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HELMUT BUSKE VERLAG HAMBURG

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MORE ON "HYBRID VERBS" AND OTHER
GRAMMATICAL CATEGORIES IN SOMALI

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1.1 What have been called 'hybrid verbs'¹ belong to 2 different formal subclasses: radical and derived items. For example:

RADICAL

weyn 'big'

DERIVED

jaban 'broken'

They have in common the following characteristics:

I: syntactically:

a) they can both function as verbal phrases (VP):

- (1) miisku waa yar yahay
table-the(S) F small is
'the table is small (!)'
- (2) miiska baa yar
table-the F small
'the table (!) is small'
- (3) miisku waa jaban yahay
table-the(S) F broken is
'the table is broken (!)'
- (4) miiska baa jaban
table-the F broken
'the table (!) is broken'

b) they can function as noun modifiers in a structure which can be interpreted as deriving from an underlying relative clause:

- (5) miiska yar ma jecli
table-the small not (I) am fond of
'I don't like the small table'
- (6) miiska jaban ma jecli
table-the broken not (I) am fond of
'I don't like the broken table'

c) they cannot function as heads of the noun phrases (NH):

- (7) *weyn ma jecli
 *big not (I) am fond of
- (8) *guduudan ma jecli
 *red not (I) am fond of

Only radicals, in very limited contexts, can occur as NHs when used with elements endowed with referential meaning, such as definite articles, anaphoric and deictic elements:

- (9) weynka waan rabaa
 big-the F+I want
 'I want(!) the big one'

II: from the morphological point of view both subclasses share the same characteristics:

a) when functioning as predicates they co-occur with the verb 'to be' in the present tense (see examples (1) and (3)) and get endings for the past tense which are identical with the corresponding endings of the verb 'to be':

- (10) miisku waa yaraa
 table-the(S) F small-was
 'the table was small(!)'
- (11) miisku waa jabnaa
 table-the(S) F broken-was
 'the table was broken(!)'
- (12) adigu waa yarayd
 you(S) F little-were
 'you were little(!)'
- (13) adigu waa jirranayd
 you(S) F sick-were
 'you were sick(!)'²

b) they both get reduplication of the initial part of the root when the subject is plural, p.ex.:

- (14) nimanku waa waaweyn yihiin
 men-the(S) F big are
 'the men are big(!)'
- (15) miisasku waa jabjaban yihiin
 tables-the(S) F broken are
 'the tables are broken(!)'³

III: from a semantic point of view both subclasses function as predicates of the sentence in which they occur and express 'stativity' with the only difference that forms in -an express states as resulting from a previous change; they may then be considered as past participles of the corresponding 1st conjugation verbs in -am with 'change of state' meaning, acquiring therefore an adjectival character.

Given all the characteristics so far considered, we may interpret the two subclasses as belonging to the category of adjectives, since they need the copula to perform their function as predicates. This is evidently so in the present tense while it may appear less evident for the past tense. There are two possible alternative analyses for this:

- a) the endings (-aa, -ayd, -aa etc.) are the result of the deletion of the root *ah* of the verb 'to be' in a process of grammaticalization;
- b) the present tense is a new periphrastical form which is a result of a process of transformation from verbs to adjectives.

There is no definitive evidence for one or the other of these two alternative analyses within Somali. From a synchronic point of view, there is no big difference between the two possible interpretations except for some consequences that the categorization of these items as 'hybrid verbs' entails; in order to get a consistent interpretative frame of the class of 'hybrid verbs', data are sometimes forced.

1.2 Once accepted the category of 'hybrid verbs', their inflection has been interpreted in a way parallel to that of other verbs,

belonging to both the strong and weak conjugations and consequently an 'extensive' and a 'restrictive' paradigm have been devised⁴: 'extensive' paradigm in all the main sentences in which the subject is not focalized by *baa*, 'restrictive' paradigm when the subject is focalized. From a merely syntactic point of view, such a distinction sounds satisfying, but from a morphological point of view the pattern that derives from such an interpretation is not consistent: we observe that the distinction between 'extensive' and 'restrictive' paradigm in strong and weak verbs doesn't imply presence *v e r s u s* absence of the endings; it rather means that in the 'restrictive' paradigm there is no distinction between singular and plural for the 2nd and 3rd person, but the gender distinction is maintained and also the 1st pl. ending is maintained as in the 'extensive' paradigm.

'Hybrid verbs' would be characterized as follows:

a) for the present tense, the 'extensive' paradigm would imply the presence of a full form of the verb 'to be' or of the prefixes plus endings of the corresponding full forms of the verb 'to be':

- (16) *Cali waa weyn yahay*
Cali F big is
 'C is big(!)'
 or:
 (17) *Cali waa weynyay*
Cali F big-is
 'C. is big'(!);

the 'restrictive' paradigm would completely cancel any item following the theme of the 'hybrid verb'

- (18) *Cali baa weyn*
Cali F big
 'C.(!) is big'.

b) for the past tense, the 'extensive' paradigm would entail the

endings of the corresponding forms of the verb 'to be' after the theme of the 'hybrid verb', while the 'restrictive' paradigm would exhibit the same endings but in a restricted form, i.e. without distinguishing 2nd and 3rd pl. from their corresponding singular forms.

1.2.1 Apart from the discrepancy between the past and the present tense (in the present tense the endings are cancelled in the 'restrictive' paradigm, while in the past tense they only appear slightly modified in the 'restrictive' paradigm in comparison with the 'extensive' one), it's a bit hard to accept the zero-morpheme that occurs in sentences with focalized subject as a 'restrictive' paradigm of the 'hybrid verb' (as if the alternating paradigms were: *-ahay, -tahay, -yahay, etc.* as the 'extensive' paradigm of the present of the verb, and *z e r o* as the 'restrictive' paradigm of the same tense). On the other hand, it's not even possible to interpret the alternating endings as the two paradigms of the verb 'to be', because elsewhere the alternance between 'extensive' and 'restrictive' paradigm of the present of the verb 'to be' is interpreted as an alternance between: *ahay, tahay, etc.* and *ah*. This results as evident from the analysis of the sentences with noun predicate:

- (19) *Cali macallin wuu yahay*
Cali teacher F+Pr. is
 'C. is (a) teacher(!)'

versus

- (20) *Cali baa macallin ah*
Cali F teacher is
 'C.(!) is teacher'.

Thus the thematic form of the 'hybrid verbs' does not represent the 'restrictive' form of the verb 'to be', because elsewhere (Puglielli 1981:36) such a form is interpreted as being *ah*, and it looks a very unusual form for the 'restrictive' paradigm of the 'hybrid verbs', because in this case the 'restrictive' form

would entail zero-endings, while in all other cases 'restrictive' paradigms have got endings, although modified in comparison with the corresponding 'extensive' ones.

1.2.2 At this point the comparison with other Cushitic languages can give an interpretative clue: if we observe the same structure in Rendille (Heine 1976:176,223 and Hudson 1977) which does not have a distinction between 'extensive' and 'restrictive' paradigm, we see that the syntactic behaviour of the predicate expressed by an adjective or a noun is identical with the Somali one: when the subject of a sentence with adjectival predicate is focalized, no copula occurs, while in the same case, when the predicate is a noun, a copula is present in a form which is called 'i n v a r i a b l e', namely -e (structurally, if not even etymologically, identical with Somali *ah*). When the subject is not focalized, the copula occurs in the sentence in its 'variable' form (*ahi, tihi, yihi, nihi, tihin, yihin*) whatever be the predicate, i.e. an adjective or a noun. The cases of lack of copula must then be interpreted as 'nominal sentences', since it's not a question in this language of 'restrictive' paradigm.

At this point the same interpretation may be applied to the Somali structure, where the presence of the focus-indicator *baa* on the subject would entail the following consequences as for what concerns the predicate morphology:

- a) in weak (and strong) verbs, the formal distinctions between sg. and pl. are cancelled, but the masculine/feminine distinction is retained as well as the form for 1st pl.
- b) with adjectival or nominal predicates, the copula is cancelled in the present indicative for all persons, either the copula in its 'full' form (i.e. the inflected root *ah*), or in the reduced form (i.e. the desinential element).

In case b) a further distinction has to be drawn between adjectival and nominal predicate: while the adjectival predicate can do without the copula, because the distribution of the elements of the sentence is sufficient to indicate which is the syntactic

role of each of them (a sentence as: (18) *Cali baa weyn* indicates that *Cali* and *weyn* do not represent a nominal cluster, which would sound: *Cali weyn baa*, and that *weyn* represents the predicate of the sentence even in absence of a copula, because *weyn*, which does not constitute a nominal head, cannot represent a further argument of the sentence), the same structure cannot be used when the predicate is a noun. A sentence as: (21) **Cali baa macallin* is not possible because it doesn't indicate the syntactic role of *macallin*, there are no elements that indicate that *macallin* is the predicate (while in: (22) *Cali waa macallin* the verbal focus indicator indicates that what follows is the predicate): the noun *macallin* then could be interpreted as the second argument of a sentence where the verb is lacking. This is probably the reason why, when a sentence with nominal predicate is focalized on the subject, an equativizing element is needed between the subject noun and the predicate noun: such an element is *ah* which is not to be interpreted as 'restrictive' paradigm of the verb 'to be', since it appears as a radical form, identical for all persons, without distinction between 3rd masculine and feminine, but rather as a radical adjective. As all other adjectives, *ah* appears in the thematic form, when the subject is focalized by *baa* while in other cases, when the subject is not focalized, the theme gets inflectional endings which transform the adjective into a verb with some peculiarities, the most important of which is the contemporary presence of endings and prefixes, limited to the present tense.

1.2.3 From the diachronic point of view, it is perhaps possible to try to reconstruct how this inflection has been formed: as Bell (1953) points out, it is probable that there was an ancient copula, now disappeared except in a few fossilized forms such as *weeye*, *maayo*, which can be reconstructed as **ye*. When this copula disappeared, it was replaced by the adjective *ah* inflected with prefixes derived from the 'strong' conjugation and endings derived from the 'weak' one. The recent formation of this copula would appear also from its unusual inflection, as results from the following considerations:

- 1) in the present tense the root *ah* is inflected with prefixes and endings, while in the past tense it has got endings only and this feature makes it different from both weak and strong verbs.
- 2) the endings are apparently derived from those of weak verbs, but in a not consistent way: if we reconstruct, following Heine's indications (Heine 1978), two series of suffixes for weak verbs, one for the infectum and the other for the perfectum, such as

infectum	perfectum	
-a	-aty	
-t/a	-t/aty	
-a	-aty	
-t/a	-t/aty	
-n/a	-n/aty	
-t/aan	-t/een	} (< -aan + 1?)
-aan	-een	

we notice that the root *ah* gets its inflection deriving the present tense mainly from the endings of the perfectum, but for 2nd and 3rd pl., which are taken from the infectum, while in the past tense the 1st sg. and 3rd sg. masc. resemble the infectum endings, while all other persons have got the ending *-ay*, which is typical of the perfectum.

3) a further peculiarity of this paradigm appears in the gender markers of the past tense which come after the endings (p.ex. *ah-ay-d*); this happens also for person-markers, at least for 1st pl. (*ah-ay-n*) and also for 2nd and 3rd pl., where the ending *-ay* is redetermined by *-t-een*, *-een*, which are personal endings typical of the perfectum.

4) the endings for negative present are also peculiar: instead of forms with vowel *-o*, typical of weak verbs (*-o*, *-tid*, *-o*, *-to*, *-no*, *-taan*, *-aan*); the verb 'to be' has got the endings: *-i*, *-id*, *-a*, *-a*, *-n*, *idin*, *-a*.

From all the above considerations we may conclude that the inflection of adjectives results from a process of grammatical-

zation due to the deletion of the root of the verb 'to be'.

2.1 Some adjectives have a nominal abstract counterpart which can be used in predication with an identical value; p.ex.: *fudud*, *fudayd* 'light', *kulul*, *kulayl* 'hot', etc.

The difference between the two forms lies in that *fudayd* can occur as a NH, while *fudud* cannot, since it's an adjective:

(23) *Cali fudaydka baan ku nacay*
Cali lightness-the F+Pr for (I) dislike
 'I don't like C. for his light character(!)'

(24) **Cali fududka baan ku nacay*
 *C. light-the F+I for (I) dislike

When *fudayd* occurs as a VP, it triggers off the copula 'to be' (except in the sentences where verbal focus *waa* can co-occur with the noun only in the 3rd ps.sg. which sounds like a nominal phrase in the present tense; compare:

(25) *Cali waa macallin*
Cali F teacher
 'C. is a teacher(!)'

versus

(26) *Cali macallin wuu yahay*
Cali teacher F+Pr. is
 'C. is a teacher(!)'

as happens whenever the predicate is not represented by a verb or an adjective, but by a noun).

The set of these pairs, such as:

(27) *fudud-fudayd* 'light'
bisil-bisayl 'ripe'
nugul-nugayl 'weak'
culus-culays 'heavy'

cusub-cusayb 'new'
ugub-ugayb 'virgin'

are peculiar in that the abstract noun does not seem to be derived from the adjective, as happens in all other cases (weyn > weynaan; jaban > jabnaan, etc.) and correspondingly the abstract noun can occur as the predicate while others cannot (compare: buuggu fudayd wuu yahay 'the book is light (lit.: 'lightness')' / *buuggu weynaan wuu yahay 'the book is bigness').

The behaviour of nouns such as fudayd seems peculiar if confronted with that of other abstract derived nouns but it's not if we compare it to all other items in the Somali lexicon that can be considered lexical nouns (i.e. subcategorized [+N] in the lexicon). It is this the case of nouns such as: run 'truth', been 'lie', gabar 'girl', macallin 'teacher' etc.; in fact, all these nouns can occur both as NHs and as predicates. This is possible because from a semantic point of view even nouns can be described as a set of elementary predicates whose function is to identify a referent. Notice that the identified referents need not be of the same nature, cfr. the difference between physical object referents and abstract referents. Therefore a noun is used as a NH in a noun phrase in its referential function, whereas it loses its referential function when used as a predicate. Beside these nouns characterized as [+N], there are roots which may be indifferently either N or V, according to the morphology attached to them, p.ex.: qosol > qosolka 'the laugh', > qoslay '(I) laughed'.

If we consider the nouns from these roots, they may be distinguished into three subgroups:

a) thematic nouns (TN) which are characterized as [-stative] such as: fal 'to dig'; kallah 'to move early in the morning', which can occur as NHs but not as predicates, because the predicate function is performed by the corresponding verbs. When they occur as NHs, they have got an abstract meaning.

b) TNs which are characterized as [+stative] such as: wabax 'sated

with water', ilbax 'civilized', which cannot occur as NHs except in the case that, by a kind of semantic shift, they are used to identify a referent which is a physical object, or in the case that an anaphoric or deictic element added to them, by itself creates reference. They usually occur as predicates:

- (28) *wabax ma jecli
*sated not (I) like
(29) *ilbax waa yimid
*civilized F came

are not acceptable, while the following may be accepted:

- (30) ilbaxii waa yimid
civilized-that F came
'that civilized (person) has come(!)'
(31) wabaxii waa yimid
sated-that F came
'that sated (animal) has come(!)'

Certainly acceptable are:

- (32) xayawaankaas wabax waa yahay
animal-that sated F is
'that animal is sated (with water)(!)'
(33) Cali ilbax wuu yahay
Cali civilized F+he is
'C. is civilized(!)'

When used as predicates, these substantives behave syntactically as nouns (i.e. they need the copula, they can be focalized with baa the focus indicator waa cannot precede them as with adjectives):

- (34) xayawaankaas wabax buu ahaa
animal-that sated F+he was
'that animal was sated (with water)(!)'
(35) Cali ilbax buu ahaa
Cali civilized F+he was
'C. was civilized (!)'

c) some of the TNs have come to identify physical objects and as such they behave exactly as nouns characterized as [+N]: abuurka 'seeds', magool 'sprout'. These roots may get a derivational suffix which turns them into an abstract noun which can occur as NHs:

- (36) wabixid (-da) 'to be sated with water'
 ilbixid (-da) 'to be civilized'
 abuurid (-da) 'to create'
 magoolid (-da) 'to blossom', etc.

Conclusions: The lexicon of the Somali language consists of the following items:

- a) a very restricted set of radical adjectives
- b) a fairly large set of lexical nouns
- c) a set of roots which may be nouns and verbs

From these items the following can be derived through suffixes:

- 1) verbs and nouns from adjectives
- 2) verbs and adjectives from lexical nouns
- 3) abstract nouns from verbs, and verbs from verbs and nouns from nouns and adjectives from verbs.

NOTES

¹ The new categorization and its denomination are due to Andrzejewski (1969).

² The paradigm of the past tense for the verb ahaansho 'to be', is: ah-aa, ah-ayd, ah-aa, ah-ayn, ah-aydeen, ah-ayeen.

³ Derived 'hybrid verbs' (with the exclusion of the radical ones) can also co-occur in the reduplicated form with a singular subject:

miisku waa jabjaban yahay
 table-the F broken is

'the table is broken in more than one place'.

In this case the reduplication conveys the meaning of a state resulting from an action iterated in time or in space.

⁴ See fn. (1) and in particular the distinction between the two paradigms in Andrzejewski (1964, pp. 128-141). The distinction between the two paradigms also in 'hybrid verbs' is totally accepted in Puglielli (ed.) 1981.

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