EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF SOMALI STUDIES
and
CENTRE OF AFRICAN STUDIES
and
DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES
SOAS, University of London

THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF SOMALI STUDIES

FIRST CONFERENCE

23rd–25th September 1993

WAR AND PEACE IN SOMALI PROVERBS
(logico-semeiotical analysis)

by

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1. Introduction

In the Somali paremiological[1] fund there is a certain amount of proverbs[2] on peace and war. They differ in number of words, in syntactic structure, in distribution of logical accents, in presence or absence of alliteration, in character of motivation (image or direct) and, what is the most important, in meaning. This paper deals with the meaning of ten proverbs of this kind. They belong to the well-known Somali paremias and mention either peace, or war (or both). But before starting the analysis I have to make several remarks.

2. Signs and models of situations

Proverbs are signs and models of certain situations or certain relationships between objects. The signal nature of the proverbs was ascertained by a celebrated Russian scholar G.Permyakov[3]. Thus a Somali proverb *Af daboolan waa dehab* (A closed mouth is gold) models the situation which may be described as follows: *The less you talk the better* and the proverb *Quraanyo aruurtay bulac bay jiidaa* ((Working) together ants can carry a lizzard) - "The joint efforts are more effective."

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[1] Paremiology derives from a Greek work which means "saying" or "parable"; this philological branch of science deals with proverbs and proverbial phrases.

[2] Here and later a term "proverb" for the sake of simplicity is used to cover all types of the paremias (proverbs proper, aphorisms and other one-phrased cliches).

[3] See G.L.Permyakof "Poslovitsi i Pogovorki Narodov Vostoka" (Moskva, Nauka, 1979) and G.Kapchits "On Paremiological Classification of Somali Proverbs" (The proceedings of the 1 Simposio internazionale di studi cuscitici ed omotici (Torino, 1990).

3. Theme of a proverb

Secondly, the theme of a proverb is not one or another word, not one or another idea and even not one or another field of people's activity, but a certain invariant[4] pair of opposite entities, embracing the meaning of the images used in the proverb. Big - Small, Good - Bad, Old - Young, Action - Reaction, Man - Woman and so on belong to such thematic pairs. In case when only one member of the pair is explicitly represented, the other is meant: *Geesi Alle ma ciilo* (God never offends a brave man [and offends a coward]). So the theme of a Somali proverb *Abeer inkastuu is taawiyo awr lama loolamo* (Though a young she-camel is arrogant, she will never pick on a mature camel) is not the young she-camel and the older camel, not the arrogance of the young she-camel and not even the fact that she is afraid of the mature (i.e. older) camel, but the invariant pair Young - Old, which is represented by the images of a young she-camel and a mature camel used in the proverb.

4. Character of logical relations between the members of thematic pairs.

The members of invariant thematic pairs establish relations with each other. It is well seen on the example of the proverbs, belonging to one and the same thematic group. Thus, Straight and Crooked (i.e. Straight and Crooked things, Truth and Falsehood, Honest and Dishonest people, Justice and Injustice) can form relations of Compatibility - Incompatibility : Straight and Crooked can either be together or not be together: *Lillaahi iyo laqdabo meel ma wada galaan* (Straightforwardness and slyness can't enter one and the same place); or relations of Quantitative Superiority or Inferiority: "Straight excels or does not excel the Crooked" (for example, in speed): *Been fakatay runi ma gaarto* - The truth will not catch up with a run-away lie and so on. The whole number of types of relations which members of thematic proverbial pairs establish, is twenty eight. Every proverb can have one, two, three and even more

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[4]Invariant implies something constant and stable contained in all corresponding variants. For example, the invariant of such pairs of oppositions as Mother and Daughter, Father and Son, Sheep and Lamb, Tree and its Fruits, is a pair Generative-Generated.

thematic pairs, but can reproduce only one kind of relations between objects mentioned in it in every concrete usage. In a proverb with more than one thematic pair one of the pairs can evidently prevail over another. To establish the exact meaning of a proverb is to point out a type of the opposite things used in it and a character of logical relations between them.

5. Analysis

The proverbs dealing with peace and war can be divided into two different categories: proverbs of transferred meaning which demand a broadened interpretation and those of direct meaning which, however allow a broadened interpretation. In the proverbs of the first type the words "war" and "peace" are used as metaphors, in the proverbs of the second type they are used in their own meaning.

Category I

1. *Dag-aal waa gelin dambe* - The War is its second half (i.e. the end of the war is really important). It may seem that the proverb is about war, but in reality it points to the beginning and end, stressing that the end of any affair (including war) is more important than its start. The proverb thus demonstrates a thematic pair Beginning (explicitly) - End, the members of which establish relations of Qualitative Superiority - Inferiority. This is a proverb of transferred meaning.

2. *Dagaal gondahaaguu ka dhashaa* - The war can appear from under your feed. The proverb stresses that all the troubles happen unexpectedly and one has to be ready to meet them. A thematic pair Good and Bad (only its second member is represented explicitly). They model relations of Usualness - Unusualness. The Bad usually happens unexpectedly, because this it its feature. This proverb demands a broadened interpretation.

3. *Dagaal waa ka dare, rag is bartaase waa door* - War is evil, but it helps men to learn each other's worth. Here again the proverb means not the war itself, but

a bad thing in general (a pair Good - Bad). Its sense is "there is no bad without good". The relations between the members of the pair demonstrate Contradiction: things are not fully endowed with inner wholeness - the second member of the pair possesses some positive feature.

4. *Waras iyo weyshiisa weerar baa kala geeya* - Even a cow and a heifer may quarrel. This proverb is about Generative and Generated (a cow and a heifer are the variants of this pair), which establish the relations of Friendliness - Animosity (Different things, even very close can be hostile towards each other).

5. *Ninkii laga nabad galo baa nabad gala* - He who does not hurt others is not hurt himself (lit. He who let others live in peace lives in peace himself). The character of logical relations between the members of the pair is Dependence - Independence (If there is one thing, there should be another).

Category 2

1. *Nabad go'day ma xiranto* - Torn peace can't be tied together. Only one member of the pair Peace and War is represented explicitly. The proverb states that things (in this case - peace), which change in time and space never return to their point of departure; changes are irreversible.

2. *Nabad baa caano macaan* - In the time of peace milk is more sweet. Only the first member of the pair presents itself explicitly. This members of the pair establish re relations of Qualitative Superiority - Inferiority. In fact the proverb affirms that peace is a good thing.

3. *Geela xeradiisu waa nabad* - The best enclosure for a camel is peace. This proverb resembles the previous one. It ascertains that in time of peace it is easier to preserve camels. The members of a pair Peace and War model the relations of Qualitative Superiority - Inferiority.

4. *Caano nabad lagu waayay dagaal laguma helo* - A thing (lit. milk) which was not gained peacefully so much the more can't be gained by force (lit. war). Both members of the pair of the opposite entities present themselves explicitly and model the relations of Qualitative Superiority - Inferiority: the second thing (war) is less effective than the first (peace).

5. *"Sagaaro biyo waa cabtaa" iyo "Ma cabto."*

- Sagaro[5] drinks water!
- No, it does not!

This is a super-phrasal cliché without immediate motivation of general meaning, i.e. cliché, the meaning of which stems neither directly, nor through the image from the meaning of their components, but is determined by the context from which these clichés were originally taken and remind of. It goes back to the tale about two friends, who quarreled and nearly killed each other disagreeing about whether sagaro drinks water or not. Both members of the pair Peace and Ware are not represented explicitly, but they model relations of Starting- Non-Starting: one thing starts another. The proverb means: Big quarrels start (originate) from nothing.

6. Conclusion

Somali proverbs on peace and war are not numerous. Mainly they are one-phrase cliches of direct meaning. They appreciate peace, assert that peaceful actions are more effective than military ones, warn about fragility of peace and demand that it should be protected. The loftiness of moral principles expressed in Somali proverbs on peace and war is beyond doubt.

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[5]Sagaro - a miniature antelope.

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