

# PRONOMINAL AND PREPOSITIONAL PARTICLES IN NORTHERN SOMALI

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## INTRODUCTION

The words which in this paper are referred to as 'Prepositional and Pronominal Particles' can be grouped together in one grammatical category on account of their phonological and syntactic features, which distinguish them sharply from all the other categories in this language.

The prepositional and pronominal particles have not yet been adequately described, although the subject has been treated at some length in Somali grammars.<sup>1</sup>

In this field the most important contribution, as far as the formal side is concerned, is that of C. R. V. Bell, while the notional associations of these particles have been extensively described by R. C. Abraham. None of the existing accounts is systematic, however, and an attempt is made in this paper to present a more coherent statement and to fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge of this important sphere of Somali grammar.

The spelling used in this paper is the same as in the *Hikmad Soomaali*, but for readers not acquainted with that book some brief notes are now given.

The consonant symbols, except for ʔ, sh, kh, ʕ, j, y, and ȳ, are the same as those of the International Phonetic Alphabet. My symbols ʔ, sh, kh, ʕ, j and y correspond to the ʔ, ʃ, x, ʁ, tʃ and dʒ of the I.P.A. respectively. The symbol ȳ represents a 'darker', less tense and very swiftly articulated type of y. Each of the vowels i, e, a, o, u can be either short or long and length is represented by doubling the vowel letter. Syllabic break between two vowels is represented by a hyphen. In addition to the basic distinction of quality, each vowel can belong either to a front or a back series, which differ from each other in that in the vowels of the front series the highest point of the tongue is more advanced towards the hard palate than in the corresponding vowels of the back series. A cedilla placed under the first vowel letter of a word indicates that all the vowels in that word (owing to harmonic tendencies) belong to the front series. The absence of a cedilla under the first vowel letter indicates that all the vowels of that word are in the back series. The harmonic tendencies also operate through whole sequences of words, but the limits of such sequences are unstable and depend on the speed, style of pronunciation and pauses. In view of this fact, harmonic tendencies beyond the word level

are not shown in my spelling here. They are implied to a large extent, however, in the position of the cedillas in the sentences, according to the formulations given in my article *The problem of vowel representation in the Isaaq dialect of Somali*.<sup>1</sup>

The accentual features, which consist of combinations of tone and stress, are classified here into five units, four of which have two variants each. The distribution of these variants depends on

- (a) whether the syllable is immediately followed by another syllable within the same or the next word, or
- (b) whether the syllable is immediately followed by a pause.

The Accentual Units are :

1. High Tone with Even Strong Stress in position (a)  
and Mid Tone with Secondary Stress in position (b).
2. High Falling Tone with Diminuendo Stress in both positions.
3. Mid Tone with Absence of Stress in position (a),  
Low Tone with Absence of Stress in position (b).
4. High Tone with Even Strong Stress in position (a),  
High Falling Tone with Diminuendo Stress in position (b).
5. Mid Tone with Absence of Stress in position (a),  
Mid Tone with Secondary Stress in position (b).

The accentual units are represented as follows :

ˊ (The Acute)	AU1
ˋ (The Grave)	AU2
ˆ (The Circumflex)	AU4
˘ (The Inverted Circumflex)	AU5

Absence of any of the above diacritics represents AU3. The diacritics are placed over the vowel letters and in the case of doubled vowel letters they are placed over the first vowel letter, although they refer to the whole vowel. For the limitations of this system of transcription, see p. 4 of my article *Accentual patterns in verbal forms in the Isaaq dialect of Somali*.<sup>2</sup>

When sources are quoted, the abbreviations HS stands for *Hikmad Soomaali* (op. cit.) and QA for *Qaalle Adduun*, a short novel by Mr. M. H. I. Galaal, as yet unpublished.<sup>3</sup> Figures used after these abbreviations refer to chapters and lines. The translations of examples are as near to the original texts as English usage permits and no attempt is made to convey their literary qualities.

<sup>1</sup> BSOAS, XVII, 3, 1955, pp. 567-80.

<sup>2</sup> BSOAS, XVIII, 1, 1956, pp. 103-29.

<sup>3</sup> A copy of the typescript of this novel can be consulted at the Departmental Library, Department of Africa, S.O.A.S.

<sup>1</sup> For bibliographies of works on Somali see : A. N. Tucker and M. A. Bryan, *The non-Bantu languages of north-eastern Africa* (Handbook of African Languages, Part III), O.U.P., 1956, and M. H. I. Galaal, *Hikmad Soomaali*, edited by myself (S.O.A.S. Annotated African Texts, IV), O.U.P., 1956.

## I. PARADIGMATIC DISPLAY

The members of the grammatical category under discussion are listed below and arranged into paradigms in a way which will become self-evident when the notional associations and accentual patterns are described in Sections 5-8.

The accentual patterns are not marked in this list, but can be inferred from the general formulation on their distribution, given in Section 4.

Each particle is given a serial sign for the purpose of ready reference and round brackets indicate optional variants.

Those particles whose serial sign consists of a Greek and/or Roman letter only, occur very frequently and the same applies to particles whose serial sign consists of or includes the figures from 1 to 4. The particles whose serial sign consists of or includes the figures 5-10 are fairly common and the remaining particles are very rare. They are placed in square brackets to indicate the infrequency of their occurrence. I have very seldom come across them in folk literature or heard them in conversations or broadcasts. Some of these rare forms have been obtained through direct questioning of linguistic informants as to the potentialities of their occurrence.

In the spelling of some particles the capital letters **L**, **K** and **G** are used in order to provide a clear visual distinction between particles identical in shape but which differ in their potentialities of accentual patterns. These capital letters are also used in those particles which though different in shape from all other particles can be associated with the particles of the former type. This device is independent of the system of serial signs employed in the list given below.

*List of Pronominal and Prepositional Particles*

I.

a. **La**

II.

- A. **i**  
B. **Ku**  
C. **na**  
D. **ina**  
E. **idin**  
F. **is**

III.

- |               |                       |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| 1. <b>u</b>   | 8. <b>kaga</b>        |
| 2. <b>ku</b>  | 9. <b>kula</b>        |
| 3. <b>ka</b>  | 10. <b>kala</b>       |
| 4. <b>la</b>  | 11. [ <b>kagala</b> ] |
| 5. <b>ugu</b> | 12. [ <b>ugaga</b> ]  |
| 6. <b>uga</b> | 13. [ <b>ugula</b> ]  |
| 7. <b>ula</b> | 14. [ <b>ugala</b> ]  |

IV.

- aA. **Lay (La-i)**  
aB. **LaGu**  
aC. **Lana (naLa)**  
aD. **Layna (La-ina)**  
aE. **Laydin (La-idin)**  
aF. **Lays (La-is)**

V.

- |                  |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| a1. <b>Loo</b>   | a8. <b>Lagaga</b>        |
| a2. <b>Lagu</b>  | a9. <b>Lagula</b>        |
| a3. <b>Laga</b>  | a10. <b>Lagala</b>       |
| a4. <b>Lala</b>  | a11. [ <b>Lagagala</b> ] |
| a5. <b>Loogu</b> | a12. [ <b>Loogaga</b> ]  |
| a6. <b>Looga</b> | a13. [ <b>Loogula</b> ]  |
| a7. <b>Loola</b> | a14. [ <b>Loogala</b> ]  |

VI.

- |                 |                         |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| A1. <b>ii</b>   | A8. <b>igaga</b>        |
| A2. <b>igu</b>  | A9. <b>igula</b>        |
| A3. <b>iga</b>  | A10. <b>igala</b>       |
| A4. <b>ila</b>  | A11. [ <b>igagala</b> ] |
| A5. <b>iigu</b> | A12. [ <b>iigaga</b> ]  |
| A6. <b>iiga</b> | A13. [ <b>iigula</b> ]  |
| A7. <b>iila</b> | A14. [ <b>iigala</b> ]  |

VII.

- |                  |                         |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| B1. <b>Kuu</b>   | B8. <b>as B6</b>        |
| B2. <b>Kugu</b>  | B9. <b>Kugula</b>       |
| B3. <b>Kaa</b>   | B10. <b>Kaala</b>       |
| B4. <b>Kula</b>  | B11. [ <b>Kaagala</b> ] |
| B5. <b>Kuugu</b> | B12. [ <b>Kaagaga</b> ] |
| B6. <b>Kaaga</b> | B13. [ <b>Kuugula</b> ] |
| B7. <b>Kuula</b> | B14. [ <b>as B11.</b> ] |

VIII.

- |                  |                          |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| C1. <b>noo</b>   | C8. <b>nagaga</b>        |
| C2. <b>nagu</b>  | C9. <b>nagula</b>        |
| C3. <b>naga</b>  | C10. <b>nagala</b>       |
| C4. <b>nala</b>  | C11. [ <b>nagagala</b> ] |
| C5. <b>noogu</b> | C12. [ <b>noogaga</b> ]  |
| C6. <b>nooga</b> | C13. [ <b>noogula</b> ]  |
| C7. <b>noola</b> | C14. [ <b>noogala</b> ]  |

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IX.

D1. inoo	D8. inagaga
D2. inagu	D9. inagula
D3. inaga	D10. inagala
D4. inala	D11. [inagagala]
D5. inoogu	D12. [inoogaga]
D6. inooga	D13. [inoogula]
D7. inoola	D14. [inoogala]

X.

E1. idiin	E8. idinkaga
E2. idinku	E9. idinkula
E3. idinka	E10. idinkala
E4. idinla	E11. [idinkagala]
E5. idiinku	E12. [idiinkaga]
E6. idiinka	E13. [idiinkula]
E7. idiinla	E14. [idiinkala]

XI.

F1. isu	F8. iskaga
F2. isku	F9. iskula
F3. iska	F10. iskala
F4. isla	F11. [iskagala]
F5. isugu	F12. [isagaga]
F6. isaga	F13. [isugula]
F7. isula	F14. [isagala]

XII.

αA1. La-ii	αA8. Laygaga (La-igaga)
αA2. Laygu (La-igu)	αA9. Laygula (La-igula)
αA3. Layga (La-iga)	αA10. Laygala (La-igala)
αA4. Layla (La-ila)	αA11. [Laygagala (La-igagala)]
αA5. La-iigu	αA12. [La-iigaga]
αA6. La-iiga	αA13. [La-iigula]
αA7. La-iila	αA14. [La-iigala]

XIII.

αB1. LaGuu	αB8. as αB6.
αB2. LaGugu	αB9. LaGugula
αB3. LaGaa	αB10. LaGaala
αB4. LaGula	αB11. [LaGaagala]
αB5. LaGuugu	αB12. [LaGaagaga]
αB6. LaGaaga	αB13. [LaGuugula]
αB7. LaGuula	αB14. [as B11.]

XIV.

αC1. Lanoo (naLoo)	αC8. Lanagaga (naLagaga)
αC2. Lanagu (naLagu)	αC9. Lanagula (naLagula)
etc., cf. VIII.	

XV.

αD1. Laynoo (La-inoo)	αD8. Laynagaga (La-inagaga)
αD2. Laynagu (La-inagu)	αD9. Laynagula (La-inagula)
etc., cf. IX.	

XVI.

αE1. Laydiin (La-idiin)	αE8. Laydinkaga (La-idinkaga)
αE2. Laydinku (La-idinku)	αE9. Laydinkula (La-idinkula)
etc., cf. X.	

XVII.

αF1. Laysu (La-isu)	αF8. Layskaga (La-iskaga)
αF2. Laysku (La-isku)	αF9. Layskula (La-iskula)
etc., cf. XI.	

## 2. POSITIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

None of the particles listed in Section 2 can occur by itself or at the end of a sentence. In the vast majority of cases a particle of this type is followed, though often not immediately, by a verb or an adjective. Between the particle and the verb or adjective the following words only can occur :

- The negation particle *ma*, whether combined or not with the subject pronouns *aan* 'I', *aad* 'you' (Sing. or Pl.), *uu* 'he, it', *ay* 'she, they', *aannu* 'we' (excluding you), *aynu* 'we' (including you), *aydin* 'you' (Pl.).
- The conjunction *na* 'and, but' (occurs very rarely in this position).
- The possessive pronouns *kaa* 'yours' (Sing.) and *kjin* 'yours' (Pl.) used in certain limited constructions (described in Note 23/237 on HS).
- The adverbial particles *soo* 'towards (the speaker)' and *sii* 'away from (the speaker)'.<sup>1</sup>
- The adverbial particles *wada* 'together' and *kala* 'apart'.<sup>2</sup>
- A noun form in pre-verbal position.<sup>3</sup>

A particle of Groups III and VI–XI can also occur when no verb or adjective follows it. This happens in verbless predicative constructions with *waa* . . . or

<sup>1</sup> These particles have also other meanings which it would be difficult to describe at length here.

<sup>2</sup> *kala* has AU3 on both syllables in all positions and thus differs from the particle *kala* in the list in § 2.

<sup>3</sup> I.e. a noun form immediately before a verb without the possibility of any other word occurring between them. This position is bound up with certain notional associations which are beyond the scope of this article.



'Take the thirty (sheep and goats); as you were ashamed to send us away on a further journey in the afternoon, for whatever you have slaughtered for us, we must reward you.' HS 20/34-6.

Náa, wáannáan idin garánayn oo shishéeyáannu idin moódnay, . . .

'Oh woman, we did not recognize you and we took you for strangers, . . .'

QA 2141-2.

Baqál fardó lá mirataa díggoóday is moóddaa.

'Mules which graze at night with horses consider themselves to be equal to them.' A proverb.

Labá qaawani is má qaaddó.

'Two naked (persons) do not take each other (i.e. two poor persons should not marry).' A proverb.

### 7. THE NOTIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF PARTICLES 1-4 OF GROUP III

These particles have usually the following direct notional associations:

u 'for', 'to' (direction, destination, advantage, disadvantage, purpose, reason)

ku 'in', 'into', 'on', 'at', 'concerning', 'with' (by means of)

ka 'from', 'away from', 'out of'

la 'with' (together with).

Examples:

Nin dīgigsii nín búu dawó ú yshay.

'One man's blood is a medicine to another man.' A proverb.

. . . mahāad ú 'arartay?

'Why (what for) did you run away?' HS 23/102.

Ninkii doonaa inuu méel ú so'daaló na biiddóod búu kiraysán jiray oo báhal La yjdaahdó hámag Lagú qáadi jiray.

'The man who wanted to travel to a place used to hire slaves and used to be carried in a thing called "hammock".' HS 22/10-2.

Boholó hadimó La má qodó, kú qí'i doontee na má ogid é.

'One should not dig pits (traps), one may (lit. "you may") fall into them—one doesn't know (lit. "you don't know").' A proverb.

. . . anaa garánayá wúhuu kú humaa.

'I know in what he was bad.' HS 18/24.

Nín labá ga'móod wah kú 'unay wuu mergedaa.

'A man who has eaten something with both (lit. "two") hands gets choked.'

A proverb.

Shimbiri labá gēed ka má bardaysato.

'A bird does not pick figs from two trees.' From a Héello love poem.

Súbihi baa ilaaládi yóo gaajaysani degmádi ká luudday.

'In the morning the scouts trudged hungry out of the village.' HS 13/7.

Márkuu odáygi háshii lá libáy búu inankii hálkii faqistay oo dúlka harriiqay.

'When the old man disappeared with the she-camel, the boy sat in the place and drew lines on the ground.' QA 51-2.

Particles 1-4 of Group III frequently have indirect notional associations in the type of constructions referred to in Section 5.

Some typical constructions are given here as illustrations (V representing a verb and A an adjective or verb of adjectival or attributive derivation):

àad . . . ú . . . V 'very', 'very much', 'very well'

sí . . . ú . . . V 'in a (particular) way, manner'

sáhal . . . ú . . . V 'easily'

saré . . . ú . . . V 'up', 'upwards'

hóos . . . ú . . . V 'down', 'downwards'

ú . . . . gée 'lead, carry, to (a person)'

kú . . . . noqó 'return'

kú . . . . qutó 'hit'

ú . . . . shèeg 'tell', 'inform'

kú . . . . so'ó 'move, walk towards'

ká . . . . A This construction has notional associations comparable with those of the words and affixes in English which express the comparative degree

ká . . . . 'éli 'defend'

lá . . . . yàab 'be astonished at'.

Examples:

Ninku na àad búu fàalka ú yjiin.

'The man knew very well the art of divination (from the beads of a Muslim rosary).' HS 23/2-3.

Anaa garánayá sí aynu ú hulannó.

'I know how (a way in which) we can pick her out.' HS 15/9.

Markaasaa wánkii mádahii saré ú qaaday oo riyihii kú darmay.

'Then the ram lifted up his head and mixed with the goats.' HS 6/3-4.

Haggée kú so'otaa?

'Where (towards where) are you going?' QA 33.

Hungúri wah ká wēyn La gēliya wuu dillaa'aa.

'A gullet into which something bigger than itself is introduced bursts.'

A proverb.

Haddii dádku béen ká shéegayó na aad ká 'eliseen.

'If the people tell lies about him, you must defend him.' HS 14/9-10.

Markaasaa ninkii bukáy iyó dádki kalóo dammi qakhtárka 'aqliweynántijisti iyó abwaannimádijisti lá yaabeen.

'Then the man who was sick and all the other people were astonished at the doctor's cleverness and wisdom.' HS 16/38-40.

## 8. THE NOTIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF PARTICLES 5-14 OF GROUP III

These particles combine the notional associations, direct and/or indirect, of the particles 1-4 of the same Group, but it is important to note that they may refer at the same time to completely different objects. In the list given below a statement concerning such combinations is made in symbolic form. The symbol = stands for 'has the same notional associations as the following particles' and the + sign is to be read as 'and'. In two cases there are alternative possibilities, the distribution of which is determined by context.

5. ugu = u + u or u + ku
6. uga = u + ka
7. ula = u + la
8. kaga = ku + ku or ku + ka or ka + ka
9. kula = ku + la
10. kala = ka + la
11. kagala = kaga (as 8 above) + la
12. ugaga = u + kaga (as 8 above)
13. ugula = u + kula (,, 9 ,, )
14. ugala = u + kala (,, 10 ,, )

This statement was arrived at through comparison of sentences, as illustrated in the following examples :

Máantii dambé ayùu iságóo toddobádii gini haystá, Jóonisbaag lúg kagá bahay . . .

'A day later, when he (still) had the seven pounds on him, he left (came out of) Johannesburg on foot.' HS 22/12-3.

Cf. Lúg bùu kú bahay. 'He left on foot.'

Jóonisbaag bùu ká bahay. 'He left (came out of) Johannesburg.'

Here kaga = ku 'on' (foot) + ka 'out of, from' (Johannesburg).

. . . sidée bàad rúgtaad sod'áalka ká bilawday ngú noqón kartaa ?

'How (in what way) can you return to the homestead from which you began your journey?' QA 636-7.

Sidée bàad ú yéeli kartaa ? 'How (in what way) can you do it ?'

Miyáad kú noqón kartaa ? 'Can you return ?'

Here ugu = u + ku. The particle u forms a part of the construction si . . . . u (see Section 7) and the particle ku belongs to the construction kú noqó 'return'.

It has been possible to apply this method of analysis to all the examples of particles 5-14 which have come under observation, except in those cases where ugu occurs with adjectives or verbs of adjectival or attributive derivation. In such constructions ugu has notional associations comparable with those of the words and affixes in English which express the superlative degree, e.g. ta ugú wanaagsán 'the best one'.

## 9. THE NOTIONAL ASSOCIATIONS OF PARTICLES OF GROUPS IV-XVII

These particles combine the notional associations, direct and indirect, of the particles of Groups I-III and a statement concerning such combinations is encoded in the system of serial signs used in the list in Section 1.

The letter a indicates that the particle has the same notional associations as the particle a in Group I.

The letters A, B, C, D, E and F indicate that the particle has the same notional associations as a particle marked with the corresponding letter in Group II.

The figures 1-14 indicate that the particle has the same notional associations as a particle of Group III marked with a corresponding figure.

Thus, for example, the serial sign aB3 shows that the Particle has the same notional associations as the particles a (Group I), B (Group II) and 9 (Group III) at the same time.

The statement encoded in the serial signs requires some modification only in the case of the particles isku and iska. The former often occurs with the meaning 'the same', e.g. waa isku jáad 'they are the same'. The latter very often means 'just, simply, of one's own accord', e.g. wuu iská qaqaayay 'he just moved on'.

The method employed in dealing with the particles of Groups IV-XV is exactly the same as in the preceding section, e.g. :

. . . mahaa arládjinnii Káa keenay ? 'What has brought you (here) from your country ?' HS 23/120.

Cf. Mahaa Ku keenay ? 'What has brought you (here) ?'

Ninka mahaa ká keenay arládodii ? 'What has brought the man from his (their) country ?'

Kaa (B3) = Ku (B) + ka (3).

Further examples :

Ka ka'a, waa Layna hayaa !

'Arise, we are attacked !' HS 23/190-1.

Samáda wáha Lagá éegayaa

Sún iyó bariud é.

'People are expecting from the sky poison and gunpowder.' From an anonymous poem of the Gabay type, about the Second World War.

Wáar, bal, áwrtu waa ljidataa yé rárka igalá diga.

'Oh men, the he-camels are weak, take down the loads from them with me.'

QA 2150.

Nin Ku dílay háq Kúu má jiidó.

'A man who has assaulted you does not drag you into a shady place.'

A proverb.

. . . immisa néef bàad hálay nóo qashay ?

'How many animals did you slaughter for us last night ?' HS 20/31.

Nimányohow, wáhaan 'aanáháa idiinkú keenay Rábbi 'absidj iyó rág abáalkj iyó réerka hírsigj.

'What I brought you that milk for was the fear of the Lord, the hope of reward from men and the Divine Protection of the family.' HS 13/12-3. Here *idiinku* = *idin* 'you' + *u* 'for, to' (you) + *u* 'for' (the fear of the Lord, etc.).

Sében abáar áa Laynóo sheegay oo sóo so'dá é waa inaad nin walbaan waa ú sii dígataa.

'We have all been told about the coming time of drought and every man must store something up for himself for it.' HS 23/317-18. Here *Laynóo* = *La* + *ina* + *u* (which belongs to the construction *u . . . shèeg* 'tell', 'inform').