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NP FOCUS IN SOMALI AND DIRAYTA: A COMPARISON
OF BAA AND PA

I. Introduction

This paper is concerned with a comparison of the focus word baa in standard Somali with a proposed cognate pa in Dirayta. It has always seemed rather surprising that baa seems to be restricted to one variety of Somali (albeit the most influential one in the development of the standard language), and that obvious cognates have not been found in other East Cushitic languages.¹ During a recent period of research on the Dirayta language of Southern Ethiopia by Dick Hayward a linguistic form was recorded which we believe is very likely to be such a cognate.

Dirayta ([dir ajɾá]) belongs to what has been called the Konsoid group of East Cushitic. The Konsoid group consists of a chain of dialects which in spite of their contiguity and the small overall size of the geographical area within which they are spoken display a surprising degree of differentiation vis à vis each other (Black forthcoming). Within Ethiopia Dirayta is generally known as 'Gidoliñña' on account of the fact that its speakers (who call themselves Diraasa ([dir á:ja])) live in and around the town of Gidole in Gemu-Gofa Province. The language is unwritten and in comparison with East Cushitic languages like Somali, Oromo and Afar it has not received very much attention from linguistics.

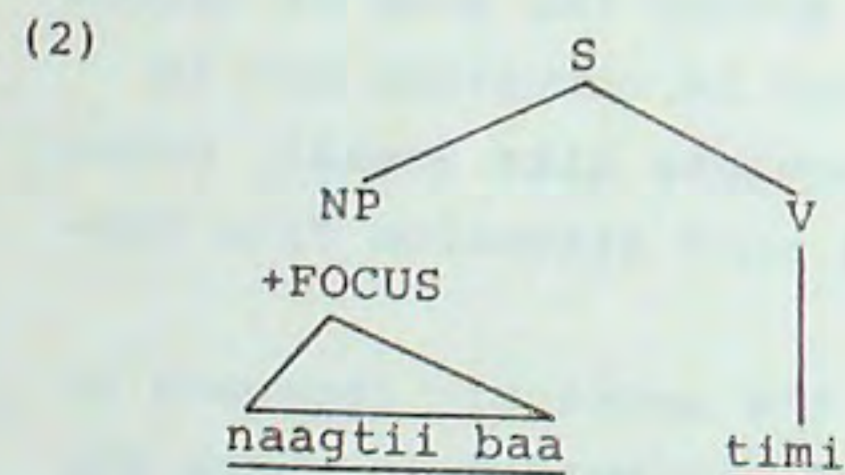
The paper first outlines briefly the syntactic approach to baa in Somali proposed in Saeed (forthcoming) in which the relation of baa structures to clefts, and to relative clauses in general is explicitly recognised by a transformational derivation. Against this background Dirayta pa,

being considered as a cognate, is described. Firstly the phonological evidence is considered, and then there is a comparison of the grammar of pa with baa. For reasons of brevity, most of the paper is concerned with focus on subject NPs; there is no reason as yet to suppose that the analysis and comparison could not easily be extended to non subject NP focus. It is probably worth pointing out that this paper is very much a report of work in progress, and given the recent nature of the primary research, we are only too aware of the tentative nature of much of the analysis. Nonetheless we are sure that the interest the subject matter will hold for Cushitic language studies, and Somali studies in particular, is sufficient to justify this early airing.

II. baa in Somali

This section outlines the syntactic analysis of baa structures presented in greater detail in Saeed (forthcoming). In essence, this analysis rejects the view that baa is a particle which is simply attached to an NP without affecting the syntactic structure of the sentence. In this latter approach sentence (1) below would be given the structure in (2):

(1) naagtii baa timi
THE WOMAN came



Thus sentence (1) is, in this view, a simple sentence.

In contradistinction, it is argued in Saeed (forthcoming) that structures with baa are in fact reduced cleft constructions and therefore syntactically complex. The line of argument is that baa structures show many characteristics of relative clauses and any attempt to describe them as simple main clauses involves accepting a series of idiosyncratic syntactic constraints to describe features which are irregular for simple main clauses but which occur normally in relative clauses. These constraints would have to cover at least the following areas of the grammar:

1. Case marking nouns
2. Verbal agreement
3. Occurrence of 'weak' (i.e. clitic) subject pronouns
4. Distribution of the negative words ma and aan.

If baa structures are analysed as simple main clauses then they are irregular in each of the above areas and need the following constraints:

1. Subject NPs focussed by baa do not have nominative marking, e.g.

(3) ninku wuu imanayaa
The man is coming

(4) *ninku baa imanaya
THE MAN is coming

(5) ninkaa (+ ninka baa) imanaya
THE MAN is coming

2. Verbs agreeing with subject NPs focussed by baa do not show the full set of person agreements (Andrzejewski's 'restrictive' paradigms; Andrzejewski 1968; 1969; 1978; Hetzron 1974), e.g.

(6) nimankii way yimaadeen
The men came

(7) nimankii baa yimi
THE MEN came

3. Subject NPs focussed by baa cannot occur with coreferential clitic pronouns, e.g.

- | | | | |
|------|------------------------|---|----------|
| (8) | <u>Cali baa yimi</u> | } | ALI came |
| (9) | * <u>Cali buu yimi</u> | | |
| (10) | <u>Cali waa yimi</u> | } | Ali came |
| (11) | <u>Cali wuu yimi</u> | | |

4. Negative sentences with baa have the clause negative wcrċ aan rather than the main sentence form ma, e.g.

- (12) warqaddii ma iman
The letter did not come
- (13) warqaddii aan iman
The letter which did not come
- (14) warqaddii baan (+baa + aan) iman
THE LETTER did not come

However, if baa structures are recognised as complex structures containing (reduced) relative clauses then there is no need for this battery of constraints specific to baa since in each case the behaviour is consistent with that found independently in relative clauses. Because of this Saeed (forthcoming) argues, in a generative framework, for a rule deriving baa structures from waxa clefts, so that, for example, (17) below is derived from (15) via (16):

- (15) waxa jabtay waa silsiladdii
The thing which broke was the chain,
What broke was the chain
- (16) waxa jabtay silsiladdii
What broke was THE CHAIN,
It was THE CHAIN that broke
- (17) silsiladdii baa jabtay
THE CHAIN broke

In this analysis a leftward movement rule applies to the focussed cleft complement, moving it to the front of the sentence, and baa replaces waxa. Although the specific

rule may be unfamiliar, there is nothing new in this recognition of the relatedness of baa structures, waxa clefts, and relative clauses: Andrzejewski (1975:136) suggested a rule similar to this but deriving waxa structures from baa structures, and Antinucci and Puglielli (1980) have suggested that the parallels between the structures be recognised by analysing (and deleting) occurrences of baa in all relative clauses. We refer the reader to Saeed (forthcoming) for detailed arguments against these specific proposals. The general point, though, is clear: if baa structures are seen as some form of cleft structure then the features they share with waxa clefts and relative clauses in general can be naturally predicted. Thus if (18) below is derived from (19)

- (18) nimankii baa yimi
THE MEN came
- (19) waxa yimi nimankii
THE MEN came,
It was THE MEN who came

then the features described earlier can be tied directly to relative clause grammar; as is shown below:

1. Subject marking on nouns

- baa
- (20) *nimanku baa imanaya
- (21) nimankaa (+nimanka + baa) imanaya
THE MEN are coming

- waxa
- (22) *waxa imanaya nimanku
- (23) waxa imanaya nimanka
THE MEN are coming,
It is THE MEN who are coming

relative clause

- (24) *nimanku imanaya
- (25) nimanka imanaya
the men who are coming

2. Verbal agreement

baa(26) *nimankii baa yimaadeen(27) nimankii baa yimi

THE MEN came

waxa(28) *waxa yimaadeen nimankii(29) waxa yimi nimankii

THE MEN came,

It was THE MEN who came

relative clause(30) *nimankii yimaadeen(31) nimankii yimi

the men who came

3. Occurrence of 'weak' subject pronouns

baa(32) *nimankii baa yimi(33) nimankii baa yimi

THE MEN came

waxa(34) *waxay yimi nimankii(35) waxa yimi nimankii

THE MEN came,

It was THE MEN who came

relative clauses(36) *nimankii ay yimi(37) nimankii yimi

the men who came

4. Negative word

baa(38) *warqaddi baa ma iman(39) warqaddii baan (+baa + aan) imanwaxa(40) *waxa ma iman warqaddii(41) waxaan (+ waxa + aan) iman warqaddii

THE LETTER did not come,

It was THE LETTER which did not come

relative clause(42) *warqaddii ma iman(43) warqaddii aan iman

the letter which did not come

It is not our intention here to provide a syntactic analysis of this relative clause behaviour but simply to demonstrate that the apparently irregular behaviour of focus structures with baa is in fact part of the grammar of relative clauses and that this can be recognised by analysing baa structures as a form of (simplified) cleft structure. To be able to do this for Somali the analyst has to posit abstract underlying levels where the surface baa constructions are represented as clefts; in addition one needs recourse to a theoretical framework, such as generative syntax, which allows movement and deletion rules. In section III.2 we discuss the focus word pa in Dirayta, where the cleft-like structure of focus constructions seems much more transparent.

III. pa in Dirayta

III.1 Phonology

The item in question is a phrase-final element with the form [pá].² The fact that the initial consonant is p, rather than b, is entirely what we should expect, for the reflexes of the voiced stops of Proto-East Cushitic have undergone devoicing in most positions in languages of the Konsoid group, so that there is a regular correspondence between Somali b and Dirayta p, e.g.

Somali		Dirayta	
<u>billaawe</u>	dagger	<u>pillaw</u>	knife
<u>ballac</u>	wide	<u>pald-</u>	wide
<u>jilb-o</u>	knees	<u>kilp-ada</u>	knees
<u>kab-o</u>	sandals	<u>hop-a</u>	sandals
<u>roob</u>	rain	<u>roop</u>	rain

The discrepancy in vowel length poses only a slight problem, since during the evolution of Dirayta from Proto-Konsoid vowels in word-final position suffered severe erosion. The process had the effect of reducing unaccented short vowels to the point of virtual inaudibility while shortening all long vowels. Since this diachronic rule affected only vowels in word-final position it has resulted in some cases of surface alternations in Dirayta involving vowel length, in which certain suffixed word forms are pronounced with long vowels while their unsuffixed counterparts are pronounced with what (impressionistically) sound no longer than short vowels elsewhere. In the following examples words with underlying long vowels finally (a. and b.) are contrasted with words ending either in a consonant or in one of the evanescent unaccented short vowels (a' and b').

	unsuffixed form	suffixed form
a.	<u>herr[a]</u> dog	<u>herr[a:]ss</u> for a dog
	<u>maak[a]</u> snake	<u>maak[a:]ss</u> for a snake
b.	<u>hin hull[a]</u> this is a guinea-fowl	<u>?amm hin hull[a:]m</u> this is not a guinea-fowl
	<u>hin k'unɔ[a]</u> these are seeds	<u>?amm hin k'unɔ[a:]m</u> there are not seeds
a'.	<u>?an/?an[a]</u> me	<u>?an[a]ss</u> for me
	<u>?oyh</u> grass	<u>?oyh[a]ss</u> for grass

<u>mann/maan[a]</u>	<u>maan[a]ss</u>
what?	for what?
<u>?inn[u]</u>	<u>?inn[o]ss</u>
us	for us
b'. <u>hin keltayt</u>	<u>?amm hin keltaytem</u>
this is a baboon	this is not a baboon
<u>hin pillaw</u>	<u>?amm hin pillawem</u>
this is a knife	this is not a knife

It is unfortunately not possible to demonstrate by means of such an alternation that the vowel of pa is underlyingly long in the synchronic phonology of Dirayta. This is for the simple reason that pa occurs only phrase-finally, i.e. it does not occur with a following suffix. Moreover, although length can be reconstructed for final unaccented vowels since these have distinct reflexes in Dirayta, it is not possible to pinpoint uniquely the source of an accented short final vowel, which could be the reflex of either *V or *VV. The point could be established if one or other of the southern Konsoid dialects, in which length distinctions in unaccented final vowels were not neutralized, happens to have preserved the item under discussion. In any future research on Konso, for example, it would be worth bearing this in mind.

To summarize then it seems that at least as far as phonetic form is concerned there is no reason why Dirayta pa and Somali baa should not be cognates. It remains now to consider pa in terms of its syntactic function.

III.2 The function of pa

In general it is true to say that Dirayta does not employ an overt copula. The predicate in equational sentences is expressed simply by a NP the head of which appears in the unmarked (absolutive) case, e.g.

(44) hin rika

- this is a tooth-stick
 (45) namse ?antu ?akk Jiraane
 man-the I saw Jiraane
 The man whom I saw is/was Jiraane

However, if such a predicate requires emphasis pa may be added, e.g.

- (46) namse ?antu ?akk Jiraane pa
 The man whom I saw is/was JIRAANE

One device which is particularly common for emphasis involves a pseudocleft sentence which has the overall structure of an equational sentence, e.g.

- (47) ?iyyaan ?att dakayt ?erpa
 What you heard are/were LIES

The head of the relative clause functioning as subject in a pseudocleft is one of a set of three proforms: ?iy, ?it and ?iyyaan. The selection of one or other of these is determined by the gender and number (but not person) properties of the head of the predicate NP. Thus:

- (48) ?iy ?antu k'al ?orkeet
 [mas] [mas]
 What I slaughtered was A HE-GOAT
- (49) ?it ?antu k'al hellemmat
 [fem] [fem]
 What I slaughtered was A EWE
- (50) ?iyyaan ?antu k'al k'olta
 [plu] [plu]
 What I slaughtered were GOATS

In view of the emphasizing or focussing function of the pseudocleft sentence, it is not surprising to find that the emphatic element pa can occur after the predicate. Thus:

- (51) ?iyyaan ?att dakayt ?erpa pa
 What you heard were LIES

According to the analysis we have been arguing for, a Somali sentence with subject focus such as

- (52) ninkii baa faras xiray
 THE MAN tied a horse

and a Dirayta sentence with a subject focus such as

- (53) namse fart hidd
 THE MAN tied a horse

result from a rule of focus fronting, and have as their respective inputs cleft type sentences such as

- (54) waxa faras xiray ninkii
 The one who tied a horse was THE MAN
- (55) ?iy fart hidd namse (w/namse pa)
 The one who tied a horse was THE MAN

(Attention is directed to the functional equivalence of Somali waxa and Dirayta ?iy (etc.) in such sentences.)

Since pa can appear in the predicate NP in Dirayta, we might well expect - if our hypothesis is correct - to find that pa could be carried over with the focussed NP to the front of the sentence. And this is exactly what we do find. Thus:

- (56) namse pa ?iy fart hidd
 THE MAN tied a horse,
 It is THE MAN who tied a horse

One important difference between the syntax of Dirayta and Somali emerges here, for whereas focus fronting in Somali requires deletion of the head of the relative clause the counterpart rule in Dirayta requires that it be retained if pa is present. Thus while the preceding sentence is grammatical, the following is not.

- (57) *namse pa fart hidd

Somali (52) should be compared here with Dirayta (56) and (57).

IV. pa-"less" focus structures in Dirayta

It would be not correct to give the impression that pa is generally employed when NPs are focussed in Dirayta. In fact focussed NPs containing pa are marked constructions and only seem to occur when there is need of some special emphasis. Nevertheless, whether they contain pa or not we believe that all focussed NPs have to be accounted for in essentially the same way. Our reasons for claiming this are virtually identical to those advanced earlier in the case of Somali, and are as follows.

1. Whether a subject NP that is focussed contains pa or not its head noun fails to show the expected nominative case marking. It should be added that when indefinite only masculine nouns show segmentally distinct nominative forms; when definite however, a nominative: absolutive distinction is seen in every type of noun, e.g.

	absolutive		nominative	
	indef.	def.	indef.	def.
mas. 'man	<u>nam</u>	<u>namse</u>	<u>namat</u>	<u>namatin</u>
fem. 'girl'	<u>?inant</u>	<u>?inantse</u>	<u>?inant</u>	<u>?inantin</u>
plu. 'nose'	<u>siina</u>	<u>siinase</u>	<u>siina</u>	<u>siinasin</u>

Table 1

- (58) namatin hetuffi
The man got hungry
- (59) *namatin tuff
THE MAN got hungry
- (60) namse tuff
THE MAN got hungry

The last sentence should be compared with

- (61) ?iy tuff namse

The one who got hungry was THE MAN

Another important thing emerges here. Namely that when a NP is focussed the preverbal sentence classifying element he cannot be present (compare (58) with (60)). It is significant that he is also missing from relative clauses. These facts can be seen as being exactly parallel to the behaviour of Somali waa.

2. There is an absence of full agreement-marking between the verb and its subject in sentences in which the subject is focussed. Leaving aside consideration of the proclitic subject pronouns (for which see 3. below) the Dirayta verb paradigm generally distinguishes five forms by means of inflectional suffixes. This can be exemplified with the perfect affirmative of tuff- 'become hungry'.

1s	<u>tuffi</u>	← 1	1p	<u>tuffini</u>	3
2s	<u>tuffiti</u>	←	2p	<u>tuffiteni</u>	4
3ms	<u>tuffi</u>	← 2	3p	<u>tuffeni</u>	5
4fs	<u>tuffiti</u>	←			

When a subject NP is focussed the verb appears in a maximally unmarked form - a form which happens to be identical to the form found in a relative clause with a 3ms subject, e.g.

- (62) namse tuff
THE MAN got hungry
- (63) ?inantse tuff
THE GIRL got hungry
- (64) *?inantse tuffiti
THE GIRL got hungry
- (65) ?orrse tuff
THE PEOPLE got hungry
- (66) *?orrse tuffeni

THE PEOPLE got hungry

(62), (63) and (65) should be compared with the relative clause verb in

(67) namatin tuff hetoi
The man who got hungry died

It will be noted here that the number of agreement possibilities in Dirayta is less than seen in the "restrictive" paradigm in Somali, though this difference has no great significance for what we are considering.

While the parallel between this agreement behaviour and that in Somali focus structures is clear there is a problem here for the derivation we propose in Dirayta. That is while the above agreement pattern is true for structures without a surface pa and ?iy cleft head, when the latter occur a fuller set of agreement is found, e.g.

(68) ?inant pa ?it fart hiddit
THE GIRL tied a horse,
It was THE GIRL who tied a horse

(69) ?inn pa ?iyyaan fart hidditen
YOU (plu.) tied a horse,
It was YOU (plu.) who tied a horse

(70) ?innu pa ?iyyaan fart hiddin
WE tied a horse,
It was WE who tied a horse

There are two points to be made here. Firstly, there seems to be some flexibility of agreement in this area which needs further research; for example an alternative for (70) which had the reduced (i.e. 3ms) form was also given, viz:

(71) ?innu pa ?iyyaan fart hidd
WE tied a horse,
It was WE who tied a horse

Secondly, while this phenomenon must be left as a problem at this early stage of inquiry, it must be seen as part of a larger problem concerning agreement in these languages, since it is clear in (72) below that one would not expect agreement across a relative clause boundary (as indicated in (73)).⁴

(72) hedd pa ?iy fart hiddit
YOU tied a horse,
It was YOU who tied a horse

(73) [[hedd pa] [[?iy fart hiddit]]]
S NP NP S
↑ agreement ↑

This is reminiscent of problems in Somali discussed in Saeed (forthcoming), where semantic considerations override the agreement predicted by the syntactic structure.⁵

3. In a sentence in which a subject NP is focussed a coreferential pronoun cannot occur. There are however three main differences between Dirayta and Somali with regard to the "weak" pronouns:
- In Dirayta such forms only distinguish categories of person, whereas in Somali categories of number and gender, as well as person, are distinguished.
 - In Dirhayta 3rd person forms are not overtly expressed, whereas, in Somali every "weak" pronoun has an overt form.
 - In Dirayta such forms are proclitic, and most commonly, attach to the verb itself. In Somali however the "weak" pronouns attach as postclitics to non-verb elements.
- The Dirayta forms can be exemplified with the perfect affirmative of tuff-, viz:

1s	<u>Ntuff</u>	1p	<u>Ntuffin</u>
2s	<u>Ctuffit</u>	2p	<u>Ctuffiten</u>
3ms	<u>tuff</u>	3p	<u>tuffen</u>
3fs.	<u>tuffit</u>		

(In the paradigm upper case N- represents a prenasalization process homorganic to the stem-initial consonant, and upper case C- represents a complete copying of the stem-initial consonant.)

When subject NPs are focussed these pronouns cannot occur, e.g.

(74) ?antu ?arap Ndei
I came HERE

(75) *?anaysu Ndei
I came,
It is I who came

(76) ?anaysu dei
I came,
It is I who came

(76) should be compared with (77) and (78).

(77) ?iy dei ?anaysu (~?an)
I came,
The one who came was ME

(78) *?iy Ndei ?anaysu (~?an)
I came,
The one who came was ME

4. Negative sentences in which a subject NP is focussed require the negative auxiliary verb diyy-, rather than the main clause negating construction ?amm...-m, e.g.

(79) ?inantin ?amm hekaltem
The girl did not go in

(80) *?inantse ?amm kalem
THE GIRL did not go in
It was THE GIRL who did not go in

(81) ?inantse kala diyy
THE GIRL did not go in,
It was THE GIRL who did not go in

Once again this situation can only be compared with the behaviour observed for relative clause negation, e.g.

(82) ?it kala diyy ?inantse
THE GIRL did not go in,
The one who did not go in was THE GIRL

(83) ?inantin kala diitt
The girl who did not go in

We conclude that the only linguistically satisfying explanation for the syntactic properties of focus structures in Dirayta - even when these do not contain pa - has to be one in which these are seen to fall out as general properties of relative clauses in the language.

V. Summary and conclusions

In the preceding sections of this paper we have been at pains to demonstrate certain striking similarities in the syntax of focus structures in the two East Cushitic languages Somali and Dirayta. Table 2 sets out the salient features of these similarities.

	feature:	1	2	3	4	5
Subject NP in focus		-	-	- ⁶	-	+
No NP in focus		+	+	+	+	-

Table 2

(In the table the features are: 1. occurrence of he or waa, 2. nominative case marking, 3. full agreement between the head of the subject NP and the verb, 4. occurrence of the "weak" coreferential pronoun, 5. occurrence of relative

clause form of the negative.)

These similarities are such that it would seem necessary within a transformational generative framework to propose a common basic analysis for the two languages at least for sentences having subject NP focus. This analysis proposes to derive focussed subject NPs from underlying cleft type constructions in which the focussed NP functions as a nominal predicate and has as its subject an NP consisting of a relative clause the head of which is lexically empty. (We refer to this as the "cleft head".) The derivation requires us to posit a transformational rule which transposes the two NPs. We refer to this as "focus fronting". In these essentials the analysis is identical for the two languages. There are some differences of course, and these are instructive.

The fact that in Dirayta pa can occur not only following a focussed subject NP (i.e. after focus fronting has applied) but can also occur following the nominal predicate in a pseudocleft sentence (i. e. before focus fronting applies) adds further plausibility to the cleft analysis of baa structures in Somali, and indeed, on the basis of the Dirayta evidence it may even prove preferable to posit an underlying baa as some form of copula in Somali, rather than to replace waxa by an introduced baa as in earlier work (Saeed forthcoming). The weak point in the latter approach is that one has to couple together two events (deletion of waxa and insertion of baa) which have no obvious logical connection with each other. In Dirayta both the cleft head and pa are carried over from the pseudocleft.

Another area of difference is that pa constructions in Dirayta are marked. This is in sharp contrast with Somali, where baa - after focus fronting at least - can never be deleted. (Conversely if baa were to be posited as an underlying copula, it would always be necessary to delete it if focus fronting, which is itself an optional rule, failed to apply.) For Dirayta on the other hand it would be ne-

cessary to propose two quite independent and optional deletion rules: one for pa in pseudoclefts, and the other for pa in focus fronted NPs, and in the latter case it would be necessary to include the deletion of the cleft head together with pa.

Summarizing these differences we have the following:

Focus fronting - Somali

(Optionally) front NP and delete cleft head

Focus fronting - Dirayta

(Optionally) front NP

(Optionally) delete pa and cleft head

One final question of interest concerns the status of pa and baa. In support of our general analysis it would be satisfying if we could say that both these elements are some kind of copula. However, it would certainly not be possible to justify this synchronically for Somali, and in the case of Dirayta some of the evidence necessary to confirm or disconfirm a copula hypothesis is simply not available.⁷ This question has therefore to be left for future research.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ Unlike the other Somali focus word ayaa.
- ² Apart from a few phonetic representations (given in square brackets) accentual diacritics are not included in the Dirayta examples.
- ³ Details of the interaction between gender, case and focus in noun inflections in Dirayta appear in Hayward (1981).

⁴ Note that it is not possible to analyse (72) as a relative clause with ?iy as some form of relative pronoun and with hedd pa as its head, since the latter would have to appear in the nominative form ?att. Secondly, a sentence such as (72a) (analysed in (72b)) below demonstrates that agreement is indeed between hedd and the verb in (72), rather than between ?iy and the verb.

(72a) ?iy fart hidd hedd pa

YOU tied a horse,

The one who tied a horse was YOU

(72b) [[[?iy fart hidd]] [hedd pa]]

S NP S NP

↑ agreement ↑

In (72a) the normal clause internal agreement applies.

⁵ An example of semantically based agreement across a relative clause boundary in Somali occurs in the equivalent pair of sentences (i) and (ii) below:

(i) [waxa dhacay] waa malqacad

rel.cl.

↑ agreement ↑

(ii) [waxa dhacday] waa malqacad

rel.cl.

↑ agreement ↑

What fell was a spoon

In (i) the normal masculine agreement occurs within the clause while in (ii) a feminine noun outside the clause governs the clause verb - contrary to what is expected by the syntactic structure.

⁶ With the complications noted above in connection with pa in Dirayta.

⁷ It is perhaps relevant to point out that in Arbore (another Omo-Tana language) it is entirely transparent

that the focus elements are synchronically identical to the elements which obligatorily occur in equational sentences (cf. Hayward forthcoming, Ch.3).

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