Syntactic Typology and 'Free Word Order' in Cushitic

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INTRODUCTION: CONFIGURATION AND SYNTACTIC TYPOLOGY[1]

Word order differences have traditionally been a focus of attention in the comparison of languages, and hence in the complementary programmes of linguistic typology and the search for linguistic universals. One topic of recent work has been the variability of head-complement orders. This is, of course, because traditional notions of heads and head-complement relations are centrally important to a number of current grammatical theories. If we take the Principle and Parameters theory, for example: a key development in this theory was Chomsky's attempts in the late 1970s and early 1980s, to develop the notion of *government* as a basic element of Universal Grammar, and thereby to link phrase structure grammar with the theory of movement rules. In recent proposals in this framework (see Chomsky n.d.), X' theory's configurational versions of notions like head, and complement, have become even more important to ideas about Universal Grammar (UG).

Within this theory, differences between languages are seen as the result of parametric variation: i.e. variations in the setting of certain values for a principle of UG. As is usual in this approach, head-complement relations are subject to a complicated interaction of principles, many of which have been argued to be subject to parametric variation. The Case Filter, the Empty Category Principle, the Theta-Criterion, and the Binding Principles, all have been argued to involve parametric variation. In this paper I would like to highlight the descriptive problems in assessing parametric variation in phrase structure by discussing verb-argument and adposition-argument relations in Omo-Tana Cushitic, concentrating on Somali. In particular I want to examine the applicability of a parameter *configurational* to these languages.

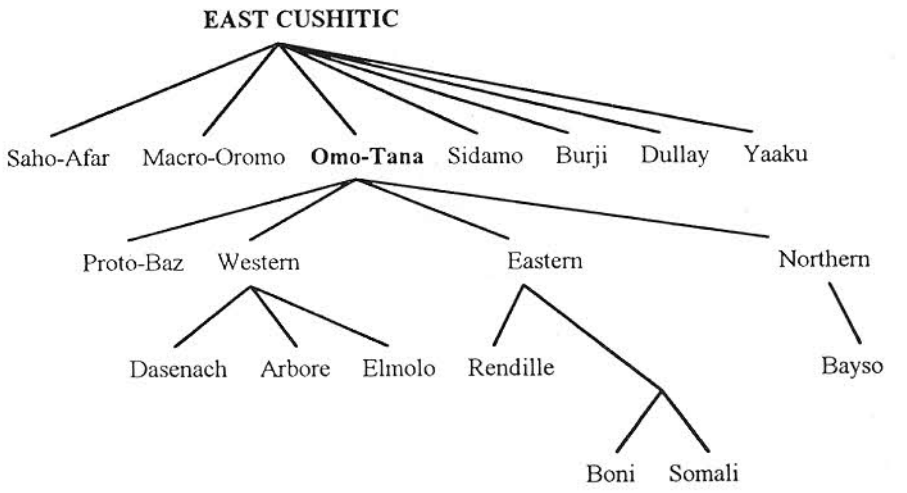
Some X-bar parametric variation concerns the order of head, complements and specifiers within the general X' schema of:

(1) *XP --> {Specifier, X'}*
(2) *X' --> {X or X', (YP)}*

The elements in { } are unordered and the ordering possibilities in (1) and (2) can be seen as parameters that can be set differently for different languages. I will be mentioning these parameters along the way. A more radical variation that has been identified is between languages to which this general schema applies, and those to which it does not: the so-called nonconfigurational languages. Following Hale's (1983) paper on Warlpiri, it has often been proposed that this too is a parameter, perhaps with a simple binary switch: languages are either **configurational** like

English, in which case the X' schema applies, and notions like syntactic government are relevant, or they are **nonconfigurational** like Warlpiri, in which case the X' schema does not apply, and sentences have a flat structure. In some sense, if such a parameter exists, it is higher than or precedes the parameters in (1) and (2). In this paper we look at this question of a configurational parameter, and attempt to flesh out some of the issues involved by trying to apply the notion to Omo-Tana languages, concentrating on Somali. As background, Figure (1) shows the position of Omo-Tana languages within Eastern Cushitic; Cushitic being one of the Afroasiatic subfamilies.

Figure 1 The OmoTana Subgroup within Eastern Cushitic



Traditionally Somali and related languages seem to provide problems for any configurational approach to syntagmatic relations like case assignment, agreement, etc. For example, at first sight, the notion of government, crucial to so many current theories, doesn't seem to have any structural correlation in the syntax. And, as we will see, the role of heads, in particular, seems problematical. In fact, as we'll see, these languages display the three features which Hale in his very influential (1983) paper described as being characteristic of non-configurational languages:

(3) a. *free word order*
b. *the use of syntactically discontinuous elements*
c. *extensive use of null anaphora.*

As mentioned earlier, Hale proposed that there is a parameter **configurational**, that divides languages with the features above from languages like English. The suggestion was that languages would be either configurational or nonconfigurational in their syntax. The language he was most concerned with then, the Australian language Warlpiri, was nonconfigurational, and, he proposed, had no syntactic categories between the word and the sentence. Sentences therefore would be assigned a completely flat structure, and notions like government, which in a

Principles and Parameters approach are based on X' theoretic notions, did not apply in the syntax.

Here I want to show, firstly, that Omo-Tana languages reveal these same features; this led Livnat (1984) for example, to suggest that Somali is a nonconfigurational language. But I will go on to argue that a two-value parameter of configurationality is too simple to reflect the facts. The aim will be to show something of Cushitic syntax, but also, I hope, to reveal the depth of analysis that is required to support decisions about parametric variation.

WORD ORDER

One very obvious fact about these languages is that they have a very free word order[2]. A sentence like (4a) below in Somali for example, can have the verb and its NP arguments in any order: (4b-e) show some of the possible permutations:

(4) a.

Cali	*wargèyskíi*	*wùu*	*siiyey*	*inántíi*
Cali	*wargeys+kii*	*waa+uu*	*siiyey*	*inan+tii*
Ali	newspaper+the	CLASS+he	gave	girl+the

'Ali gave the newspaper to the girl.'

b. *Wargèyskíi Cali wùu siiyey inántíi.*
c. *Inántii Cali wùu siiyey wargèyskíi.*
d. *Inántii wùu siiyey Cali wargèyskíi.*
e. *Wargèyskíi Cali inántii wùu siiyey.*

How are the semantic relations recoverable here? The first point is that NPs are inflected for case distinctions in a subject-absolutive-genitive-vocative case system. In most instances this is marked tonally, so that in the sentences in (4) above, *Cali* is marked as the subject, and 'the girl' and 'the money' as non-subject or absolutive, by their tone patterns. Secondly, subject NPs agree in number and gender with verbs, so that *sii* 'give' in these sentences is marked as having a masculine singular subject. Thirdly, as was shown in Sasse (1981) for Boni, and in Saeed (1984) for Somali, word order reflects pragmatic roles like focus and topic, so that the various word orders in (4) will be appropriate in different discourse situations. Indeed the only word order restriction on a predicator and its arguments in Somali, for example, is that focused NPs (of which there usually may only be one in a sentence) must occur to the left of the verb, where they are followed by a lexically empty focus word *baa* or *ayaa*, e.g.

(5) a.

Cali	*baa*	*wargeyskii*	*siiyey*	*inantii*
Ali FOC	newspaper+the	gave	girl+the	

'**Ali** gave the newspaper to the girl, It was Ali who gave the newspaper to the girl'

b. **Wargeyskii inantii siiyey Cali baa.*
c. **Inantii siiyey Cali baa wargeyskii.*

The difference between (4) and (5) is that the NPs in the former are all known, whereas it would be likely that *Cali* in (5) would be new information. Focus is

restricted to root clauses, so the word order in subordinate clauses is as free as in root clauses without focus.

So in processing terms, free verb-argument order is compensated for by morphological marking on NPs and verbs, and by pragmatic context. This still leaves sentences like (4), though, as a problem for approaches whose descriptive devices rely crucially on a notion of syntactic government. I would argue, however, that things are not as bad as they seem for such approaches. I will argue that the freedom of NP order is licensed by the presence of preverbal pronominal clitics, which as described in Saeed (1993b and in press) represent subject, object, and indirect arguments. Sentence (6) below is a characteristic example:

(6) *Axmed*	*waxoogaa*	*wuu*	*iigu*		*kaa*	*dhiibay*
Axmed	*waxoogaa*	*waa+uu*	*i+u+ku*	pro	*kaa*	*dhiibay*
Ahmed	a little	CLASS+he	me+to+for	it	you	gave

'Ahmed gave you a little (money) for me'

The grammar of these pre-verbal clitics is quite complicated (see for example: Andrzejewski 1960, Saeed 1993a). Basically, non-focus (and therefore usually known) arguments of the verb are represented by a coreferential clitic in a preverbal cluster. I have argued elsewhere (Saeed 1993b) that these are in fact clitics and not agreement affixes, though we might speculate that this is an intermediate stage in the development of a secondary (more comprehensive) system of agreement. Complexities arise, firstly, from the fact that considerable phonological coalescence occurs between them, as we can see from (6) above. Secondly, third person forms are zero, marked by **pro** in the morpheme analysis in (6). For readers who are dubious about empty categories: this is a genuine **gap in paradigm**, as we can see from the paradigms of second and third argument pronoun clitics in (7):

(7)

	2nd Argument	3rd Argument	
1s	*i*	*kay*	'me'
2s	*ku*	*kaa*	'you(sg.)'
3s	-	-	'him, her, it'
1p	*na*	*keen*	'us'
2p	*idin*	*kiin*	'you(pl.)'
3p	-	-	'them'

If only one non-subject argument is required, the 2nd argument pronoun will be used; if there are two, both 2nd and 3rd argument pronouns will show up; so these are something like direct and indirect object pronoun clitics (but see Saeed 1993a: 173-180 for complications). Here what is important is that any gap in the argument structure of a verb will be interpreted as a third person argument, the choice dependent on context. See for example:

(8) a. *Wuu*	*ku*	*arkay*
waa+uu	*ku*	*arkay*
CLASS+he	you	saw

'He saw you'

b. *Wuu arkay*
'He saw him/her/it/them'

Note that since both second and third argument clitics have third person gaps, the interpretation of gaps in the clitic cluster will fill out all the places in the argument structure of a three-place predicator, as in (9):

(9) *Wuu* *siiyey*
waa+uu *siiyey*
CLASS+he gave
'He gave him/her/it/them to him/her/it/them.'

Where, as we have said, the selection of the third person argument will depend on context. Thus the representation of (9) should probably be (10):

(10) *Wuu*$_1$ pro$_2$ pro$_3$ *siiyey*

Here the subscripts 1-3 identify arguments of the verb. Now, I would argue that it is these pronominal clitics that satisfy the argument structure of the verb, and thus license the word order freedom of NPs. There are a number of arguments for believing this and I'll present three: two grammatical and one pragmatic.

Firstly, we can observe that if NPs doubled by clitics are in fact in non-argument positions, then they form a parallel construction to topic structures. Topic NPs in Somali can occur before, or after the clause proper; they are known; and under the right discourse conditions, are deletable. This set of behaviours provides us with our first test: if the clitics are arguments of the verb, and the NPs not: then the latter should be optional and not the former. To see this we need to look at cases where the clitics are overt, i.e. non-third person arguments, and here we do indeed find that it is the NPs and not the clitics that are optional. The examples in (11-12) use the independent pronouns, which are syntactically and morphologically full nouns, as the second non-clitic argument. The (a) and (b) examples show a couple of instances of the positional freedom of these NPs (not all permutations shown). The (c) examples show that just the clitic pronoun satisfies the verb's argument structure, while the (d) examples show that just the full NP cannot:

(11) a. *Askartii* *adiga* *way* *ku* *garteen*
askar+tii *adiga* *waa+ay* *ku* *garteen*
police+the you CLASS+they you recognised
'The police recognised you (sg.).'

b. *Askartii way ku garteen adiga*
'The police recognised you (sg.)'

c. *Askartii way ku garteen.*
'The police recognised you.'

d. **Askartii adiga way garteen*
'The police recognised you.'

(12) a.

Askartii	*annaga*	*way*	*na*	*garteen.*
police+the	us	CLASS+they	us	recognised

'The police recognised us.'

b. *Askartii way na garteen annaga.*
'The police recognised us.'

c. *Askartii way na garteen.*
'The police recognised us.'

d. **Askartii annaga way garteen*
'The police recognised us.'

The (d) examples are ungrammatical because of a lack of an object pronoun clitic: we can speculate that the gap in the verbal piece causes the default third person interpretation, which then clashes with the non-third person external NP. In other words, the (d) examples have one too many arguments for the verb's argument structure, something we could parallel in an English sentence like (13):

(13) *The police recognised him you.

For a second argument, we can turn to subordinate clauses: in particular, **that**-clauses. These begin with a complementiser in these languages as in English. In Somali it is *in* 'that', and we can therefore 'see' the limits of the sentence, so to speak. Our example (14) shows that the Somali two-place predicate *doon* 'want' subcategorises for a **that**-clause, underlined in the example:

(14)

Waxaan	*doonayaa*	*in Axmed tago*		
waxa+aan	*doonayaa*	*in*	*Axmed*	*tago*
what+I	want	that	Ahmed	go

'I want that Ahmed goes, I want Ahmed to go.'

We can derive evidence from the behaviour of matrix verbs and embedded sentences, like those in (14), that the free NPs are in non-argument positions and that the pronominal clitics are arguments. We are familiar in English with patterns like (15):

(15) a. I expect [S' that Jim will win]
b. I expect [S Jim to win]
c. *I expect Jim$_i$ [S' that he$_i$ will win]
d. *I expect Jim$_i$ [S' that _$_i$ will win]

Sentence (b) is a marked construction, traditionally associated with an S' (or CP) deletion analysis, since a higher verb does not govern a lower subject unless the maximal projection (S') dominating the lower clause is removed in some way (under

the assumption that x governs y only if they share all maximal projections). Presumably, (c) is out because *expect* only theta-governs one complement argument so here we have one argument too many. And (d) is probably out for that and the extra reason that an empty element isn't properly governed by a co-indexed element in the right domain.

By comparison we can look again at our Somali verb *doon* 'want', where we find the pattern in (16):

(16)a.	*Waxaan*	*doonayaa*	*[S' in*	*Axmed*	*tago]*
	what+I	want	that	Ahmed	go

'I want that Axmed goes, I want Axmed to go.'

b. **Waxaan doonayaa Axmed*$_i$ [S' *in* _$_i$ *tago*]
c. **Waxaan doonayaa* [S' *in* _$_i$ *tago*] *Axmed*$_i$.
d. **Waxaan doonayaa* [S' *in* _ *tago*]

Sentences (16b) and (16c) are ungrammatical, like their English equivalents, because the NP *Axmed* is, in that position, one complement too many for the matrix verb, and because as in (16d) the lower sentence is missing a subject argument, or in generative approaches, has an improperly governed empty category. Now if we insert a clitic pronoun into the embedded sentence, we can see that the position of an NP like *Axmed* becomes immaterial:

(17) a. *Waxaan doonayaa inuu Axmed tago* .
b. *Waxaan doonayaa Axmed*$_i$ *inuu*$_i$ *tago*
c. *Waxaan doonayaa inuu*$_i$ *tago Axmed*$_i$.
'I want that Ahmed goes, I want Ahmed to go.'

d. *Waxaan doonayaa inuu tago.*
'I want that he goes, I want him to go.'

In these sentences we can see that the clitic is the relevant argument for the lower clause, and the NP *Axmed* is not an argument of either the matrix verb or the lower verb. We might expect that (17b) would be ungrammatical, like English sentence (15c) earlier because in it *doon* has two objects, though it only subcategorises for one, but in fact this sentence is fine because the NP *Axmed* is in fact a topic of the lower sentence, as shown in (18) and therefore not an argument of the matrix verb.

(18) *Waxaan doonayaa* [S' [TOPIC *Axmed* [S'*inuu tago*]]

Our third argument is a pragmatic one. Our analysis of the roles of these clitic pronouns and satellite NPs is supported by the behaviour of focused NP constructions. The clitic-NP doubling we have been looking at so far has involved nonfocus, known NPs. And, as we have seen, we have identified the satellite NPs as non-arguments. When we turn to focused NPs we find a different pattern. NPs focused by the focus particles *baa* and *ayaa* cannot occur with coreferential clitics, as (19) and (20) show:

(19) a.	*Axmed*	*baa*	*ku*	*gartay.*
	Ahmed	FOC	you	recognised
	'**Ahmed** recognised you.'			
b.	**Axmed*	*buu*	*ku*	*gartay.*
	Axmed	*baa+uu*	*ku*	*gartay.*
	Ahmed	FOC+he	you	recognised
	'**Ahmed** recognised you'			

(20) a.	*Adiga*	*ayay*	*garteen.*	
	adi+ga	*ayaa+ay*	*garteen*	
	you	FOC+they	recognised	
	'They recognised **you**.'			
b.	**Adiga*	*ayay*	*ku*	*garteen.*
	adiga	*ayaa+ay*	*ku*	*garteen*
	you	FOC+they	you	recognised
	'They recognised **you**.'			

Sentence (19b) is ungrammatical because a focused subject has a coreferential subject clitic pronoun in the verbal piece, (20b) is similarly ungrammatical because an object focused NP is doubled. In fact, we could rerun our earlier arguments and show that in these sentences the focused NP is an argument of the verb, and as well as not supporting a clitic double, cannot be deleted. This is pragmatically plausible, because clitic pronouns are lexically underspecified and can participate in argument structure only because of the recoverability of their referents. They typically represent arguments that are known or deictically accessible. Focused NPs, on the other hand, must be obligatorily present in the predication, as we would expect: NPs are given focus to be made prominent in the discourse, signalling amongst other things, new information and contrastive emphasis. They are thus maximally resistant to omission, reduction, or representation by clitics. We can describe the facts of (19) and (20) simply by stating that since the focused NPs have to be present as part of the predication, there is no available position in argument structure for clitic pronouns.

Now these focus constructions provide support for our connection between nonargument NPs and free word order because, as I mentioned earlier, these focused NPs, which are arguments of the predicator, do not display the same freedom of movement: they must occur to the left of the verb, as we saw in example (5) earlier. Since the other arguments, clitic pronouns, are strictly restricted to a preverbal position, this means that all arguments must occur to the left of the predicator in Omo-Tana, or in simple terms, Somali and related languages are verb final. If for brevity we just take the verb and its arguments, as described in Saeed (1993a: 216ff), clitic pronouns must occur in the fixed order of:

(21) SUBJ pro - 1st OBJ pro - 2nd OBJ pro - VERB

To go further than this would take us into as yet unresolved issues of word order in these languages. We can risk a simplification, though: if the nonargument satellite NPs are ignored, the order of elements in a basic root clause is:

(22) FOCUS NP - other arguments as clitics - V

DISCONTINUITY

This analysis also relates to a second non-configurational feature of Somali and other Omo-Tana languages: that certain constituents seem to be discontinuous. The clearest example of this concerns adpositions, which in these languages do not occur with the nominal but in the preverbal clitic cluster, e.g.

(23) a. *Reerkii* *way* ***ka*** *fogaadeen.*
reer+kii *waa+ay* ***ka*** *fogaadeen*
hamlet+the CLASS+they from went-far
'They went far from the nomadic hamlet.'
b. *Way* ***ka*** *fogaadeen reerkii.*
'They went far from the nomadic hamlet.'

In this Somali example, the adposition ***ka*** 'from', remains in a preverbal position regardless of the position of the NP is appears to govern. There are no conventional prepositions or postpositions in Somali, except for one preposition borrowed from Arabic *ilaa* 'until'. Similar preverbal adpositions are found in Boni, Rendille, Elmolo and Dasenach; some examples from Appleyard (1990) are given below:

(24) **Boni**

Us	*min*	***k'i***	*jiid*
he	house	from	came

'He came from the house'

Rendille

Usu	*'ule*	*wel*	***ka***	*jaha*
he	stick	child	with	hits

'He hits the child with a stick.'

Elmolo

Y'ere	*an'an*	***ka***	*nuure*
knife	I	with	cut

'I cut it with a knife.'

I have argued for Somali (Saeed 1993b) that these are not verbal derivational affixes but adpositional clitics, which participate freely in a number of syntactic structures: just like adpositions but occurring next to the verb rather than any nominal. They thus seem to raise the problem of a discontinuous PP constituent.

However, our analysis of the role of pronominal clitics suggests that these structures do not involve discontinuity. We cannot go into too much detail here but it seems that the adpositional clitics can, with one apparent exception, always be analysed as

governing local pronominal clitics, which are then in the topic-like relation with external freely ordered NPs. Once again zero anaphora makes this behaviour easier to see with non-third person arguments:

(25) *Askartii*	*adiga*	*way*		*kaa*	*qaadeen.*
askar+tii	*adiga*	*waa+ay*	pro	*ku+ka*	*qaadeen*
police+the	you	CLASS+they	it	you+from	took
'The police took it away from you.					

(26) **Askartii*	*adiga*	*way*		*ka*	*qaadeen.*
askar+tii	*adiga*	*waa+ay*	pro	*ka*	*qaadeen*
police+the	you	CLASS+they	it	from	took
'The police took it away from you.					

Sentence (25) has the adpositional clitic governing an adjacent pronominal clitic *ku* 'you', which has a satellite NP the independent pronoun *adiga* 'you', in a nonargument position. Sentence (26) shows that omission of the clitic pronoun makes the structure ungrammatical: the external NP in not available to the adpositional clitic. We can therefore assign a structure something like (27) to sentence (25):

(27) *Askartii* $adiga_i$ [S' *way* ku_i *ka qaadeen*]

govt.
topic-like rel.

Once again the exception is focused NPs where the focused NP must directly be governed by the adpositional clitic, e.g.

(28) *Adiga*	*ayay*		*ka*	*qaadeen.*
adiga	*ayaa+ay*	pro	*ka*	*qaadeen*
you	FOC+they	it	from	took
'They took it from **you**.'				

(29) **Adiga*	*ayay*		*kaa*	*qaadeen.*
adiga	*ayaa+ay*	pro	*ku+ka*	*qaadeen*
you	FOC+they	it	you+from	took
'They took it from **you**.'				

Sentence (29) where the focused NP is doubled by a clitic is ungrammatical, which means that the adposition must govern the focused NP directly. This leaves us with a much reduced version of our original apparent discontinuity: the adposition must govern the focused NP across the subject and direct object pronoun clitics, i.e.

(30) [S'	[NP+FOC	*adiga ayaa*]	*ay*	pro	[ADP	*ka*]	*qaadeen*]
[	[	you FOC]	they	it		from	took]

So it seems that these focused NPs are our last remaining case of discontinuity. We turn briefly to their syntax in the next section.

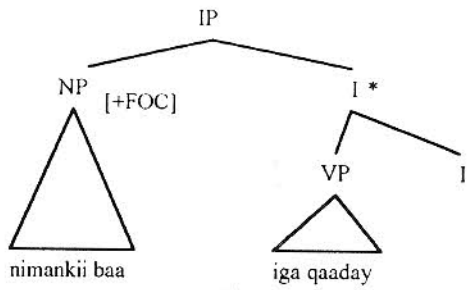
NP FOCUS CONSTRUCTIONS

As we have seen, contrary to the positional freedom of NPs in general, a focused NP must occur left of the verb and any clitic arguments. In Saeed (1984) I argued that the leftmost position of these elements was a result of a movement rule, *Focus Fronting*. In fact, whether we use a movement or a static analysis, the real issue is whether these phrases are inside the sentence or not. I argued above that they participate in the predication, whereas topic NPs do not. However, this leaves the question of whether they participate directly by being inside the S, or indirectly from an non-argument position, via a governed empty category. That is, whether (31) has the structure (32) or (33):

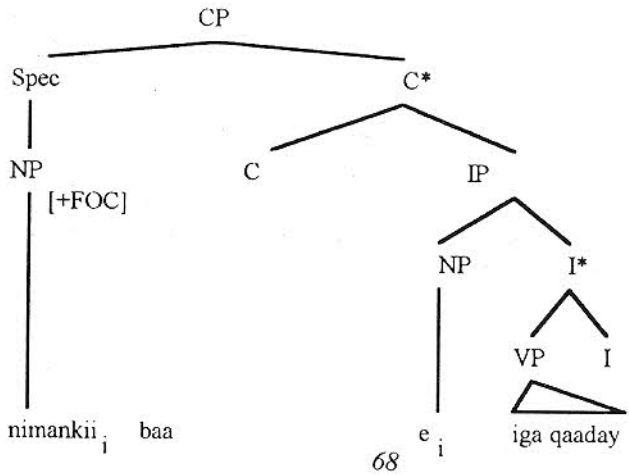
(31)	*Nimankii*	*baa*		*iga*	*qaaday.*
	niman+kii	*baa*	*pro*	*i+ka*	*qaaday*
	men+the	FOC	it	me+from	took

'**The men** took it from me.'

(32)



(33)



In both cases we could argue about the position of *baa*, but we will leave that an open question for now.

There is some evidence that (33), the analysis of the focused NP as external to the sentence, is correct, and this evidence comes from agreement. As has been described many times from Andrzejwski (1968) onwards, focused subject NPs show a defective, reduced agreement marking on the verb. Andrzejewski called this the restrictive paradigm, and it occurs with all verbs with focused NP subjects. Essentially, instead of a five way agreement, we get only three. This means for example that the verb *qaad* 'take' in (31) shows up with singular agreement even though it has a plural NP subject. Compare (34) below where there is no focused subject and the verb shows the usual plural agreement:

(34) *Nimankii*	*way*		*iga*	*qaadeen.*
niman+kii	*waa+ay*	pro	*i+ka*	*qaadeen*
men+the	CLASS+they	it	me+from	took

'The men took it from me.'

This reduced agreement is by itself not a conclusive argument for a sentence external analysis of focused NPs, but as described in Saeed (1984), this behaviour is paralleled in one other place, relative clauses, where if the headword is the subject of the clause, the relative clause verb shows the same reduced agreement. See (35), which shows the usual restrictive relative clause marked by a gap rather than any relative pronoun, and which presumably has a structure like (36):

(35) a. *Nimankii iga qaaday*
b. **Nimankii iga qaadeen*
'the men who took it from me'

(36) [NP *nimankiii* [CP e_i [IP e_i *iga qaaday/*qaadeen*]]]

It seems that in order to explain the relative clause behaviour we have to assume that the empty category in subject position, and coreferential with the head, is defective in triggering agreement. Whatever the details of this analysis, we can automatically predict the parallel behaviour with focused subjects if we assume a structure like (33) where the focused subject is outside the sentence, but represented in it by a coreferential empty category. In both cases the reduced agreement on the verb is associated with an empty category in subject position.

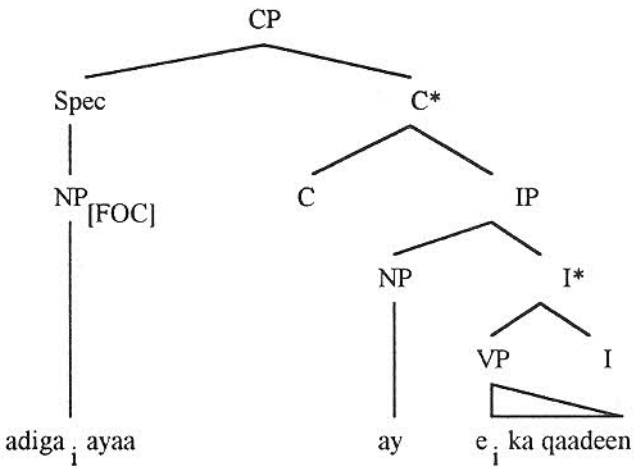
Note that this also solves our last problem with discontinuity. Focused NPs apparently governed by a discontinuous adpositional clitic will be analysed, in this independently motivated approach, as locally governed empty categories in the verbal piece.[3] That is, our earlier example (28), repeated here as (37a) will be analysed as (37b) with no discontinuity:

(37) a.

Adiga	*ayay*		*ka*	*qaadeen.*
adiga	*ayaa+ay*	pro	*ka*	*qaadeen*
you	FOC+they	it	from	took

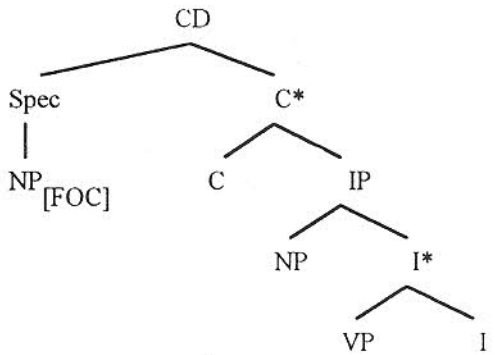
'They took it from **you**.'

b.



So to sum up: if we follow fairly traditional Principles and Parameters assumptions about phrase structure, our discussion so far has led us to a characterisation of Somali clause structure, which far from our original notions of nonconfigurationality, have the typologically familiar structure in (38):

(38)



where TOPICs freely adjoin at CP, and IP.

To conclude this section, we can see that the superficial identification of these Omo-Tana languages as nonconfigurational on the basis of Hale's criteria - free word order, heavy use of zero anaphora, and discontinuity - breaks down under close examination into a much more complicated story. I have tried to demonstrate the role of preverbal clitics in licensing the extremely free order of NPs in the sentence, by identifying a difference between the argument and nonargument NPs. I have

argued that clitic pronouns and full NPs are both arguments of the verb and are therefore, in a sense, in complementary distribution in argument structure. They can only be coreferential if the NP is an external topic in a non-argument position. The clearest evidence for the truth of this characterisation comes from focused NPs which, as essential parts of the predication, cannot be doubled by a clitic. Topic NPs, on the other hand, are in non-argument positions and must have a coreferential pronoun in the clause. It remains clear that discourse-based notion of focus and topic are very influential in the grammar, but it is also clear that clause boundaries, word order and directionality of government are crucially involved in Omo-Tana clause structure. In the next section we look briefly at one final issue in the role of government: the assignment of case.

CASE

We have seen, by looking at the role of clitic pronouns, that a simple two-valued parameter of **configuration** is not adequate for Somali. I have argued that these pronouns are referential arguments of the predicator, i.e. can act as subject, object etc., and we have seen that they are morphologically distinguished for case. However, our discussion so far raises another issue of typological importance: how can we characterise case marking in these languages? For our pronominal clitics this is not a problem: they occur adjacent to the verb or adposition. But we have another problem: the satellite or topic NPs are case marked. For example the NPs *Cali* in (4) or *Axmed* in (16) show up as subject marked wherever they appear. So it seems that the topic and the pronoun clitic are not only coreferential but they agree in case. The relationship between the topic and the pronoun shows no features of a movement rule: I will not give the details here because they are detailed in Saeed (1984) but basically there are no structural constraints on the relationship: no island constraints, subjacency etc.

Clearly, these topic NPs cannot be assigned case configurationally, and we will assume that they inherit case from the clitic pronoun in argument position. We can call this agreement **external** agreement, a term Fassi Fehri (1988: 140) uses to describe the matching between topics and pronouns in Arabic. Writing within a Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG) approach, he proposes a two level coherence condition on functional structures, the level which copes with grammatical relations:

(39) a. an **internal** coherence condition; which binds all the grammatical functions within the predication; and

b. an **external** coherence condition; which binds discourse functions like TOPIC to a predication.

Fassi Fehri proposes that the (b)-type binding is necessarily anaphoric but does not necessarily involve case: our Somali sentences seem to be examples where externally bound elements do agree in case. If a separate level of functional structure is not available, then we will have, I think, to say that we have here an instance of semantic case assignment.

The fact that NPs gain their case by coreference with a pronoun in argument position rather than configurationally might help explain the rather strange fact that complex NPs are only case marked once, at their righthand end, which means that NPs which are part of higher NPs do not necessarily get case marked, occurring in a default premodifier form, as shown in (40) below:

(40) a. ***nin*** *ma* *sugayaa?*
man Q wait
'Is a man waiting?'

b. *Nin**ku*** *ma* *sugayaa?*
nin+ku *ma* *sugayaa*
man+the Q wait
'Is the man waiting?'

c. *ninka* *iyo* *naag**tu*** *ma* *sugayaan?*
man+the and woman+the Q wait
'Are the man and the woman waiting?'

d. *Ninka* *sugaya* *miyaad* *aragtay?*
nin+ka *sugaya* *ma+aad* *aragtay*
man+the wait Q+you saw
'Did you see the man who is waiting?'

e. *Ninka* *sugaya**a*** *wuu* *ku* *yaqaan.*
nin+ka *sugayaa* *waa+uu* *ku* *yaqaan*
man+the wait CLASS+he you knows
'The man who is waiting knows you.'

In (40) we show the position of subject marking on the NP in bold: whichever element occurs rightmost will bear the marking, even if it happens to be a verb as in (40e). The subject role of the maximal NP in its predication is marked, but there is no trickle down or percolation of features to any internal heads. Though this behaviour does not provide us with a strong argument for our analysis of semantic case, it does show that configuration does not seem to be important for case assignment in Somali.

CONCLUSION

From this brief investigation of free word order in Omo-Tana Cushitic, we have seen that a simple binary parameter *configurational* is in fact too simple and would inadequately reflect the syntactic complexities. Noun phrase order in these languages reflects pragmatic roles and we have seen something of the different behaviour of focus and topic NPs. I have argued that the syntactic freedom of non-focus NPs arises from their status as satellites to the predication, with the argument structure requirements of verbs and adpositions being locally satisfied by clitics. Focus NPs, however, do not display positional freedom: they must occur as specifiers of C*, binding an empty argument in the clause. Our investigations have shown that, though these languages seem to display extreme freedom of argument

order, category boundaries, direction, and government are important in their syntactic description. We have also seen one dependency phenomenon, case, where these languages do in part require a non-configurational explanation.

FOOTNOTES

[1] This article is a condensed version of a talk given to the Irish Association for Applied Linguistics in November 1992. I would like to thank IRAAL for their kind invitation and the audience at the talk for their comments and suggestions. I am grateful to Abdillahi Dirir Hersi and Abdirahman Afey for discussing the Somali data with me. The following abbreviations are used in the paper: FOC, CLASS, NEG, ADP = focus particle, classifier, negative word, adposition; 1,2,3 = first, second, third persons; sg, pl = singular, plural; m, f = masculine, feminine; pro = non-overt clitic pronoun; e = empty argument bound by focus NP; + = morpheme boundary. Tones (not marked in Omo-Tana orthographies) are only marked here when relevant to the discussion: á = high tone, âa = (high) falling tone, a (unmarked) = low tone.

[2] We concentrate here on the relationship between verbs and their arguments; and later on, between adpositions and their arguments..

[3] It might be useful here to contrast the behaviour of this empty category, **e**, involved in focus constructions and relative clauses, with the non-overt object **pro**. The latter is referentially free, while there are syntactic constructions which block the interpretation of the former. For example, clauses with the complementiser *in* 'that' form barriers to government which cause some relative clauses to be ungrammatical. Compare for example:

(1)	[$_{NP}$ *naagtii*$_i$	[$_S$	e$_i$	*ku*	*aragtay*]]				
	woman+the		[e]	you	saw				
	'the woman who saw you'								

(2)	*[$_{NP}$ *naagtii*$_i$	[$_S$	*aad*	*sheegtay*	[$_{CP}$	*in*	e$_i$	*ku*	*aragtay*]]]
	woman+the		you	said		that	[e]	you	saw
	'the woman who you said that saw you'								

In (1) we see the normal gap strategy for relative clauses in Somali; in (2) the referential link between the head NP *naagtii* 'the woman' and the empty category **e** is blocked by the *in*-clause. To convey this meaning speakers use an alternative relativisation strategy using a clitic pronoun instead of a gap, e.g.

(3)	[$_{NP}$ *naagtii*$_i$	[$_S$	*aad*	*sheegtay*	[$_{CP}$	in	*ay*$_i$	*ku*	*aragtay*]]]
	woman+the		you	said		that	she	you	saw
	'the woman who you said that she saw you'								

This clear distinction between the two non-overt categories **pro** and **e** can be seen if we parallel (2) with an embedded relative clause with an empty object as in (4):

(4)	[$_{NP}$ *naagtii*$_i$	[$_S$	*aad*	*sheegtay*	[$_{CP}$	*in*	aad	**pro**$_i$	*aragtay*]]]
	woman+the		you	said		that	you	[pro]	saw
	'the woman who you said that you saw'								

Sentence (4) with the non-overt object **pro** inside the *in*-clause is grammatical; sentence (2) with the empty category **e** inside it is not. Of course in terms of Binding Theory we can reflect this by saying that **pro** is only subject to Principle B of the theory.

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