ninba dhuuniguu cuno* – Every man the food which he eats, but not *Dhuuniga uu ninba cuno* – The food which every man eats), the subject of the main sentence (the blood) is bound up, by the relation of possessiveness, with the subject of the relative clause (every man) which determines the object (food). The place of the possessed, which here plays the role of the subject, seems to be determined by the structure of the text itself. At any rate, in another proverb with exactly the same syntax, the possessed (this time in the role of the object) also occupies the position between the SP *baa* with a short subjective pronoun and the predicate:

(347) *Ninba coodkuu dhaqdo buu caanihiisa dhamaa* – Every man drinks the milk of the cattle he looks after.

4.5.3. The word order in those not very numerous paremias which have the subject as rheme and two objects (or other DFRs), is the same, in general, as those with only one: objects occupy the first place, with sometimes an indirect object preceding a direct one and sometimes the other way round, then come the subject, marked by the SP *baa* without a short subject pronoun, and the predicate:

(348) *Dheriga karka kulayl baa ka keenay* – It was heat that made the cooking-pot boil [lit.: The heat brought boiling from the cooking-pot]. This means that there was a certain reason which made someone angry.

The disposition of the components in paremias which have two objects (or

other DFRs), one of which bears the logical accent and is therefore marked by the SP *baa* with a short subjective pronoun, resembles what was said in 4.5.2 about clichés with one object.

The second object, direct or indirect, is usually placed between the sentence particle and the predicate:

(349) *Beenlow nin dhintey iyo nin dheer buu markhaati u qabsadaa* – A liar calls as witness one who is either dead or far away.

But exceptions can also occur; in at least one proverb the subject and the first object change places:

(350) *Nin wuxuu xarrago moodaa nin kale xumaan moodaa* – What one man is proud of another is ashamed of [lit.: A thing which one man considers to be good another considers to be bad].

It seems that here the canon has been broken for the sake of achieving the maximum phonetic, lexical and syntactic balance between the two parts of the proverb. This is due to the obvious possibilities of inversion (*Nin wuxuu* – ‘One man a thing which’ instead of the more natural *Wuxuu nin* – ‘A thing which one man’), the dropping of the short subjective pronoun (as was shown in 2.3.2 and 2.4, its usage in such structures is optional), and the fusion of the SP *baa* with the last word of the relative clause (*moodo* + *baa* = *moodaa*), which results in a form indistinguishable from the verbal predicate of the main sentence (*moodaa*).

4.5.4 The word order in those quite widespread paremias with the impersonal pronoun *la* is determined by its fixed position relative to the sentence particle and the predicate (*la* stands between them, adjoining the preverbs of governance). In this

case objects and other DFR are placed only before the SP *baa*:

(351) *Cadowgaaga caano mac baa la siiyaa* – An enemy should be treated to fresh milk [i.e. should be treated as a valued guest so as to lessen his vigilance];

(352) *Hadal been ah dheg been ah baa lagu dhegeystaa* – False speech is listened to with a false ear;

(353) *Dantaada maqaar ey baa loogu seexdaa* – In striving for gains one will sit even on a dogskin³².

4.5.5. Among Somali proverbs there are some structures, by no means rare, which are composed of two syntactically independent parts, both including the SP *baa*, which are linked by the conjunctions *na* or *se* with the meaning of ‘and’, ‘but’:

(354) *Cid wax ku siisa in badan baad aragtaa, cid wax kuu sheegtase in yar baad aragtaa* – People who can give you a (necessary) thing you meet often, but people who can give you (necessary) advice you meet seldom [this is why good advice is so highly appreciated];

(355) *Ciil sokeeye kaa galay carrabkaa (carrabka + baa) lagu baxshaa, ciil shisheeye kaa galayna cududdaa (cududda + baa) lagu baxshaa* – One gets rid of an offence caused by one’s own people with a word [lit.: tongue], but one gets rid of an offence caused by other people with force [lit.: hand];

However, very often the SP *baa* and the verbal predicate in the second part of such paremias are omitted:

(356) *Dhagax meel dhow buu ku dhacaa, dhawaaqna meel dheer* – A stone

³² According to Muslim ideas a dog is a dirty animal, so after having touched one, the ‘defiled’ spot needs repeated ablutions.

flies [lit.: falls] near, a word [lit.: a sound] far off.

This happens even when the subjects of the two parts of a proverb are not of the same gender, and the missing verb would not have been identical to the one present:

(357) *Dhib dheef baa ka dambeysa, abaarna aaran* – *A poor life is followed by a prosperous life, a drought – by green grass;*

(358) *Hadal run baa lagu caddeeyaa, ilkana rummay* – Truth makes to shine speech, rummay³³ – teeth.

4.5.6. As was seen in examples (350) and (355), the SP *baa* can merge with the preceding word which is either the rheme itself (355) or which finalises a subordinate clause attached to the rheme (350). The sentence particle loses its initial consonant *b*, and the contracted word its final short vowel.

That these phonemes are dropped is evident from the following examples of contractions using the SP *baa* together with the short subjective pronoun in the 3rd person masculine singular – *buu*:

(359) *Dagaal gondahaaguu (gondahaaga + buu) ka dhashaa* – A war can jump out from under your feet [lit.: can be born under your feet]. This means: get ready for unexpected troubles.

Bell (1953, p.35) observed this phenomenon in oral communication and ascertained that a contraction does not occur if the word preceding the SP *baa* ends in a long vowel or in any consonant. Moreover, if the last phoneme of this word is a

³³ A twig used by Somalis to clean the teeth.

short *-i*, the contraction is not obligatory.

The study of paremias confirms and widens these observations. Firstly, in proverbs and proverbial phrases, contraction of the SP *baa*, with or without a subjective pronoun with the stressed words, is always optional. This becomes evident:

1) When variants of the same paremia are compared:

(360) *Beentaada hore runtaada danbay (danbe + baa + ay) u baas baxdaa;*

(361) *Beentaada hore beentaada danbe bay baas u noqotaa* – Your previous lie damages your present truth.

(362) *Ri' waliba shillalkay is dhigtaa (digto + baa) lagu qalaa;*

(363) *Ri' walba shillakay is digato baa lagu qalaa* – Every she-goat is slaughtered where she is standing on the board [i.e. everyone gets what he merits].

(364) *Geed walba in gubtaa (gubta + baa) hoos taal;*

(365) *Geed walba in gubta baa hoos taal* – Under every tree there is something which hampers its growth [lit.: burns it].

2) When separate proverbs are examined:

(366) *Ammaano kugu raagtay yeddaa baad moodda* – Property deposited with you for safekeeping a long time ago feels like your own;

(367) *Ballan habeen kallah arooryo buu leehayay* – What was promised in the evening should be fulfilled [lit.: set off] in the morning;

(368) *Deeqsi baa loo duceeya* – A generous man is prayed for.

It also becomes apparent that the SP *baa* can be adjoined by words which end in:

1) The glottal consonant *h*, which is reduced in the final position in the verbal forms *ah* – ‘being’ and *leh* – ‘having’:

(369) *Baruur keliyaa (keli ah + baa → keli + aa → keliyaa) baruuro qurmisa*

– One piece of fat spoils many pieces;

(370) *Ninkii xoog laa (leh + baa → l + aa → laa) xaq leh* – He who has strength has right.

2) The semi-vowel sonant *y*:

(371) *Meel lagaa jecel yahay haddaad ka tagto, meel lagaa neceb yahaad (yahay + baa + aad → yahaad) tagtaa* – If you leave a place where you are loved you will come to a place where you are hated.

It is also worthy of mention that in (369) and (370) *h* is “ignored” and the preceding phonemes, *a* and *e*, participate in the contraction, and in (371) the phoneme *b* of the sentence particle interacts with the diphthong *ay* of the verb *yahay* – (he) is.

Contractions with the SP *ayaa*, a variant of *baa*, with the preceding word have not been observed:

(372) *Dhubuq-dhubuq hore dhabanno-hays dambay (dambe + bay) leedahay* – He who makes haste at the beginning will hold his head in his hands at the end.

(373) *Dhubuq-dhubuq hore dhabanno-hays dambe ayay leedahay.*

4.6. The particle *waxaa* in proverbs and proverbial phrases

Of the sentence particles, *waxaa* is the one most seldom used in proverbs. This can be explained by the specificity of the sentence particle itself, which serves mainly for the creation of complex sentences, and by that of paremias which, with some

exceptions, represent simple syntactical structures. Inasmuch as functionally the SP *waxaa* is similar to the SP *baa* (they both realize the same types of focus – actantial and circumstantial), the place it might have taken in paremias is, as a rule, occupied by *baa*. In the preference which is given to the SP *baa* a part is also played by the above-mentioned ability of this particle to disappear, as it were, by merging with the marked words, a process which saves the “building material” of the proverbial structures.

Typical sayings with the SP *waxaa* contain one or several dependent clauses:

(374) *Belaayo waxay u daran tahay marka reer aad mijihiisa tahay ay madax kaaga dhigto* – Misfortune is when a reer³⁴ in which you are a leg [i.e. occupy a subordinate position] makes you a head [i.e. a chief];

(375) *Rag waxaa ugu xun saddex: nin maqan oon la tebin, nin jooga oon la tirin iyo nin tegeya oon la celin* – Of all men, three types are the worst: he who is not remembered when absent, he who is ignored when present, and he who is not stopped when departing;

(376) *Maalintii col loo joogo labo nin lalama tashado – fuley iyo geesi ee waxaa lala tashadaa nin caaqil ah* – When the (attack of) an enemy is expected one does not seek advice from a coward or a brave man, but from a wise man.

As we see, in proverbial sentences the SP *waxaa* is used with a short subjective pronoun (example 374 in which the subject is not the rheme), without a short subjective pronoun (example 375 in which the subject is the rheme) and with the indefinite personal pronoun *la* which is never the rheme (example 376).

³⁴ Here: clan, tribe.

4.6.1. Among the items of Somali folklore there is a number of “numerical” clichés traditionally attributed to proverbs. A careful observation of the so-called *labaley*, *saddexley*, *afarley* (clichés based on numbers ‘two’, ‘three’, ‘four’) and so on, reveals that they are not homogeneous. Some are typical proverbs (375), others are riddles (often with answers), or fablettes etc. Without going into the problem of the classification of the “numerical” clichés I shall only mention that some are one-phrase and others supra-phrase structures, and that both are rather complicated syntactical formations in which, however, the SP *waxaa* is almost never used:

(377) *Laba waa la dhibaa, labana waa la dhowraa, labana waa la dheefiyaa. Hadday lugaha wax ka gaaraan waa la dhibaa, labada gacmood hadday wax gaaraan waa la dhowraa, labada indhoodna hadday wax gaaraan waa la dheefiyaa* – Two (things) are not spared, two are cared for and two are gratified. When legs are tired they are not spared [i.e. they are forced to go on], when hands are tired they are cared for [i.e. they are given rest], when eyes are tired they are gratified [i.e. they are cured];

(378) *Saddex baa maskiin ah, saddex baase ka sii maskiinsan. Meyd baa maskiin ah, ninkii maro u waayo baa ka sii maskiinsan; tuugsade baa maskiin ah, ninkii taano u waayo baa ka sii maskiinsan; naag baa maskiin ah, ragannimo ninkii u waayo baa ka sii maskiinsan* – Three (things) gain sympathy, three gain pity. A dead man gains sympathy, the man [i.e. kinsman] who is not able to get a shroud for him gains pity; a beggar gains sympathy, the man who is not able to give him anything [lit.: a five cent coin] gains pity; a woman gains sympathy, the man who is not able to

satisfy her gains pity.

The usage (though seldom) of the SP *waxaa* can be explained by the desire to avoid the frequent repetition of other sentence particles at least in one part of a “numerical” cliché:

(379) *Raggu waxay u kala baxaan afar: nin af garad ah oo is mooda nimaan wax garad ahayn – kaasi waa caaqil ee gar siiya; nin jaahil ah oo is og inuu jaahil yahay – kaas wax bara; nimaan wax garad ahayn oo is mooda inuu wax garad yahay – kaasi waa badow madax adag ee ka dheeraada; nin wax garad ah oo is og inuu wax garad yahay – kaasi waa caaqil ee qaddariya* – Men are of four types: one knows much but thinks that he knows little – he must be given his dues; another knows little and understands that he knows little – he must be taught; the third knows little but thinks that he knows much – this stubborn ignoramus must be avoided; the fourth knows much and understands that he knows much – he must be respected.

4.6.2. Among the printed sources of paremias which are at my disposal there is an eclectic collection by Abdurahman Aden (1995) which rather stands apart. It mainly contains a number of previously published proverbs existing in the *Maxaad-tiri* dialects, supplemented with others collected in Mogadishu, the inhabitants of which speak the *Ashraf* dialect (see 0.1.1). The noticeable syntactical peculiarity of the original part of the material is a frequent usage of the SP *waxaa*. For example, the only one out of a great number of variations of the proverb ‘It was heat that made the cooking-pot boil’ (see 348) which contains the SP *waxaa* was recorded in the main Somali city:

(380) *Dheriga karkarka waxaa ka keenay kulaylka.*

The same source provides further examples in which the necessity of the usage of the SP *waxaa* from the point of view of the above-described “paremiological norm” is not evident:

(381) *Dhallinyaro waxaa ah ruux aan rafaad arag* – A young man [lit.: youth] is one who has not learnt suffering;

(382) *Gef waxaa u weyn gefafka dadka kale* – The most unpardonable [lit.: the biggest] mistake is that of other people;

(383) *Beenlow waxaa sira xasuus-xumi* – A liar is betrayed by a bad memory.

It is necessary to point out the somewhat “bookish” nature of the urban paremias, the majority of which are sayings with a direct meaning, i.e. are not proverbs proper, but folk aphorisms (see 4.2).

4.7. Paremias without sentence particles

In his review of “Somali Proverbs and Sayings” (Kapchits, 1983) Andrzejewski (1986) attracted the attention of linguists to “archaic grammatical forms which, paradoxically enough, form part of everyday language and are commonly used in conversations and in the mass media. A good example of this are those verbal and verbal-adjectival forms which exclude the occurrence of focus indicators (*baa*, *ayaa*, *waxaa* and *waa*) in declarative sentences such as for example *Ayax teg eelna reeb* – ‘Locusts go away but leave damage behind’ and *Tuug wax ka tuhun badan* – ‘A thief is more suspicious than anyone else’. In Kapchits’ collection 7 per cent of all the items contain such grammatical forms, while normally focus

indicators are obligatory in all declarative sentences.”

Teg and *reeb* in the first proverb are the forms of the 3rd person masculine singular of verbs *tag* – ‘go’ and *reeb* – ‘leave’ in the so-called Past Independent Tense and *badan* in the second proverb is the form of the 3rd person masculine singular of the attributive verb *badan* – ‘be numerous’ in the Present Comparative Tense (the terminology of Andrzejewski, 1969).

4.7.1. Personal verbal forms in the Past Independent Tense, now found mainly in folklore texts (see, however, 118) differ from the corresponding forms in the Past General Tense either by tone or by a combination of tone and suffixes. This can be clearly seen by the following example of the conjugations of verbs from the three main verbal classes which have already been mentioned: *keen* – bring, *samee* – make and *qabo* – take:

Past General Tense

Singular

1 st pers.	<i>keenay/ sameeyey/ qabtay</i>
2 nd pers.	<i>keentay/ sameysey/ qabatay</i>
3 rd pers. masc.	<i>keenay/ sameeyey/ qabtay</i>
3 rd pers. fem.	<i>keentay/ sameysey/ qabatay</i>

Plural

1 st pers. (excl.)	<i>keennay/ sameynay/ qabannay</i>
1 st pers. (incl.)	<i>keennay/ sameynay/ qabannay</i>
2 nd pers.	<i>keenteen/ sameyseen/ qabateen</i>

3rd pers. *keeneen/ sameeyeen/ qabteen*

Past Independent Tense³⁵

Singular

1st pers. *kéenay/ saméeyey/ qábtay*
 2nd pers. *kéentay/ saméysey/ qabátay*
 3rd pers. masc. *kéen/ samée/ qabáy*
 3rd pers. fem. *kéentay/ saméysey/ qabátay*

Plural

1st pers. (excl.) *kéennay/ saméynay/ qabánnay*
 1st pers. (incl.) *kéennay/ saméynay/ qabánnay*
 2nd pers. *keenté/ sameysé/ qabaté*
 3rd pers. *keené/ sameeyé/ qabté*

Proverbs employing the Past Independent Tense constitute a considerable, though not the biggest, part of the paremias without sentence particles:

(384) *Cad ku ceejiyey xil iyo geeri ku dil* – If you choke with a big piece (of food) you will both disgrace yourself and die [lit.: A big piece which stuck in your throat killed you with shame and death]. This means: It is bad to gobble;

(385) *Geel laba jir soo wada mar* – All the camels were two years old [lit.: passed the two-year age]. This means: Once upon a time everybody was young;

(386) *Laga barayba laga badi* – One surpasses [lit.: surpassed] the man from

³⁵ See Andrzejewski (1956), p.126.

whom one has learnt something;

(387) *Hadday fooli timaaddo, gudaqarsiimo hartay* – When labour pains start, shame must be thrown off [lit.: had to be thrown off];

(388) *Wax rag kaa galay rako kaa gale* – What [lit.: things] you gave a man you will not get back [lit.: they stuck in him].

The subjects in each of these examples are as follows: in 384 it is the 3rd person masculine singular noun *cad* – a piece; in 385 it is the collective masculine noun *geel* – camels, in which, as in 384, the verbal predicate takes the form of the 3rd person masculine singular; in 386 it is the indefinite personal pronoun *la* (see 0.3.8), again with a 3rd person masculine singular verb; in 387 it is the 3rd person feminine singular noun *gudaqarsiimo* – covering of the genitals; and in 388 it is the 3rd person plural noun *wax* – things. The set of subjects in the paremias known to me in which the Past Independent Tense is used is, in fact, exhausted by the nouns of the 3rd person singular and plural and the pronoun *la*, and correspondingly only those forms of the regular verbs which I have shown in the examples can be found among them.

The personal forms of the attributive verbs are extremely rare in paremias with the usage of the Past Independent Tense. Suffice it to say that in my collection of about ten thousand proverbs there is only one – that of the 3rd person feminine singular:

(389) *Gabadhii xabaal ku asturrayd ama nin ku asturrayd* – Only grave or marriage can save a girl (from seduction) [lit.: A girl is preserved in a grave or in a husband].

The paradigm of the verb *asturan* – ‘be preserved’, ‘be covered’ in the Past

Independent Tense is as follows³⁶ (see the corresponding forms of the attributive verbs in the Past General in 2.5.2):

Singular

1 st pers.	<i>asturnáa (asturráa)</i>
2 nd pers.	<i>asturnáyd (asturráyd)</i>
3 rd pers. masc.	<i>asturnáa (asturráa)</i>
3 rd pers. fem.	<i>asturnáyd (asturráyd)</i>

Plural

1 st pers. (excl.)	<i>asturnáyn (asturráyn)</i>
1 st pers. (incl.)	<i>asturnáyn (asturráyn)</i>
2 nd pers.	<i>asturnaydé (asturraydé)</i>
3 rd pers.	<i>asturnaayé (asturraayé)</i>

4.7.2. Attributive verbs appear much more often in paremias without sentence particles in which the Present Comparative Tense is employed. Banti (1988, p.209) writes that in the Present (Comparative) Tense all the verbs of the class 4³⁷ have a simple form³⁸ which does not co-occur with focus particles and is used in

³⁶ See also *ibid.*, p. 129.

³⁷ i.e. attributive verbs.

³⁸ What is meant is the dictionary form (*wanaagsan* – be good, *daran* – be bad, tough) which these verbs assume in relative clauses without subjects of their own: *Nin wanaagsan* – a good man [lit.: A man who is good], *Abaar daran* – A severe drought [lit.: A drought which is severe] in contrast to a compound form in which they appear in the role of the predicate of the main sentence, for example with the SP *waa*: *Ninku waa wanaagsan yahay* – ‘This man is good’ or of the predicate in the

comparative structures of proverbs and other fixed expressions. In a later letter to the author (1990) he drew his attention to the fact that the Present Comparative Tense is not used only in comparative contexts.

Before setting about the analysis of the proverbs with attributive verbs in the Comparative Tense it is necessary to name the regular ways of the formation of the comparative degree used in proverbs. They are three: one syntactical and two lexical. There is no morphological expression of degrees of comparison in Somali.

1) The syntactical pattern presumes the building of a construction which starts with the names of a pair of compared things followed by the name of that one of the pair which is superior in quality and is usually a subject or an object to the verbal predicate which closes the construction:

(390) *Dhegta iyo isha, dhegta ayaa da' weyn* – An ear is older [i.e. more important] than an eye [lit.: An ear and an eye, an ear is old];

(391) *Libaax aammusan iyo libaax ciyaa, libaax ciyaa [ciya + baa] wanaagsan* – A growling lion is better [i.e. less dangerous] than one which keeps silent [lit.: A silent lion and a growling lion, a growling lion is good];

(392) *Dhurwaa kan ciya iyo kan aammusan, kan ciyaa [ciya + baa] la qaatay* – A barking hyena is better [i.e. less dangerous] than one which keeps silent [lit.: A barking hyena and a silent hyena, one has preferred a barking hyena].

2) Lexically the comparative degree can be expressed by two modes:

relative clause with its own subject: *Inuu daran yahay waa la ogsoon yahay* – It is known that he is bad.

a) with the help of the preverb *ka* meaning ‘than’ in proximity to attributive verbs:

(393) *Dhul jid baa ka toosan, dadna kii qaada* – A road is straighter than open ground and he who takes it (is straighter) than other people [i.e. he leaves them behind].

It is necessary to note that in the second part of the proverb, which is also a comparative structure, there is no sentence particle, preverb or attributive verb;

(394) *Nin fiicanba nin baa ka sii fiican* – For every good man there is a better man [lit.: One man is good, the other man is still more good].

In this proverb the preverb *ka* is supplemented by the particle *sii* which here means ‘still more’ because both comparable “things” possess the same quality.

(395) *Afar-addinle waxaa ka halis badan laba-addinle* – He who possesses two legs [i.e. a human being] is more dangerous than he who possesses four legs [i.e. an animal].

It is worth paying attention to the fact that in all three proverbs the thing which possesses superior quality is a subject which coincides with the rheme. It is shown by the absence of short subjective pronouns in proximity to the sentence particles.

b) with the help of the verb *dhaan* – be better than. In the constructions with *dhaan* “a better thing” becomes a subject, the verb becomes a predicate and the SP *baa* (*ayaa*) is used either with or without short subjective pronouns:

(396) *Maroodiga iliggiisaa (iliggiisa + baa) dhaama* – The tusk of an elephant is better [i.e. more expensive] than he himself;

(397) *Nin dhintay kabihisaa [kabihisa + baa] dhaama* – The sandals of a dead man are more valuable than he is [there is no benefit from a dead man];

(398) *Dameerka ninka wada mar buu dhaamaa* – Sometimes a donkey is better than its driver.

4.7.3. In all the paremias without sentence particles in which comparisons are made between elements possessing different degrees of particular qualities (there are dozens of such paremias in my collection), the first lexical pattern of the expression of the comparative degree is used, as in examples (393-395). These paremias belong to two constructive logical types:

1) If one element has a particular quality and another element a different degree of the same quality, one element will exceed, or be preferable to, the other:

(399) *Carrab dalab leh lug dalab leh laga garan og* – It is easier to recognize the crookedness of one's tongue [i.e. one's lie] than the crookedness of one's leg;

(400) *Gows la qaaday geel la qaaday ka daran* – It is worse to eat before someone's eyes³⁹ [i.e. without sharing the food] than to steal his camels;

(401) *Far bukta faraha ka dheer* – A sour finger seems to be longer than the others [because it always hits against something].

2) If one element has a particular quality to a greater extent than does another element, it also has some other quality to a greater extent than does that other element:

³⁹ In the original the idiom 'to take one's tooth' which means 'to eat before someone's eyes'.

(402) *Nin gu' kaa weyn garaadna kaa weyn* – He who is one year older [lit.: bigger] than you has a mind bigger than yours;

(403) *Nin gu' kaa weyn il guruxeedna kaa weyn* – He who is one year older [lit.: bigger] than you has an eye [lit.: eyeball] bigger than yours [i.e. he sees more];

(404) *Nin gu' kaa weyn gu' baas kaa weyn* – He who is one year older [lit.: bigger] than you suffers one year longer [lit.: bigger] than you.

Proverbs (400-404) differ from the similar constructions in (393-395) only by the absence of sentence particles. At first glance they simply omitted and can be easily “reconstructed” without any damage to their syntactical structure and meaning. However, on closer examination it becomes clear that this operation can be applied in full measure only to two of them:

(405) **Gows la qaaday geel la qaaday baa ka daran;*

(406) **Far bukta baa faraha ka dheer.*

It can also be applied in part to proverbs (402-404):

(407) **Nin gu' kaa weyn baa garaadna kaa weyn;*

(408) **Nin gu' kaa weyn baa il guruxeedna kaa weyn;*

(409) **Nin gu' kaa weyn baa gu' baas kaa weyn.*

But in some variants of these proverbs one can spot the morphological marker *-i* which is incompatible with the SP *baa* stressing the subject (see 2.2):

(410) *Nin gu' kaa weyni garaadna kaa weyn;*

(411) *Nin gu' kaa weyni il guruxeedna kaa weyn;*

(412) *Nin gu' kaa weyni gu' baas kaa weyn.*

In other words the following are not grammatically correct:

(413) **Nin gu' kaa weyni baa garaadna kaa weyn;*

(414) **Nin gu' kaa weyni baa il guruxeedna kaa weyn;*

(415) **Nin gu' kaa weyni baa gu' baas kaa weyn.*

If the “dropped out” SP *baa* had marked not the subject phrase but the object (which would have justified the addition of the morphological marker *-i* to the last word of the subject phrase) it would, firstly, have been used with a short subjective pronoun and secondly, the attributive verbal predicate would have adjoined the 3rd person masculine singular form of the verb *ahaan* – to be:

(416) **Nin gu' kaa weyni garaad baanu (baa + uu + na) kaa weyn yahay;*

(417) **Nin gu' kaa weyni il guruxeed baanu (baa + uu + na) kaa weyn yahay;*

(418) **Nin gu' kaa weyni gu' baas buu (baa + uu) kaa weyn yahay.*

The sentence particles *waa* and *waxaa* also do not fit within the context of the proverbs concerned. In the case of *waa*, the predicate would have agreed with the subject according to the “complete” type I, and in the case of *waxaa*, among other differences the verb could not have occupied the final position.

As for the proverb (399), the clipped form of the attributive verb *og* – ‘aware’, ‘know’, when used in the role of the predicate of the indefinite personal pronoun *la* (the subject), always makes a construction with the verb *ahaan* – ‘to be’ in any of the present tenses, irrespective of the type of sentence particle used in the sentence (see 1.5).

(419) **Carrab dalab leh lug dalab leh baa laga garan og yahay.*

Hence there have been revealed three types of paremias without sentence particles in which the attributive verb-predicate is used in the so-called Present

Comparative Tense:

1) Paremias which allow for the reconstruction of the SP *baa* without any change of their structure and meaning (400-401);

2) Paremias of which some variants allow for the reconstruction of the SP *baa* (402-404);

3) Paremias which do not allow for the reconstruction of the SP *baa* (399).

Proverbs which belong to the third type seem to be the most ancient. It may be assumed that they appeared when the SP *baa* was not yet used for the topic-comment articulation (see 0.3.5). Paremias which belong to the second (“intermediate”) type may have been created when the SP *baa* had just emerged as one of the focus particles. Finally, the proverbs of the first type seem to have entered the Somali discourse when the SP *baa* had already established itself in the language but had not yet driven out the other functionally similar rheme-marking means.

The aforesaid makes more exact the following observation made by Zholkovsky: “...the SP *baa* can be omitted in the sentences with the preverb *ka* in the meaning of the comparative degree” (1971, p.194), because, as has been just demonstrated, in some proverbial sentences with the attributive verbs in the role of the predicate, sentence particles are not only absent, but they cannot occur.

4.7.4. One of the interesting types of paremias without sentence particles is represented by the proverb mentioned in Andrzejewski’s review (4.7):

(420) *Tuug wax ka tuhun badan* – A thief is more suspicious than anyone else [lit.: A thief is more suspicious than anything].

Here the preverb *ka* – than, which usually serves to convey the meaning of the

comparative degree, is used to express the superlative degree (instead of the preverb *u* – most):

(421) *Habaar waxaa u daran 'lixdan jir ku cayrow', 'labaatan jir kaa dhimay', 'laba jir caano u waa'* – The most terrible curse is 'May you become poor at sixty', 'May you lose your twenty-year-old (son)', 'May you fail to get milk for your two-year-old (child)'.

Syntactical structures with this exceptional usage of the preverb *ka* represent one of the archaic paremiological types. I know of another two proverbs of this kind:

(422) *Fuley wax ka daymo badan* – A coward looks back most frequently;

(423) *Fuley wax ka qoryo badan* – Nobody arms himself better than a coward.

These proverbs allow for the reconstruction of the SP *baa*:

(424) **Tuug baa wax ka tuhun badan*.

4.7.5. Some other types of proverbs also make syntactical forms without sentence particles, among them the following in particular:

1) Proverbs with the verbal predicate *waa*⁴⁰ – 'fail', which in combination with the indefinite personal subject *la*, the short objective pronoun *is* – 'self' and the preverbs *ku* or *la*⁴¹ (*la+is+ku* = *laysku*; *la+is+la* = *laysla*) means 'One cannot bring together' or 'One cannot do two things at the same time':

(425) *Calool bukta iyo weji furfuran laysku waa* – One cannot smile [lit.: make an amiable face] when one has a stomach-ache;

⁴⁰ The coincidence of this verbal form with the SP *waa* is purely graphical. In fact they differ by the quality of the vowel: in the verb it is closed (fronted) and in the particle it is open (retracted).

⁴¹ For their meaning see in 0.3.5.

(426) *Fadhi iyo fuud yicibeed laysku waa* – One cannot sit at home [i.e. idle] and enjoy yicib-nut soup;⁴²

(427) *Laf iyo labo dhagax laysla waa* – Where there is a bone you cannot find two stones [which you need for crushing the bone and eating the marrow].

In paremias of this type a sentence particle cannot be reconstructed.

2) Proverbs with the attributive and irregular verbs *lahaan* – ‘to have’ and *la’aan* – ‘not to have’ in the role of the predicate in combination with the adverbial particle *kala* – ‘apart’, ‘differently’, which in their turn divide into two subtypes:

a) proverbs with the indefinite personal subject *la*:

(428) *Alle la kala baryi og, erayna la kala dhihi og* – (People) pray to Allah differently and speak differently [ie. some of them do it better, some worse];

(429) *Dhaan loo kala habboon* – Some (people) can go for water and some cannot.⁴³

b) proverbs with nominal subjects:

(430) *Run iyo beeni kala raad leh* – Truth and lies leave different traces;

(431) *Hadal iyo hilbaba kala qalan* – Talk is like different sorts of meat [some is good and some is bad];

(432) *Kala fog fool iyo lulmo* – When in labour one cannot sleep [lit.: childbirth and sleepiness are far from each other]. This means: when someone is in trouble, he cannot rest.

⁴² Somalis usually go to remote and often almost inaccessible places to gather these very nutritious nuts.

⁴³ This refers to the important and laborious task of bringing water to a nomadic encampment, which is charged to the strongest and most sturdy men.

(433) *Laba kala bariday kala war la'* – If two men have spent a night far away from each other, neither knows how the other one is now.

Paremiyas which belong to type (a), and some proverbs of type (b), i.e. (430) and (431), do not allow for the reconstruction of sentence particles (see the argumentation in 4.7.3), while (432) and (433) can perfectly well be used with the SP *baa*. In proverb (432), however, it would then become necessary to cancel the inversion, resulting in the adverbial particle occupying the first place in the sentence, which is an extremely untypical situation in Somali affirmative structures;

3) Proverbs with attributive verbs in what Andrzejewski (1969) called the Present Exclamatory Tense:

(434) *Aji bakhti la buuranaa!* – (It seems) to an *aji*⁴⁴ (that) a dead beast was fat! This means: A lost thing seems to have been good;

(435) *Ayandarro fac-weynaa!* – Bad luck lasts a long time!

(436) *Maba dhalane dhawrsan okaa!* – She has not been born yet but is already ashamed (of her nakedness)! Said when a young person acts as seriously as if they were adult.

4) Verbless proverbs, which resemble structures with the SP *waa* introducing a compound nominal predicate (see 1.6). These proverbs can be divided, according to their syntactic complexity, into two sub-types: one-part and two-part structures. They both allow for the reconstruction of the SP *waa*:

a) verbless proverbs in the form of one-part deep structures:

⁴⁴ A person of a high caste.

(437) *Cunug fiyow, hooyo fiican* – A good [lit.: healthy] child (means) a good mother;

(438) **Cunug fiyow waa hooyo fiican*.

(439) *Ballan badan, been badan* – A lot of promises (means) a lot of lies;

(440) **Ballan badan waa been badan*.

b) verbless proverbs in the form of two-part deep structures:

(441) *Dharaartiina il, habeenkiina dheg* – By day (one needs) eyes, by night (one needs) ears;

(442) **Dharaartiina waa il, habeenkiina waa dheg*.

(443) *Kismaayo kistaa ama kaskaa* – (To live) in Kismayo⁴⁵ (one needs) either money or brains;

(444) **Kismaayo waa kistaa ama waa kaskaa*.

4.7.6. It is worth mentioning that archaic grammatical forms which exclude the usage of sentence particles co-exist with the usual forms, not only within the framework of the Somali proverbial stock as a whole but also at the level of the variants of individual plemias. This can be exemplified by a proverb taken at random:

(445) *Caano daatay dabadoodaa (dabadooda + baa) la qabtaa* – When milk spills one tries to save at least the last drop [lit.: catches milk by its tail].

Many variants of this proverb were received from informants, the following among them:

⁴⁵ Kismayo – a Somali coastal city.

(446) *Caano daatay waa la dabo qabtaa* and

(447) *Caano daatayba dabadood la qabay*.

Proverbs 445 and 446 represent syntactic structures with the indefinite personal pronoun *la*, followed by a direct object (in the first example *caano daatay dabadood* – ‘spilled milk’s tail’, in the second *caano daatayba* – ‘any spilled milk’) and a verbal predicate in the form of the 3rd person masculine singular in the Present General Tense (*qabtaa* – ‘catches’ and *dabo qabtaa* – ‘catches behind’). But whereas in (445) the SP *baa* makes the object into the rheme, in (446) the SP *waa* transfers logical accent to the verb.

Proverb (447), which is used along with other variants, belongs to the paremias described in 4.7.1, which have archaic verbal forms in the Past Independent Tense incompatible with any of the sentence particles and seldom used in contemporary Somali.

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