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„Mehr als nur Worte ...“

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Somali Camel Terminology

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Notes on Somali Camel Terminology

1 Names of wild and domestic animals, especially when organised in lexical systems according to their colour, sex, age, etc. are one out of the many areas of Franz ROTTLAND's interest. I was lucky enough to listen to him talking about this on more than one occasion, and found a particularly stimulating example in the paper where he related a number of Iraqw individual cattle names with some Bantu (esp. Sukuma and Rimi), Sandawe, and Southern Nilotic (Datooga) terms used both as individual names and 'as general terms referring to the skins of cattle and goats and indicating their colour(s) and/or the pattern of distribution (size and position of patches etc.)' (ROTTLAND 1994:338). In a concise but clear way, he showed how the direct or indirect source of them was Datooga, that lent this sizeable set of terms because its speakers 'came to the area as fully specialized herders and raisers of cattle' (ROTTLAND 1994:340).


In the Horn of Africa several pastoralist communities developed an economy with a strong specialisation in camel-herding during the last two millennia, when increasing aridity created a comparative advantage for more drought-resistant animals. This resulted in a common set of distinctive terms being adopted and preserved until now by the languages of the main camel-keeping societies in its eastern and southern regions. The five terms shown in Table 1 all occur in at least two different language groups, and have been discussed in BANTI (1993:205ff).

2 Obviously enough, most of these languages have a much larger stock of specialised terms related to this important animal, especially if their speakers keep them in large numbers. For instance, there are few camel-related terms in Dasenech, Turkana and Pokot, as well as in Saho and in the language of most of the western, central and eastern Oromo who are agriculturalists and cattle pastoralists.

Table 1.

	* <i>gaala</i> 'camel(s)'	* <i>ḡarq-</i> - * <i>ḡar(a)q-</i> etc. 'camel foal'	* <i>awr-</i> 'adult he-camel'	* <i>hala</i> 'adult she-camel'	* <i>qurba-</i> - * <i>ḡurba-</i> 'young he- camel'
Saho	✓				
Afar	✓	✓		✓	
Somali	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Maay	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rendille	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Oromo	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dasenech	✓	✓	✓		
Turkana	✓				

Richly specialized camel lexicons are instead reported for camel-herding Oromos such as the Boorana and the Gabbra in north-eastern Kenya and the Karrayuu in eastern Shewa, as well as for Afar, Somali, Maay,¹ and Rendille. The best known among these is the Somali one, that counts several hundreds of items, partly used exclusively for camels, partly for both cattle and camels. SAID (1982:17) and, especially, ISSE (1984) record samples of these terms, but the bulk of them has still to be published systematically. Strict space limits make it impossible to list all the known Somali camel-related terms here. I hope to do it in the future. Here only some of them will be discussed, in an attempt at explaining them etymologically. Some have already been taken into account in BANTI (1993: 208f), but will be given here what I hope will be a somewhat improved treatment, other ones are new etymologies. In order to make it easier to find a specific item in the following pages, the arrangement is alphabetical rather than semantic.

2.1 *Áwr* m. (pl. *áwr*)² 'bull-camel; pack-camel'. This word has good parallels in Maay *óor* 'group of male pack-camels', southern Oromo *ooróo* 'male camels used as pack animals or for meat', as well as Dasenech *awr-ič* 'male camel'. Rendille *óor* means both 'male camel' and 'ox, bull', while in Saho-Afar this word is used only for cattle: Saho *áwr*  used for

reproduction', Afar *áwr* ~ *abúr* ~ *agúr* 'bull, ox'. The geolinguistic pattern of the meanings of this word suggests that 'bull', the meaning preserved in the two lateral areas, is older and was later extended also to camel bulls, possibly through the phrase '*awr* of camel(s)' parallel to Rendille *óor-i líku* 'cock, rooster' (lit. '*óor* of chicken', cf. SCHLEE 1978:144), or Karrayuu Oromo *korma gaalá* 'bull-camel' (lit. '*kormá*, i.e., bull ~ adult male animal, of camel'). More precisely, the original stage appears to be preserved in Saho-Afar, the intermediate one in Rendille, and the most recent one in Somali, Maay, southern Oromo and Dasenech. A special development took place in Boni, where *óor* is 'male elephant' (cf. HEINE 1982: 104), probably because it was the most important animal for this community of hunter-gatherers.

According to EHRET (1987:9, 138), since *-r* may have been "a singularizing suffix in origin", East Cushitic **awr-* can be compared to *-r*-less forms such as Iraqw and Burunge *áwu* m. 'bull', and KIESSLING (no date) adds also Arbore (East Cushitic!) *háww* 'steer'. EHRET (1980:317) also points out that since the South Cushitic word was borrowed into Bantu languages such as Thagicu and Chaga as **-ḡau* with **ḡ* < **y*, e.g., Gikuyu *n-jaũ*, it is necessary to posit an old variant **yaw-* that may be preserved also in Dahalo *ḡu-m-uru* 'male waterbuck', with a semantic shift to a male wild animal that parallels what occurred to Boni *óor*. Also two Beja forms with initial *y-* have been adduced by him here: *yō-b* m. 'ox, bull' and *yiwē-t* f. 'cow-calf, heifer' (ROPER 1928:249, 251: *-b* in the m. form is a case marker). This is then a very old word, attested in three out of the four major branches of Cushitic. It should be compared to Egyptian *jw3* 'bull' and *jw3.t* 'cow', whose similarity to the two above Beja words and the South Cushitic reconstructed variant **yaw-* is so striking that direct borrowing, rather than retention of an inherited word, cannot be ruled out. Interestingly, since in several cases Egyptian <3>, usually taken to have been a glottal stop /ʔ/, represents an older **r* (e.g., Egyptian *k3m* 'vineyard' vs. Ugaritic *krm*, Hebrew *kérem* < **karm-* 'vineyard', Ge'ez *karm* 'vine, grapevine', etc.; see LOPRIENO 1995:31), the final *-r* of **awr-* attested in Somali etc. may be of considerable antiquity. On the other hand, since Egyptian *j* can

also be the result of palatalisation of an older **l*, as in Egyptian *jb* 'heart' (vs. Akkadian *libbu* 'id.', Hebrew *lēb* 'id.', Ge'ez *labb* 'id.', as well as Beja *lēb* 'belly, heart', and Omotic forms such as Yemsa *niba* 'id.', Mocha *nibbo* 'id.', even Anfillo *yibbo* 'id.', etc., cf. LOPRIENO 1995:31 and EHRET 1995:398), other authors prefer to posit Egyptian *jw3* 'bull' < **lw* - a cognate of an Afroasiatic family of words for cattle, e.g., Akkadian *li* 'wild bull', Somali *lō* 'cattle', Iraqw and Burunge *hlee* [ʎe:] 'cow', Mubi *la* 'cattle', Ngizim *tlā* 'cattle', etc. (DIKONOFF 1981:33). Yet Cushitic and Chadic seem to attest an old **f*- in this family of words, that does not palatalize to *j* in Egyptian and makes it unlikely that *jw3* 'bull' belongs here. DOLGOPOLSKY (1988:629), on the other hand, prefers to connect East Cushitic **awr* with the Semitic family of Hebrew *aryēh* 'lion', Akkadian *ariu* 'buck (of gazelle or mountain goat)', Arabic *irwiyya* ~ *irwiyya* 'mountain goat', Ge'ez *arwe* 'wild beast', Amharic *awre* 'id.', Muher *or* 'id.', Harari *ūri* 'id.'. The similarity between the southern Ethiosemitic reflexes of this family and **awr* 'bull' > 'camel bull' are striking, yet it has already been pointed out that these Semitic words should rather be connected with Somali *āar* m. 'male lion' (e.g., LESLAU 1987:40b), as well as Arbore *āar* m. 'bull' (cf. HAYWARD 1984:336). The similarities are striking, and instances of contamination between southern Ethiosemitic and East Cushitic are likely.

2.2 *Déeble* m. 'camel(s)'. A generic term used for indicating camels especially in poetry. It is a compound of *déeb* f. 'ashes from a special plant used by men to make their hair white' and of the verbal noun *lé* m. from *léh* 'have'. It is thus a metaphor that refers to the ash-like colour of camels.

2.3 *Géel* m. collective 'camel(s)'. This general term is the only m. noun in *-l* that has definitives with \emptyset rather than *-k-*, e.g., *géel-a* 'the camels', *géel-iis-ii* 'his camels' (vs. *céel-ka*, *céel-kiiis-ii* from *céel* [ʃéel] m. 'well'). The vowel is actually [eɛ], i.e., long [+ATR] *e*, with raising of older *-aa-* as in Somali *gées* [eɛ] 'horn' vs. Maay *gáas* 'id.', Oromo *gaafá* 'id.', Dullay (Gollango) *káase* 'id.', etc. LAMBERTI (1986:209, 217ff, 422) reconstructs

**gaali* rather than **gaala*, with (inflectional ?) **-i* causing umlaut to [+ATR] *ee* before being deleted. (Actually, he distinguishes [+ATR] umlaut from raising **aa > ee*, in order to account also for some other instances where he does not posit a final **-i*, but Somali *géel* 'camel' and *gées* 'horn' are the strongest cases, in my opinion.) The older form with *-aa-* is preserved in some Somali compounds such as *haruub-gaal* 'container for milking camels (lit. milkvessel-camel)', *daba-ggáal-le* 'ground squirrel (lit. tail-camel-having)'. Older *-aa-* is also preserved in most of the other languages that, as shown in Table 1, have reflexes of this word: *Saho gáala* 'camel', *Afar gāala* 'id.', *Maay gaal* 'id.', *Rendille gaal* 'id.', *Oromo gaalá* 'id.', *Turkana -kaal* 'id.', *Dasenech galti* 'camel, she-camel'.

The most likely source of **gaala* is one of the Semitic names of this animal, already attested in King 'Ezānā's inscriptions in the northern Horn as Ge'ez *gamal*. Before that, it occurs in Hebrew *gāmāl*, Akkadian (Late Assyrian) *gammalu* and possibly also *gamlu* (in ADD 779:5, cf. CIVIL *et al.* 1968, Vol. 5:36a), and Epigraphic South Arabian (Sabaic) *gml*. Arabic *gamal* is already in the Koran, and probably still retained velar [g] as modern Egyptian *gamal*. Loss of *-m-* between vowels has not been observed in any of the East Cushitic languages that preserve reflexes of **gaala*, but occurs frequently in Jibbali (one of the Modern South Arabian languages of Dhofar), and occasionally in Harari and some Gurage languages. For instance, the reflex of the above Semitic word for 'camel' is *gūl* in Jibbali with **-ama-* developing into a short nasalized high back vowel, while *tōni* (with f. nouns) and *tīnət* (with m. nouns) are its reflexes of 'eight' (cf. respectively Arabic *ṭamānin* and *ṭamāniyatun* spelt <ṭm'n>, <ṭm'nyh>, Sabaic *ṭmny* ~ *ṭmn* and *ṭmnyt* ~ *ṭmnt*, Ge'ez *samāni* ~ *səmn* and *samānitū* ~ *sammantu*). When **-m-* is lost in Harari it does not leave nasalised vowels, e.g., *sūt* 'eight' (with a single form for both genders as in all modern Ethiosemitic languages), whereas in Gurage it may leave either nasalised or oral vowels, e.g., Endegeñ *sūūt* 'eight' and *ṭəwāṭṭää* 'twist around' (vs. Chaha *ṭə māṭāmā*, with *-m-* being reduced both to *-w-* and to \emptyset). If one is not to posit a lost language where Semitic **gamal-* became **gaal-*, the most likely assumption is that the East Cushitic forms preserve a southern Ethio-

semitic (i.e., Pre-Gurage and Pre-Harari) or, less likely, Pre-Jibbali development of **gamal-*.

2.4 *Hál* f. (pl. *haló*) 'adult she-camel'. This word has good parallels in Maay *hál* 'id.' and Afar *alá* 'id.'. Its plural is preserved in Rendille *aló* 'she-camels', that lost its initial **h-* like Afar, a process that is regular in Rendille (cf. SASSE 1979:40, LAMBERTI 1986:298f), but less so in Afar (cf. SASSE 1979:38ff). Oromo has *haláa* ~ *aláa* 'adult she-camel' in the south (Boorana, etc.), *hasháa* 'id.' in the east, and *dhaláa* 'id.' among the Karrayyuu in Shewa. The last term is a derivative of *dhal-* 'give birth' and also occurs in other varieties of Oromo as 'female'. *Hasháa* is an adaptation of Somali *hasha* 'the she-camel', i.e., the form *hál* has when it takes the definite article. The southern form *haláa* ~ *aláa* alternates initial *h-* and *Ø* like most other Oromo words with initial *h-*, e.g., *hárrée* ~ *árrée* 'donkey' < **harr(r)-* (cf. Harso Dullay *har-icčé* 'donkey', Sidamo *harr-icčo* 'id.', etc.), *ooróo* ~ *hooróo* 'pack camels' cf. (2.1) above, *hurjii* ~ *urjii* 'star' < **huzk-* / **hizk-* (cf. Afar *cutúk-ta* [*hutúk-ta*] 'star', Arbore *húzzuq* 'id.', Gollango Dullay *hisk-itté* 'id.', Somali *xiddig* [*hiddig*] 'id.', etc.), etc. This southern Oromo *haláa* ~ *aláa* is either a recent contamination of Oromo *dhaláa* with Somali *hál* or an older cognate. Interestingly, Saho has *gaal-attó*, the singulative f. of *gáala*, for 'she-camel', and uses *alá* as a suppletive pl. of *lah* 'female goat'. EHRET (1987:126) adds also Mbugu (Ma'a) *i-ahlü* [*iʔahlü*] 'female domestic animal that has calved' (the *i-* is the Bantu class 5 noun prefix) and *ahlü* [*ahlü*] 'mother-of' (e.g., *ahlü X* 'mother of X'), and reconstructs **haʔ-* 'bearing adult'.³ If he is right, a word preserved in South Cushitic with its older more general meaning developed two different specialised meanings in East Cushitic: (i) 'female goat' among the Saho for whom goats are important animals in the rugged mountains and escarpments they live in, but (ii) 'female camel' in the languages of the lowlands, where camel-cows became the most important calving mothers.

2.5 *Nirig* m. (f. *niríg*; pl. *nirgó* m.) 'camel calf that still suckles milk'. This is one of the most widespread camel-related words in the Horn of Africa, as shown by Maay *naríg* 'new-born camel', Rendille *nyirax* m. (f. *nyirax-e*; pl. *nyirx-ó*) 'young camel', Afar *naríg* (Predicate form *nar í ig-i*; f. *narg-ó*; pl. *nariig-á*) 'very young camel', eastern Oromo *nyárq-óo* (singulative m. *nyarq-icha*, f. *nyarq-ittii*) 'very young camel', Karrayyuu Oromo *narq-ichóo* 'very young female camel', Dasenech *ñir-iñ* 'young camel'.

An etymology for this word has been suggested by EHRET (1991:268, 1995:331) who noticed that Arbore *ñurqí* 'weak (Adj.)' is likely to be from the same root, but with *-u-* rather than *-a-* ~ *-i-*. Within Arbore, *ñur-q-i* is best analysed as lexically related to Arbore *ñar-ɸ-os-* 'make thin, emaciate (Causative of the Middle/Autobenefactive stem)'. Both preserve the initial *ñ-* of a root he reconstructs as **ñar-/ñir-* 'to be weak, frail', which has reflexes in Somali *jirr-án* 'be in bad health, be ill' and *jirr-o* 'bad health, illness'. It may occur also in South Cushitic **naraku* 'poverty' reconstructed by KIESSLING (n.d.) on the basis of, e.g., Gorowa *narákw* 'poor, few', Iraqw *narákw* 'poverty', etc., and in Omotic (Gonga: Kefa *nir-* 'be tired, be weak', Mocha *nira-* 'be soft, loose, flexible; have pity').⁴

It should be pointed out, however, that the sound correspondences are only partly regular. On the one hand, the correspondence set posited by EHRET (1991:262) requires initial **ñ-* to be preserved in Oromo and Arbore, while becoming *n-* in Afar, and *g-* in the Somali group (later palatalized to *j-* before *i* in Rendille, northern Somali and other varieties). Accordingly, Rendille *nyirax*, Somali *nirig* and Maay *narig* would be expected to have initial *j-* like Somali *jirro* 'bad health' (Maay even *g-!*). On the other hand, **q* is expected to be preserved in Oromo and Arbore, to become *Ø* medially in Dasenech (*ñir-iñ* < **ñirq-*) and *x* in Rendille,⁵ but in Somali it should have yielded *q*, in Maay *g'* [*g'*], and in Afar either *Ø* (~ ') or *k* (cf. SASSE 1979:47ff). MOHAMED (1985:105f) and EHRET (1991:268) suggest that Somali *nirig*, as well as Maay *narig*, is a loan "from an Afar-related language" that left also other traces in northern Somali (cf. MOHAMED 1985:144ff). This may explain initial *n-* but not the final *-g*, that is puzz-

ling even in Afar. On the other hand, also the Rendille form must be "a borrowing because of its manifestation of [ny] instead of expected [j]" (EHRET 1991:268). As I already pointed out (BANTI 1993:214), we are thus left with basically two sets of reconstructed forms, i.e., (i) **narq-* ~ **nir(a)q-* in the central and western languages (eastern Oromo, Rendille and Dase-nech), vs. (ii) **nar(q)g-* ~ **nir(i)g-* in the eastern languages (Afar, Somali, Maay). If set (i) preserves the older consonants, set (ii) can be explained as a borrowing from "an Afar-related language" only if one posits either that **q* > *g* also occurred regularly in that language, or that the development of *g* was irregular and due, e.g., to tabooistic distortion. Yet **n̄-* > *n-* is not diagnostic of Afar because, according to EHRET (1991:262), it also occurs in Highland East Cushitic languages such as Sidamo and Burji. Karrayyuu Oromo *narq-ichóo* 'very young female camel' is formally intermediate between the two sets, and may be due either to contact with Afar, that adjoins the Karrayyuu in eastern Shewa, or be an independent development of this little known dialect of Oromo. Indeed, *ny* is known to be in dialectal variation with *n(n)* in Oromo, e.g., Macca *naacha* 'crocodile' vs. Boorana and Eastern *nyaacha* 'id.', Macca and Eastern *keenya* 'our' vs. Gujii and Boorana *keenna* 'id.', etc.

2.6 *Qáalin* m. (pl. *qaalimmó* f.) 'young he-camel'. So, e.g., REINISCH (1902:259b 'ein 3–4jähriges männliches kamel'), ABRAHAM (1964:199a), ANDRZEJEWSKI (1964:32), and AGOSTINI *et al.* (1985:477a). Some varieties of northern Somali use only the feminine of this word, *qaalín* f. (pl. *qaalmó* m.) that is defined by YAASIIN (1976:333b) as *neef geel ah ama lo' oo da' yar* 'camel or cow of young age', rather than 'young she-camel'. HEINE (1978:92) compares this word with Rendille *xáalim* 'young male camel' and reconstructs **qáalim* for his 'specialized Proto-Sam vocabulary involving camels' (HEINE 1978:67; cf. also HEINE 1981:179). Yet REINISCH (1902:259b) already pointed out the similarity of the Arabic root *qLM* to this word, that appears to be a direct loan of Arabic active participle *qálim* 'that is in heat, that ruts', with the normal development of Arabic *q* > Somali *q* (that regularly corresponds to Rendille *x*). Indeed, it may be

remembered that camels reach sexual maturity when they are about 3–4 years old, i.e., when they are called *qáalin* m. / *qaalín* f.

This is not the only Arabic loanword in the camel-related lexicon shared by Somali and Rendille. Another one is Somali *rakiub* m. 'camel for riding', Rendille *rukúub* 'id.' (cf. HEINE 1978:94), also attested in southern Oromo *rukúm* 'male camel used for riding' (TABLINO 1980:183), as well as in Saho and Afar *rakúb* 'adult male camel', from Arabic *rakūb* 'mount, riding animal; pack animal'. This word occurs once already in the Koran (36,72), *wa-dallalnā-hā la-hum fa-min-hā rakūbu-hum wa-min-hā ya'kulūna* "and we rendered it ('an'āman 'livestock' in the preceding verse) submissive to them; part of it is their mount, and part of it they eat". The development of this word in the Horn is due to the fact that the Afar, the Somali, etc., use only the strongest male camels as pack animals and sometimes for riding, never the females. The wide diffusion of these two loanwords in Somali, Rendille, southern Oromo and Saho-Afar need not be construed as an indication of great antiquity, i.e., that they were borrowed into the proto-languages. Rather, it shows that single items of the camel-related lexicon, just as the five terms in Table 1 above, could be widely adopted by linguistically diverse camel-herding communities.

2.7 *Ratí* m. 'bull-camel'. This word occurs only in Somali, where it is a synonym of *ávr*. An older cognate of it may, however, lie behind the otherwise obscure southern Oromo *roochóo*, irregular sg. form of *ooróo* ~ *hooróo* 'pack camels' (a cognate of the above *ávr*; for the form with initial *h-* see under *hál* above), if it is a contamination between *ooróo* and a possible Oromo **ra-cha* corresponding to Somali *ra-tí* but with the Oromo singulative m. suffix *-cha* instead of Somali *-tí*, for which see below. (Notice that a possible reason for dropping old Oromo **ra*cha 'pack camel' may have been its quasi-homophony with Oromo *raachá* 'frog'.)

Table 2.

Simple Verb: A. <i>erré</i> 'load; go with herds from one place to another' (3sg. m. Impf. <i>yaarré</i>) S. <i>eerré</i> 'load' (3sg. Impf. <i>yaarré</i>)
Derived Verbs: S. <i>eséré</i> 'cause to load' (REINISCH 1890:42; Causative) A. <i>eyerré</i> 'cause to load in order to move' (Causative of Causative) A. <i>esserré</i> 'load in order to move f.o.b.' (Middle/Autobenefactive of Causative) S. <i>eteré</i> 'load f.o.b., load one's own pack animal' (REINISCH 1890:42; Middle/Autobenefactive) S. <i>emcerré</i> 'be loaded' (Passive; 3sg. m. Impf. <i>yamaarré</i>)
Derived Nouns: A. <i>erér</i> m. 'loading up (of camels)' A. <i>irir</i> m. 'back, rear' (unclear vocalism, possibly etymologically independent) A. <i>merrá</i> f. 'pack animal' S. <i>meerrá</i> f. 'loading, load' S. <i>amáarra</i> f. 'loading' A. <i>yaarrí</i> f. 'song of exorcism' (formally an agent noun of the simple verb. cf. BANTI 1988:51; A. <i>yaagurí</i> f. 'rinderpest' from <i>oogore</i> 'hit, strike', A. <i>yakamí</i> f. 'irritation (of the skin)' from <i>okmé</i> 'eat', etc. show that forms with the m. prefix <i>y-</i> can be used as f. nouns; unclear motivation of the meaning specialization)

Also this Somali word can be explained if one remembers that the camel pastoralists in the Horn use only the strongest male camels as pack animals, while camel cows are used as milch animals and for calving. During the centuries the etymological connection between Somali *ra-tí* 'pack-camel' > 'bull-camel' and the old reduplicated forms *rár* m. 'camel-load', *rar-* 'to load (camels)' – and possibly *saar-* 'put something on to', 'load something on to', an old causative form cognate of Saho *eséré* – became obscure, whereas Afar still has *merrá* 'pack animal' transparently derived from the verb *erré* 'load', whose derivational scatter is shown in Table 2 above (where S. = Saho and A. = Afar).

As for *-tí*, it is a suffix that is no more productive in present-day Somali, even though it is still well attested as a deverbal and denominal morpheme. The deverbatives *galtí* f. 'foreigners, persons who came from somewhere' (from *gal-* 'enter'), *tammootí* f. 'animal killed when it was going to die because of a wound or disease' and *tummaatí* m. 'deadly

(wound)' > 'wound caused by a pointed weapon' (from the old prefix-conjugated *-ammuud-* 'die') were reported in BANTI (1988:49). Denominal forms are, e.g., *gashaan-tí* f. 'unmarried girl' (vs. Jiiddu *galtáam* 'girl of marriageable age', Rendille *galtáam* 'id.>'; the Somali simplex *gasháan* f. shifted to 'mistress, female lover', and originated *gasháan* m. 'male lover'), *mowtí* f. 'the dead, spirits of the dead', and *meytí* f. 'id.' (from the Arabic loanwords *mówd* m. 'death' and *méyd* m. 'corpse' respectively). Another interesting example is Somali *ab-tí* 'maternal uncle' from *ab* m. that in Somali means only '(male) ancestors', while its East Cushitic cognates all refer to maternal kinsfolk like Somali *abtí*, e.g., Saho *ábo* 'maternal uncle; male ancestor(s)', Afar *ábu* 'male maternal relative/ancestor', Rendille *ab-íyo* 'maternal uncle', Konso *ap-úyya* (Vocative) 'mother's brother; mother's brother's son', Burji *ab-uyyáa* 'mother's brother; wife of mother's brother', Sidamo *abbo* 'maternal uncle'. BLACK (1974:174) and SASSE (1982:22) reconstruct **ab-* 'maternal uncle' for East Cushitic, but Mbugu *abú* 'mother's sibling' (EHRET 1980:281) attests this word even in South Cushitic.⁶

2.8 *Xiito* [*hiito*] f. 'camel'. A generic term used for indicating camels especially in poetry. It is a back-formation from the name of a bird known as *xiidxiito* f. and *xidinxiito* f. that has been defined in the following manners in the main dictionaries of Somali:

- 'der nachtfalke, gattung kleiner eulen, der zigenmelker (Haggenm.), Schl. T. 85, 22; ein nachtvoegel, roter, langbeiniger regenpfeifer (Burt.); bei Lar. *hedín heto* a whitish-grey bird resembling the lark'. (REINISCH 1902:197b);
- 'ringed plover' (ABRAHAM 1964:120c);
- 'small bird with a red bill and long thin legs' (YAASIIN 1976:463a; AGOSTINI *et al.* 1985:632a).

In popular belief, after the *xiidxiito*-bird's sons had being falsely accused of theft and killed, she vowed (cf. CIISE 1985:23):⁷

Waxaan nidir ka maray 'I make a vow never
Hilib dambe cuniddi To eat other meat

<i>Hurda dambe jifkeed</i>	To slumber another sleep
<i>Geed dambe koriddi</i>	To climb another tree
<i>Haad dambe raaciddi</i>	To mingle with other birds.'

The metaphor refers to the whitish-grey colour, the long legs, and the facts of not eating meat and that camels don't like to mingle with other livestock.

3 Even this small sample of nine words (the eight entries plus *rakiub* discussed under *qaalin*) shows how the Somali camel-related lexicon is made up of rather diverse items. On the one hand, there are words such as *déeble* 'camel(s)' and *xiito* 'camel' that can be explained rather transparently through Somali, and are language-internal innovations with no parallels in the languages of other camel-herding communities. On the other hand, there are Semitic loanwords that, interestingly, occur also in several other East Cushitic – and even Eastern Nilotic – languages of the Horn. One of them, *gèel* 'camel(s)' is the most widely used generic name for this species, and is likely to be quite old. Its development **-ama-* > **-aa-* has parallels especially in southern Ethiosemitic, and may thus be an indication of the fact that speakers of an older form of southern Ethiosemitic had a special role in introducing camel-herding in the eastern Horn. Alternatively, the weakness of *-m-* in southern Ethiosemitic (and possibly in Jibbali) may be due to a vanished substratum language that could have been the locus for **gamal-* > **gaal-*, and even of **narq-* ~ **nir(a)q-* > **nar(ɣ)g-* ~ *nirti)g-*. The other two are direct loanwords from Arabic, i.e., *qaalin* 'young he-camel' and *rakiub* 'camel for riding'. Their occurrence also in other languages, i.e., in Rendille and, respectively, in Rendille and Afar shows how even borrowed items, once included in the set of camel-related words, were passed round different languages of camel-herders. (For the further occurrences of reflexes of Arabic *rakūb* in other languages of the Horn, yet with quite different meaning developments such as Ge'ez *rākub* 'female camels', see BANTI 1993:217f).

Also *dubээр* m. 'decrepit pack-camel' may be a loanword, but from a different source. BLAŽEK (1994:17) has suggested a link between it and

Elamite *zibar* 'camel' through "cultural diffusion", because camel-breeding spread to the Horn of Africa from southern Arabia, where it was probably introduced from Iran and the Indus Valley (cf. BANTI 1993:186). The sound change **z > d* is regular in Somali, and BLAŽEK's case would be strengthened if other possible Elamitic loanwords were identified in Somali. Alternatively, *dubээр* may be explained language-internally as a derogatory term developed out of Somali *dabээр*, a variant (cf. YAASIIN 1976:82b) of *damээр* ~ *dammээр* m. 'ass, donkey'.⁸

Rati 'bull-camel' is still a different case. It occurs only in Somali, unless its Oromo counterpart **racha* is posited as one of the sources of southern Oromo *róochóo* 'pack camel'. Comparison with Saho-Afar shows *rati* to be an old verbal noun meaning 'pack animal' that underwent semantic specialization to 'bull-camel'. Finally, *ávr* 'bull-camel, pack-camel', *hál* 'adult she-camel', and *nirig* 'camel calf that still suckles milk' are words belonging to the set of specialized camel-related terms that occur across several East Cushitic language groups in the Horn. As far as the available etymological tools can tell, the former two are Cushitic words that meant 'bull' and, respectively, 'bearing adult, female that has already given birth to her young' before developing their specially camel-related meanings. *Nirig*, instead, may be a derivative of an old root meaning 'be weak, frail', that also has reflexes meaning 'be in bad health' in Somali, be 'poor, few' in the West Rift (South Cushitic) languages and 'be tired, be weak, be soft' in the Gonga (Omotic) languages. (A similar constellation of meanings occurs in the unrelated family of Ge'ez *lāhlāha* ~ *lahlāha* 'become weak; become slack; be soft; be loose; languish', cf. LESLAU 1987:312b.) The phonetic shape of this Somali word, however, shows it to be a loanword from an unknown language, contrary to MOHAMED's (1985:105f) and EHRET's (1991:268) suggestion.

NOTES

¹ Here, as usually in the literature, Somali indicates the group of varieties called Northern Somali ("Nordsomali") by LAMBERTI (1986:30f), i.e. the Maxaa-tiri varieties spoken

in northern and eastern Somalia up to Gaalkacyo in the Mudug, in eastern and southern Ethiopia, in Kenya and in the former Oltregiuba (Jubaland) between the Juba River and the Kenyan border. The camel-related lexicon in the coastal Maxaa-tiri varieties referred to as Benaadir by, among others, MORENO (1955:iv f) and LAMBERTI (1986:34f) does not seem to differ significantly (cf. MOHAMED 1985:326). Maay, on the other hand, is the correct spelling for the group of varieties spoken in the interriverine area, and called May or Af-May by LAMBERTI (1986:40f). Other names used in the literature for this last group have been Jabarti (still used by HEINE 1978), Digil (e.g., in MORENO 1955), and Central Somali (in SAEED 1982).

² An old plural **awra-* ~ **awró*, similar to the Afar plural *awrá* from *abūr* and to Oromo *ooróo*, may be preserved in the Somali tribal name *Awra-má-le*, lit. 'awra-not-having'. Its variant form *Cawramále*, lit. 'without sexual organs' is probably a derogatory folk-etymological reinterpretation of the opaque *awra-* 'male camels' as *cawró* 'sexual organs'. Another variant of this tribal name, *Oormále*, has *awra-* replaced by *oor-*, synchronically acceptable as a dialectal form of *awr* 'male camels'.

³ The Mbugu data have been improved with the kind help of Maarten MOUS (letter of 26th August 1998). It should be pointed out that EHRET adds Awngi *alali* 'male donkey' and reconstructs also 'adult animal' as oldest meaning of this word. But it is not likely to belong here, because it has good parallels in Bilin *alal-* 'cry, bellow, moo' and *alali* 'young 1-3 years old calf' (REINISCH 1887:26), 'heifer' (KIFLEMARIAM & PAULOS 1992:200), Saho *al-* ~ *alal-* 'cry, moo, bellow, bleat' (REINISCH 1890:25), Afar *hallit-* 'bray (of donkey)', as well as Beja *hell-* ~ *hēl-* ~ *hōl-* 'cry, bark, brüllen' (REINISCH 1895:117), *hil-* 'bark' in ROPER (1928:194). This group of Beja, Agaw and Saho-Afar words may be connected with the group of Ge'ez *tahalala* (*ta-* stem) 'utter cries of joy', Amharic *allala* 'rejoice', and Arabic *hallala* ~ *tahallala* 'to shout with joy' (LESLAU 1987:217b), as well as with the group of Ge'ez *halale* 'male equine at rut', Tigrigna *halali* ~ *hāla* 'donkey that brays when at rut', Tigre *halla* 'cover (animal)', and Amharic *allala* 'to be in heat (animal)' and *alale* 'of dissolute life'. LESLAU (1988:96) lists the group of Ge'ez *tahalala* in his 'Also in' class, i.e., among the words about whose identification as being cognates in Ethiopian Semitic and in Cushitic or borrowings in either direction he has doubts. It is but one of the many cases where it is very difficult to disentangle the thread of the history of a family of words across the many language families in the Horn.

⁴ CERULLI (1951:480) suggested a connection with Amharic *lalla* 'be loose, be slack' and Kemant *lal-* 'be loose' that requires a rather *ad hoc* correspondence between Gonga *n-r-* ~ Amharic *l-l-* ~ Kemant *l-l-*. Instead, LESLAU (1979:378ab) showed Amharic and Gurage *lalla* 'be loose, be slack' to be a Semitic word connected with Ge'ez *lāhlāḥa* 'become weak; be soft; languish', that was borrowed into Kemant.

⁵ Rendille *nyirax*, pl. *nyirx-ó* 'young camel' is thus from **ñiraq*, pl. **ñirq-ó*. Here LAMBERTI (1986:246) mistakenly assumes *-k-, that would have given the same alter-

metrally long in the 2nd and 4th lines and short in the 5th line. 59

nation as Rendille *iláh*, pl. *ilk-ó* 'tooth', cf. Somali *ilig* pl. *ilk-ó* 'id.', Baiso *ilk-oo* 'id.', Oromo *ilk-áan* 'id.', etc. with *-k-.

⁶ Dahalo has *áabo* glossed 'mother's sister' in EHRET *et al.* (1989:21), but 'grandmother' in TOSCO (1991:127) and MADDIESON *et al.* (1993:45). Formally it may belong here as well (cf. EHRET 1980:281), even though something more about the Dahalo kinship system should be known in order to understand fully the semantic shift to 'grandmother'. CHOI AHMED (1995:174ff) points out that the family of Somali *abti* is but one of several possible traces of a stronger role formally played by matrilineal ancestry in these communities.

⁷ The scansion pattern of these five lines is | = - - | = | Only the actual words of the vowel are alliterated in *d* (*dambe* repeated four times) and partially in *h* (*hilib*, *hurda* and *haad* in lines 2, 3, and 5 respectively).

⁸ This word has parallels in Boni (Kilii) *dabээр* f. 'ass, donkey' and Baiso *dimэр* f. (pl. *dimeer*) 'ass, donkey', but seems to lack other cognates. HEINE (1982:103a) records *dobээр* f. as the form this word has in the Kijee dialect of Boni, with -a- rounded to -o- because of the following labial consonant. Accordingly, Somali *dubээр* 'decrepit pack-camel' could just be a phonetic variant of the word for 'ass, donkey' that became independent through lexical split, rather than a morphological derivative (through vowel change from *a* to *u*).

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