

SPRACHE UND ORALITÄT IN AFRIKA

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Die Reihe »Sprache und Oralität in Afrika« hat zwei Schwerpunkte, auf die ihr Name ausdrücklich hinweist: Sie konzentriert sich auf die Erforschung und Beschreibung afrikanischer Sprachen und bemüht sich gleichzeitig um die in Afrika immer dringlicher werdende Dokumentation der mündlich überlieferten Literaturen. Afrikas Vergangenheit, seine geistigen und sozialen Institutionen, die rechtlichen und religiösen Lebensformen und -inhalte, Poesie und Musik sind Bestandteile der ungezählten Gedächtniskulturen dieses im Übergang zur Schriftlichkeit befindlichen Kontinents. Die geistige Welt des Afrikaners erschließt sich daher wesentlich aus der oralen Überlieferungstradition. Dabei sind Stil und Technik der noch heute vom »L'homme de paroles« (C. Hagège) praktizierten Mündlichkeit durchaus derjenigen früher europäischer Barden und Sänger vergleichbar. »Sprache und Oralität in Afrika« hat sich die Aufgabe gestellt, bei der Rettung afrikanischen Geisteserbes mitzuhelfen und es wissenschaftlich zu dokumentieren.

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Somali Kinship Terms

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Tol waa tolane.
Kinsmen are sewn together.
(Somali proverb)

0. Introduction

The present paper has been prepared within the general framework of the AAKTS – Afro-Asiatic Kinship Terms and Systems Project [cf. Ibrizimow, Porkhomovsky 2001, 2005a, 2005b]. One of the authors began collecting the data on Somali kinship terms some fifteen years ago, when working on the typological study of kinship systems in Semitic (Modern South Arabian and Ethiosemitic) and Cushitic languages. In the course of several sessions with native speakers of Somali who were at that time students of Moscow University, a basic list of Somali kinship terms was compiled but for several reasons this data was not further analysed. For this study a new attempt to obtain more complete and reliable information has been undertaken¹. The collected data is characterized by a relatively high degree of variation and the responsibility for its selection and evaluation is ours.

1. Somali family and tribal structure

A Somali *xaas* (family) usually consists of a husband, one or sometimes several wives (the Somalis are Muslims and the Koran allows polygamy) and their children. Several closely related families, for example grown-up sons with their wives and children, form a *reer*. The members of a *reer* keep their household in common, and tend and guard their herds together. A family and a *reer* are the lowest stages of the tribal organization of the Somali kinship system. Several *reers* which together go back to a common ancestor form a *jilib* (a knee). Several *jilibs* make up a *laf* (bone) and several *lafs* a *qabiil* (tribe). A tribe owns large herds of cows and camels defended from looting by an armed patrol. The tribe is headed by a chief, whose title (different in the various tribes) is handed down from father to son. If there is no successor one of the chief's relatives is chosen. The highest level of the kinship hierarchy of the Somalis is a union of tribes (a clan). There are five major clans – *Daarood*, *Isaaq* (in the North of the country), *Hawiye* and *Digil-Mirifle* (in the South), *Dir* (in the North and South).

A Somali knows exactly the place he occupies in the tribal structure, remembers the names of at least seven direct male ancestors² and is aware of the placing of all his innumerable nomadic relatives.

¹ The authors express their profound gratitude to the Somali informants Cabdiraxmaan Faarax 'Barwaaqo' (Canada), Cabdulqaadir Nuur Salaad (USA) and Moxamed Moxamad Xandulle (Moscow) who answered their numerous questions, and to Sheila Andrzejewski who has revised their English writings.

² In Somali there is a number of terms designating this notion: *absaxan-ka*, *abuulan-ka*, *sullan-ka* and others. Somali kinship terms are nouns, which have the category of definiteness. An indefinite article is marked by zero, while a definite article is added to a noun as a suffix, and marks its gender. The variants of the definite article for masculine nouns are *-ka*, *-ga*, *-ha*, *-a*; the variants of the definite articles for feminine nouns are *-ta*, *-da*, *-sha*. The form of the article depends on the last phoneme of its stem. The phoneme *sh* is the result of the fusion between the final *l* of the stem and the consonant sound of the article – *ta*. We give the Somali terms together with their articles, separating them by a hyphen.

2. The Somali kinship terms system

Once upon a time Ina-Samweyne ("Son-of-Big-Nose", a character in one of the extended cycles of Somali folktales, had to settle a dispute between his *seeddi* (sister's husband), who had abducted a she-camel, and its owner, whom he had never seen before. After the plaintiff and the defendant had been listened to and the witnesses questioned, Ina-Samweyne stood up and told his relative by marriage:

"Justice doesn't know a father-in-law and a brother-in-law, a relative by blood and a relative by marriage, a son and a daughter, a brother and a sister, a father and a mother, a maternal uncle and a paternal uncle, a distant relation and a close relation. Justice knows only Allah³. Man, return the she-camel!"

Here is the Somali version of this fragment⁴: "War, ninyohow, gari soddog ma taqaan oo seeddi ma taqaan oo tol ma taqaan oo xidid ma taqaan oo wiil ma taqaan oo walaal ma taqaan oo aabbe ma taqaan oo hooyo ma taqaan oo gabadh ma taqaan oo abti ma taqaan oo adeer ma taqaan oo shisheeye ma taqaan oo sokeeye ma taqaan e laahay bay taqaan e ninyohow, hashii lagaa hel!"

In his short verdict, the wise judge mentioned almost half the Somali kinship terms⁵:

1. *Walaal-ka* [brother, male sibling]; *abboowe-ha*, *abboow-ga*, *boowe-ha* [brother, elder brother; also polite form of address to any male person];
 2. *Walaal-sha* [sister, female sibling]; *abbaaye-da*, *abbaayo-da* [sister; also in the religious sense⁶];
 3. *Aabbe-ha/aabbo-ha*, *adoo-ga* [father];
 4. *Hooyo-da* [mother]; *habar-ta* [mother; also old woman];
 5. *Adeer-ka* [paternal uncle – father's brother; husband of father's sister; stepfather; respectful form of address to a man];
 6. *Abti-ga* [maternal uncle – mother's brother];
 7. *Soddog-ga* [father-in-law – wife's father];
 8. *Soddoh-da* [mother-in-law – wife's mother];
 9. *Wiil-ka*, *inan-ka* [boy; son];
 10. *Inan-ta*, *gabar-ta/gabadh-a* [girl; daughter];
 11. Several terms standing for 'relatives by blood': *Casabo-da*, *cashiro-da*, *ehel-ka* or *ehelo-da*, *garaabo-da*, *xixin-ta*, *xigaalo-da*, *xigto-da*, *sokeeye-ha* of which the last three can be understood as 'close relation', since the verbs *xig* and *sokee* from which they are derived mean 'to be next to' and 'to be near' correspondingly [cf. Zorc and Osman, 1993].
 12. *Xidid-ka* means 'relatives by marriage';
 13. *Tol-ka* means 'distant relatives', though in his speech the judge used the word *shisheeye(-ha)* with the meaning of 'unrelated persons'.
- The remaining kinship terms are as follows:
14. *Xaas-ka* [family (wife and children), man's household, man's dependants; spouse]; *afu-da* [wife, woman, lady (respectful)]; *marwo-da/murwo-da* [lady, honourable woman; wife; respectful term for woman]; *oori-da* [wife]; *naag-ta* [woman, wife]; *arad-da* [married woman]; *maranti-da* [wife]; *gaari-da* [good housewife, good woman];
 15. *Dumaashi-da* [sister-in-law – brother's wife; wife's sister; husband's sister];
 16. *Ooryo-walaal-ka* (var. *ooryo-walaal-ka*) [brother-in-law – husband of wife's sister];
 17. *Ina-adeer-ka* [first cousin – son of father's brother (*adeer*)];
 18. *Ina-adeer-ta* [first cousin – daughter of father's brother (*adeer*)];
 19. *Ina-eeddo-ha*⁷ [first cousin – son of father's sister (*eeddo*)];
 20. *Ina-eeddo-da* [first cousin – daughter of father's sister (*eeddo*)⁸];

³ A Somali proverb (see in Kapchits, 1998, p.170). A number of Somali 'kinship' proverbs can also be found in Kapchits, 2002 and 2005).

⁴ The full text of this tale ("Gari laah bay taqaan") see in Kapchits, 2006, pp. 88-90.

⁵ For the sake of simplicity and because of the lack of space we decided to present the Somali kinship terms in this paper without using the AAKTS Code System.

⁶ In Southern dialect.

⁷ In Southern regions – with a feminine article (*ina-eeddo-da*). In Northern regions also *ina-abti-ga*, the same as 'son of mother's brother' (see 21).

⁸ In Northern regions also *ina-abti-da*, the same as 'daughter of mother's brother' (see 22).

21. *Ina-abti-ga* [first cousin – son of mother's brother (*abti*) or father's sister (*eeddo*)⁹];
22. *Ina-abti-da* [first cousin – daughter of mother's brother (*abti*) or father's sister (*eeddo*)¹⁰];
23. *Habarwadaag-ga*, *ina-habreed-ka* [first cousin – son of mother's sister (*habaryar*)];
24. *Habarwadaag-ta*, *ina-habreed-da* [first cousin – daughter of mother's sister (*habaryar*)];
25. *Minyaro-da* [junior wife or last wife];
26. *Aayo-da/aaye-da* [aunt – wife of paternal or maternal uncle¹¹; stepmother];
27. *Eeddo-da* [aunt – father's sister; stepmother];
28. *Habaryar-ta*¹² [aunt – mother's sister];
29. *Dangalo-da* [father's second wife; stepmother¹³];
30. *Awow-ga*, *awoowe-ha* [grandfather – father's or mother's father¹⁴; great-uncle; ancestor]; *abkoow-ga* [also great grandfather];
31. *Ayeeyo-da* [grandmother – father's or mother's mother¹⁵; great-aunt; ancestress]; *abooto-da*, *macooyo/moyooyo-da* [also great-grandmother];
32. *Say-ga* [husband]; *nin-ka* [man; husband; spouse];
33. *Dumaashi-ga* [brother-in-law (of a woman) – husband's brother; sister's husband];
34. *Seeddi-ga* [brother-in-law (of a man) – sister's husband; wife's brother];
35. *Minweyn-ta* [senior wife].

3. Classificatory and descriptive terms

The Somali kinship terms system is characterized by a rather high number of polysemantic, i.e. classificatory terms. Thus, *dumaashi-da* means "brother's wife", "wife's sister" and "husband's sister"; *dumaashi-ga* – "husband's brother" and "sister's husband". *Aayo-da* (or *aaye-da*) stands for "wife of paternal uncle", "wife of maternal uncle" and "stepmother", *eeddo-da* – for "father's sister" and "stepmother" as well; *awow-ga* (or *awoowe-ha*) may mean "grandfather" (i.e. father's or mother's father), "great uncle" and "ancestor". In the case of *abkoow-ga* all these meanings are supplemented by "great-grandfather". The term *ayeeyo-da* conveys three meanings – "grandmother" (i.e. father's or mother's mother), "great-aunt" and "ancestress", *abooto-da* and *macooyo-da* (or *moyooyo-da*) even four (in addition to the above-mentioned it is also "great-grandmother"). *Seeddi-ga* besides "brother-in-law" (of a man) means "sister's husband" and "wife's brother". *Boowe-ha* means "brother" and "elder brother".

Some terms and their meanings vary from region to region (i.e. from dialect to dialect) – see, for example, those terms which stand for cousins: *ina-eeddo-ha* (19), *ina-eeddo-da* (20), *ina-abti-ga* (21) and *ina-abti-da* (22).

A peculiar feature of the Somali kinship terms system is the following: there are neither simple nor even descriptive terms for some important entries of the kinship system, such as "grandson" and "granddaughter", "nephew" and "niece". These notions are described by special formulas:

Grandson – *Inanka aan awoowga (ayeeyada) u ahay* [Lit: the boy for whom I am the grandfather (grandmother)];

Granddaughter – *Inanta aan awoowga (ayeeyada) u ahay* [Lit: the girl for whom I am the grandfather (grandmother)];

Nephew – *Inanka aan adeerka (abtiga, eeddada, habaryarta) u ahay* [Lit: the boy for whom I am the paternal (maternal) uncle/the paternal (maternal) aunt];

Niece – *Inanta aan adeerka (abtiga, eeddada, habaryarta) u ahay* [Lit: the girl for whom I am the paternal (maternal) uncle/the paternal (maternal) aunt].

⁹ See footnote 6.

¹⁰ See footnote 7.

¹¹ To distinguish between them one may say: *aayada adeerka* (aunt, wife of paternal uncle) or *aayada abtiga* (aunt, wife of maternal uncle).

¹² Lit: a small mother.

¹³ See also 26, 27.

¹⁴ To distinguish between them one may say: *awowga aabbe* [paternal grandfather] or *awoga hooyo* [maternal grandfather].

¹⁵ To distinguish between them one may say: *ayeeyada aabbe* [paternal grandmother] or *ayeeyada hooyo* [maternal grandmother].

4. Relatives by marriage

The vast majority of Somali kinship terms stand for relatives by blood. The much lower status of relatives by marriage (with the exception of husband and wife) has resulted in the existence of only a few corresponding terms:

- seedi-ga* – sister's husband or wife's brother;
- dumaashi-da* – wife's sister or husband's sister;
- avo/aave-da* – wife of paternal or maternal uncle;
- soddog-ga* – wife's or husband's father;
- soddoh-da* – wife's or husband's mother;
- dumaashi-ga* – husband's brother or sister's husband;
- manlayaal-ka* – man who lives with his wife's clan¹⁶.

All other relatives by marriage, for example, 'husband of mother's sister' or 'brother of husband's father' are usually called *xidid*, i.e. 'relative by marriage'.

5. The hierarchy of kinship

A Somali proverb goes: *Toi waa hal la qalay* – *Kinsmen are like [different] pieces of a she-camel's meat [some are good, i.e. important and some are bad, i.e. not important]*. In Somali traditional society with its dominant male lineage there are two prominent figures: a father and a paternal uncle. The latter plays an outstanding role in the upbringing of his nephews and takes the place of their father in the event of his death. The Somali custom *dumaal* directs him to marry his brother's widow, i.e. his sister-in-law (*dumaashi*). If the children's mother dies their father usually marries one of her younger sisters (*habayyar*). If all are married one of them takes the children into her family.

As for the "value" of other relations it is well exposed in many pieces of Somali folklore. Here is one (English translation and the original text):

Once there was a girl who wanted to learn the difference between her paternal brother, her maternal brother, her paternal cousin and her maternal cousin, so one day she suggested that they should all go to play at a place some way off. Halfway there she fell down and cried out that she had been bitten by a snake. The boys stopped to decide what to do. The paternal brother said: "We aren't far from the place where we were going to play. Let's leave her here, play a while and then come back." The paternal cousin said: "No, we have to take her home." The maternal brother said: "We can't leave her here." The maternal cousin said: "Let's carry her as close to the playground as we can and then come to see her from time to time." Having heard this the girl sprang to her feet and exclaimed: "My paternal cousin takes good care of me. My maternal brother plays fair with me. My paternal brother thinks of play and not my care. My maternal cousin thinks the way's now here, now there!"

Waxaa la yiri, gabadh baa damacday in ay kala ogaato walaaleheed iyo ina-adeerradeed. – Ina kiciya, cayaarta ii raaca! – ayay ku tiri ina-adeerkeed, ina-aabbeheed, ina-hoovadeed iyo ina-abtigeed. Meel dhexe markii la marayo ayay tiri: – A - a - a - a, waa la i qaniinay! A - a - a - a, waa la i qaniinay! Markaasay dhulka isku tuurtay. Markaasaa wiilalshii isku jeesteen. Waxay yiraahdeen: – War, see yeelnaa? Gabadhana kama tegi karno, cayaartiina waa dhowdahay. Ina-adogeed aan ku habar ahayni waxuu yiri: – Aan kaga tagno meesha, intaan meel u dhow geyno aan u soo noqonno hadhow! Ina-adeerkeed waxuu yiri: – Waxaasi hadal ma dheer gabadha aan qaadno. Ina-hoovadeedna waxuu yiri: – Marna yaynaan gabadha ka tegin, sina. Ina-abtigeedna waxuu yiri: – Intaan qaadno oo meel u dhow cayaarta geynnoo aan u soo noqnoqonno. Gabadhana lama qaniinin e waxay rabtay in ay kala ogaato oo waa dhegaysanaysaa intaas hadalkooda. Markii dambe ayay inta iska kacday tiri: – Ina-adeer, igama tage! Ina-hooyow, ima huraan! Ina-odow, oog-la-shiday! Ina-abtow soo-noqnoqoy!¹⁷

¹⁶ Usually after marriage a husband takes his wife to stay with his clan.

¹⁷ Kapchits, 2006, pp. 113-114.

6. Vocative forms.

It is interesting to note the existence in Somali of special forms of address between close kin belonging to different generations. While children address their father and mother in the usual way, calling them "*aabbe/aabbo*" ("father") and "*hooyo*" ("mother"), the parents address their children using the same terms; thus the father calls his son and daughter "*aabbo*" (i.e. "father"), and the mother calls them "*hooyo*" (i.e. "mother"), usually together with their proper names. For example, a father can tell his son: "*Cabdi, aabbo, i sii waxan!*" [Lit: "Cabdi, father, give me this thing!"] and mother can appeal to her daughter: "*Shukri, hooyo, waxan ii qabo!*" [Lit: "Shukri, mother, keep it for me!"]. Sometimes "father" and "mother" are omitted and the name of the son is preceded by the word "*waryaa*", which is used to get a man's attention, while the name of a daughter follows the word "*naayaa*" which is used to attract a woman's attention: "*Waryaa Cabdi, i sii waxan!*" ["Hey, Cabdi, give me this thing!"] or "*Naayaa Shukri, waxan ii qabo!*" ["Hey, Shukri, keep it for me!"]

Similarly, children call their grandparents "*awoow*" ("grandfather") and "*ayeeyo*" ("grandmother"), but if there happen to be two members of this generation present (for example, father's father and his brother, or mother's mother and her sister), a child, when addressing one of them, supplements "*awoow*" ("*ayeeyo*") with his or her name: "*Awoow Yuusuf (Ayeeyo Maryam), waan baahan ahay!*" ("Granddad Yuusuf /Granny Maryam, I am hungry!")

When addressing his grandson or granddaughter a grandfather calls them both "*awoow*", and a grandmother calls them both "*ayeeyo*". If there are several children, "*waryaa*" or "*naayaa*" and a proper name is used: "*Naayaa Faadumo, ayeeyo, waxaan samee!*" (Lit: "Hey, Faadumo, granny, do this!")

7. Typological summary

7.1.

Our analysis is based on a typological nomenclature, using as criteria oppositions along paternal/maternal and direct/collateral lines. Kinship systems where both oppositions are attested form the bifurcate-collateral type, and those where only the latter is present form the lineal type. Semitic and Cushitic kinship systems mostly belong to the bifurcate-collateral type with an obvious general shift towards the lineal one, as, for example, in Amharic (cf. Ibrizimow, Porkhomovsky 2005, 27-28). In Berber and possibly Chadic the situation is more complicated, since in some communities (e.g. among the Tuaregs) one may note certain features proper to a bifurcate-merging type (which is characterized by the presence of the paternal/maternal opposition and the absence of the direct/collateral one).

The Somali kinship system fully corresponds to the general trend from the bifurcate-collateral type towards the lineal one. In the first ascending generation the opposition between paternal and maternal lines is attested both for masculine and feminine:

- adeer-ka* – paternal uncle
- abt-ga* – maternal uncle
- eeddo-da* – paternal aunt
- habayyar-ta* – maternal aunt

These four simple non-descriptive terms reflect the paternal/maternal opposition in Somali, and such a configuration is to be considered as the more archaic one within the Hamito-Semitic area. The same situation is attested, for example, in Adari (Semitic branch), Oromo (Cushitic), Hausa and Bole (Chadic) [for more details cf. Ibrizimow, Porkhomovsky 2005, p. 27]. The first step of the shift towards the lineal type is the loss of this opposition in feminine lines, e.g. in Socotri (Semitic branch). The first ascending generation is the most important one for typological classification, since it is the last to lose this opposition.

The trend towards the lineal type in Somali is attested in the Ego generation, where the paternal/maternal opposition is preserved for parallel cousins, but lost for cross-cousins. It must be

emphasized that all original terms for cross-cousins are still in use but are no longer opposed to each other along the paternal/maternal line:

- Ina-adeer-ka* [first cousin – son of father's brother (*adeer*)];
- Ina-adeer-ta* [first cousin – daughter of father's brother (*adeer*)];
- Ina-eeddo-ha* [first cousin – son of father's sister (*eeddo*)];
- Ina-eeddo-da* [first cousin – daughter of father's sister (*eeddo*)];
- Ina-abti-ga* [first cousin – son of mother's brother (*abti*) or father's sister (*eeddo*)];
- Ina-abti-da* [first cousin – daughter of mother's brother (*abti*) or father's sister (*eeddo*)];
- Habarwadaag-ga, ina-habreed-ka* [first cousin – son of mother's sister (*habaryar*)];
- Habarwadaag-ta, ina-habreed-da* [first cousin – daughter of mother's sister (*habaryar*)].

The evolution towards the lineal type led to a semantic paradox, since all these terms are descriptive, with the designations of paternal and maternal uncles and aunts as their components. However, these terms for parents' siblings preserve their original semantics when used independently for the first ascending generation, but lose this semantic component when they function as parts of the compound descriptive terms in the Ego generation.

7.2.

As was stated above, the Somali kinship system is characterised by a peculiar feature, which may be labelled "mirror nomination": certain entries of the system of referential terms are designated not directly, but via the Ego's position vis-à-vis the person to be nominated. This is the case with grandchildren and nephews:

- grandson – *Inanka aan awoowga (ayeeyada) u ahay* [Lit: the boy for whom I am the grandfather (grandmother)];
- granddaughter – *Inanta aan awoowga (ayeeyada) u ahay* [Lit: the girl for whom I am the grandfather (grandmother)];
- nephew – *Inanka aan adeerka (abtiga, eeddada, habaryarta) u ahay* [Lit: the boy for whom I am the paternal ~ maternal uncle/the paternal ~ maternal aunt];
- niece – *Inanta aan adeerka (abtiga, eeddada, habaryarta) u ahay* [Lit: the girl for whom I am the paternal ~ maternal uncle/the paternal ~ maternal aunt].

The same *mirror* principle is noted in the case of certain vocative forms when the situation of address includes different generations (cf. above, paragraph 6), i.e. in the case of parents ~ children and grandparents ~ grandchildren contacts. In this case even the sex of the children and grandchildren is not relevant. The gender of the vocative term depends on the sex of the elder participant of the communication act and the kinship term pertaining to the elder participant is used by both of them.

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