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SOME TRACES OF SOMALI HISTORY IN MAAY DIALECT

According to southern Somalis, the Somali language fall into two main dialectal categories known as Maxaa and Maay. The first is known by several linguistics as Common Somali dialect and the second, as Central Somali. The term are both synonyms to the English interrogative word "what". Since Maay is the name that Somalis use more frequently for this dialect, I think that it should be preferred.

Now let us observe in Maay dialect the nouns of the two most important Somali livestock (camel and cow) in connection with the Somali history.

I. Somali and Oromo

It has generally been assumed that the Oromo occupied much, if not all, of northern Somali prior to the Somali people.

In an attempt to demonstrate the presence of Oromo further east in the Horn, Cerulli (1957) has argued that several place names in northern Somali regions refer to Galla. The root gaal in the names Gaala'ood Gaal-eri and Gaalkacyo does not mean Galla nor Gaal in the meaning ("pagan", "infidel", or "non-Muslim" in general) as H. S. Lewis (1966) argued, but means geel, "camel".

If we analyse all the compound words containing the noun gaal we see that they can all be construed to mean or refer to "camel". For example:

1. Haruubgaal is the name of a wooden container used specifically for milking camels.
2. Xero-gaal means fenced in area for camels.
3. Baargaal is a place name, but it means camel's name.
4. Gaaljecel is the name of a Somali clan of camel herders.

Thus the name can more logically be construed as "camel-loving" than "infidel-loving".

5. Abgaal, another clan name, seems to mean "ancestor-camel" and this is borne out by the tradition which states that the original ancestor, abandoned in the middle of a herd of camels, was saved by a camel.

6. Ilgaal is the name of a wild fruit which resembles a camel's eye.

7. Dabogaalle, "squirrel", literally means possessor or possessing a camel's tail: dabo-gaal-le (tail-camel-possessing). In fact there is a certain similarity between the tails of these two very different animals.

8. Finally, sangaalle, as defined in Yaasiin's dictionary is a worm often found in the nostrils of camel (san, "nose").

These compound nouns indicate that the noun geel-a was originally gaal-a. Thus it would seem that this word, in standard Somali has undergone a vowel-change (from gaal to geel) but has remained unchanged in compound nouns, where it has been fossilized as gaal. This appears in compound nouns in two ways and its pronunciation varies according to its position in the compound: when it follows a noun in which it modified, it is an advanced vowel, e.g. haruubgaal. When it precedes a verb, instead, it is not advanced, e.g. gaaljecel.

In southern Somali dialects and in other Eastern Cushitic languages the noun camel has remained gaal:

Maay:	<u>gaal</u>
Jiiddu:	<u>gaal</u>
Dabarre:	<u>gaal</u>
Rendille:	<u>gaal</u>
Boni:	<u>g'aal</u>
Cawwada:	<u>kaal</u>

In an analogous case, the word "horn" is known in Northern and Coastal Somali as gees, but in:

Maay:	<u>gaas</u>
Jiiddu:	<u>gaas</u>
Dabarre:	<u>gaas</u>
Rendille:	<u>gaas</u>
Dasenech:	<u>gaas</u>

Cawwada:	<u>gaase</u>
Werize:	<u>kaaso</u>
Tasamay:	<u>gaaska</u>
Gidole:	<u>kaasa</u>
Afar:	<u>gayse</u>

## II. Samaale

Somalis believe that their name Somali as they are known today, is originated from the name of their ancestral forefather Samaale. Though the process of change from Samaale to Somali is linguistically not clear, there are certain oral as well as written records, supporting the afore mentioned idea:

1. The first and the most ancient record, mentioning the Somali name, in an Ethiopian document, it contained in the victory song of Negus Yeshag, who reigned from 1414 to 1429. The appropriate verse of such song reads Samaalee Yingar, "tell to the Somali". According to this, one can deduce that six centuries ago, the name was similar to Samaale rather than Somali.
2. Maay dialect speakers believe that, Sab and Samaale were two brothers who owned a cow whose calf died. Since milking a lamenting cow is not an easy task, one had to allure it by fondling it and other had to milk it. By the application of this technique, they used to get milk out of the cow. Eventually they were named after their work roles as sab, "to allure", and sac-maale, "cow-milker".
3. A man from Ceelbuur District (Galgaduud Region) who actually doesn't belong to Maay speakers once told me that his mother used to refer to Irir-Sacmaale whenever she spoke of her genealogy.

On the basis of the above mentioned traditional and historical references, one can come up with the assumption that the original source of the term Somali traces back to sac-maale. In due course the word underwent a slight change be-

coming Samaale by loosing its pharyngeal ç. This is a common phenomenon in several Eastern Cushitic languages which lose the two pharyngeal fricatives x (ħ) and ç (ʕ) or merge them with the glottals (h) (ʔ) respectively, e.g. Proto East Cushitic.

Magac, magaca (name)

Somali:	<u>magac</u>
Maay:	<u>magà</u>
Rendille:	<u>magaca</u>
Baiso:	<u>meege</u>
Dasenech:	<u>maaya</u>
Arbore:	<u>make'e</u>
Borana:	<u>mek'a</u>
Konso:	<u>maca</u>
Afar:	<u>migac</u>
Saha:	<u>migà</u>

Warxan (spear)

Somali:	<u>waran</u>
Maay:	<u>waran</u>
Rendille:	<u>warxan</u>
Oromo:	<u>waraan-a</u>
Dullay:	<u>orxan</u>

Malax (pus)

Somali:	<u>malax</u>
Maay:	<u>malà</u>
Oromo:	<u>mala-a</u>
Gidole:	<u>malah</u>
Konso:	<u>mala</u>
Afar:	<u>malax</u>

Another instance of the loss of the pharyngeal is represented by the very word samaale in Maay, which nowadays means "cow milker".

These ideas pertaining to the word Somali are only tentative and do not contradict with Prof. Heine's hypothesis that the proto-Sam community camel, but furthermore reveals that du-

ring early Sam migration the Eastern Sam acquired cattle breeding before crossing the Shabelle river where the division between Sab and Samaale communities took place. The works of some scholars support the idea in question: Murdock (1959) correlates the Somali occupation of Horn with their acquisition of cattle milking techniques acquired from South Arabians:

Fleming (1964) in conformity with Murdock writes:

"Presuming that such contact with South Arabians would have originated in the Harar area, there is good reason to believe that old Saho-Afar would have been the first to borrow milking techniques and that the Somali in Juba watershed would have borrowed the techniques before the ancestral Galla for reasons of sheer geography, they were closer to the Harar area than the Galla were."

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