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Ethnorêma, dal greco *ethnos* ‘popolo, etnia’ e *rhêma* ‘ciò che è detto, parola, espressione’, ma anche ‘cosa, oggetto, evento’. Nella linguistica pragmatica *rema* sta ad indicare la parte di una frase che aggiunge ulteriore informazione a quello che è stato già comunicato (il *tema*).

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The lexicographic treatment of West African kinship terminologies

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to discuss the treatment of kinship terminologies in lexical descriptions of West African languages. Lexical descriptions of African languages show a general disconnection between the terminology being compiled (and the kinship system that the terminology represents) and the translation provided by the lexicographer, who provides correspondences of the terms of the language described that are based on the terminology and kinship system that are most familiar to the compiler or the user the compiler is addressing. In the case of minority languages, kinship terms are often excluded or poorly represented within lexical descriptions. The loss of semantic and cultural information can be traced back to four main causes: 1) the compiler's lack of training in anthropology, 2) the consideration of the kinship system as being secondary within the lexical corpus, 3) the (more or less unintentional) disregard of the lack of interlingual isomorphism, and 4) a precise choice made by the compiler, who identifies the audience of the lexical description and adheres to the end users' cultural framework and needs.

Keywords: *kinship terminologies, West Africa, Hausa, minority languages, bilingual dictionaries*

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1. Introduction and organisation of the paper¹

This article stems from a negative observation: kinship terminologies as they are found in the lexical descriptions of West African languages are treated inconsistently, non-systematically, and with a degree of variability that rarely allows the user to extract a minimal amount of information about the kinship system underlying its terminology in a given language.

The basic assumption is that kinship terms are special terminologies. They represent networks of fundamental relations that not only are constitutive of societies, but are also subject to cultural variation. Precisely because of their importance in the construction of human societies and their cultural variation, we would expect them to be given appropriate space – at least to some extent – in lexical descriptions. Although this expectation may seem trivial and somewhat self-evident, it is contradicted by the state of affairs: as we shall see, lexical compilers tend to ignore (for a whole series of reasons) kinship terminologies.

The issue has been addressed in a small number of studies (among others SIBOMANA 1981 and WANGIA and AYEKO 2016), and its consideration still remains

¹ A first version of this text was presented at the *4th Symposium on West African Languages* (Naples, 21-23 September 2022). The lively discussion that followed the presentation benefited from the presence of a significant number of dictionary compilers. I am grateful to the participants for their considerations and remarks on why kinship terms are not given proper consideration in certain types of lexical descriptions. Section 4 of this article reflects and integrates the points raised during the discussion.

at the margins of lexicographic practice. This article, therefore, seeks to frame critically the treatment of kinship terminologies in lexical descriptions of West African languages, i.e., the quality and quantity of their presence in the different types of dictionaries available to users. Parallel objectives consist, on the one hand, in outlining the causal framework that determines the lexicographic treatment under scrutiny, and, on the other hand, in suggesting an answer to the current situation. In order to do so, the paper is organised as follows: first, a description and categorisation of the lexical descriptions under consideration will be offered, both from a structural and empirical point of view. Next, the cultural nature of the lexicographic product will be illustrated. The cultural variability of kinship terminologies will be exemplified with the case of Hausa, and the types of lexicographic treatment given to kinship terminologies will then be outlined. In the final section, the reasons for the current state of affairs will be discussed, also from the perspective of the compilers themselves.

2. Lexicographic products

This section is devoted to (a) the definition of the lexicographic product under consideration, i.e., the bilingual dictionary, as well as of its inherent bidirectionality; (b) the empirical categorisation of dictionaries as commercial, scientific and academic products; and (c) the inalienable cultural dimension of lexical descriptions.

2.1 Properties of bilingual dictionaries

The lexicographic product relevant to our discussion is the bilingual dictionary, i.e., a dictionary L2-L1 where “the source language (SL) is the foreign language (L2) for the dictionary users and [the] target language (TL) is either the user’s native language (L1) or a foreign language better known to [the user] than the dictionary’s source language” (ADAMSKA-SALACIAK 2016: 144).

The salient property of bilingual dictionaries is bidirectionality: they address two groups of speakers at the same time and for different purposes. An A-B dictionary will be used by speakers of language B as an L2-L1 dictionary for reception, while it will be used by speakers of language A as an L1-L2 dictionary for production. A-B/B-A dictionaries, i.e., bilingual dictionaries with a reverse section, are intended to serve two groups of speakers for both purposes. However, in the context of lexical descriptions of African languages, these dictionaries are often asymmetrical, i.e., the reverse section consists of an index or glossary without examples or definitions and with minimal grammatical information. Even if dictionaries are organised upon the identification of a primary group of users, such as in L2-L1 dictionaries where the intended user group of the lexicographic work is constituted mainly by L1 speakers, usually the compiler recognises and promotes the bi-directionality of the work. See for example the following statements on the intended uses of three dictionaries (Hausa-English, Hausa-English-Hausa, and English-Hausa):

“[...] for use in Nigeria by Nigerians wishing to learn about one of the major languages of their country. [...] as well as for speakers of other languages who are trying to improve their present knowledge of Hausa or who are just beginning to learn it” (NEWMAN 1977: v)

“This dictionary [...] intended to assist Hausa speakers to learn English. Such is still its main intention. It can, however, be used by English speakers wishing to learn Hausa [...]” (SKINNER 1965: iii)

“This dictionary [...] is especially geared to the needs of speakers of both languages, be they student, business traveler, or tourist.” (AWDE 1996: back cover)

2.2 Dictionary as products: format and context of use

Dictionaries have been defined on the basis of their intended user groups, i.e., on the basis of the different language competence of the user groups with respect to the languages covered by a dictionary. However, I would like to propose another type of categorisation, and frame dictionaries in terms of products defined on the basis of their format as well as their intended purpose or scope of use, rather than on the structure and L1 or L2 competence of the users. This type of categorisation, far from being formal or formalizable, is based on the quantitative characteristics of the lexicographic product.

We can distinguish three types of dictionaries: 1) reference dictionaries, 2) compact dictionaries, and 3) dictionaries of minority languages. By reference dictionaries, we intend those L2-L1/L1-L2 dictionaries characterised by a certain completeness of information: they are generally available for major and well-documented languages, such as languages that enjoy official recognition on a macro-regional or national level or vehicular languages. Reference dictionaries describe vocabulary extensively, make systematic use of examples and definitions, and include a variety of grammatical information. The ‘classic’ Hausa-English dictionaries of ABRAHAM (1946) and BARGERY (1934) and the more modern ones of MA NEWMAN (1997, English-Hausa) plus NEWMAN (2007, Hausa-English) and NEWMAN & MA NEWMAN (2022, Hausa-English/English-Hausa) fall into the category of reference dictionaries thus defined.

Then there are those dictionaries that can be labelled ‘compact’. They are offered as quick reference works and are designed upon criteria of practicality. This type of product is also generally available for the dominant or most widely used languages, but unlike reference dictionaries, the amount of grammatical information is minimal, as is the use of definitions and examples. Dictionaries with a commercial vocation fall into this category, such as the *Hausa-English/English-Hausa Dictionary* by AWDE (1996) and the *Wolof-English / English-Wolof Dictionary* by KANTOREK (2006).

Finally, there is a third type of lexicographic product: bilingual dictionaries that have a minority language (SL) as their source language. Dictionaries that fall into this category are essentially academic products with limited circulation: they have no commercial potential and their presence is generally confined to university libraries. The amount and type of grammatical information, as well as the presence or absence of definitions and examples, varies from product to product. A dictionary of this type is generally the only lexicographic product available for the source language and the likelihood of others being compiled is minimal. Moreover, despite our best intentions, or those of our collaborators and local language boards, one cannot ignore the fact that most lexical descriptions of minority languages are only potentially bidirectional and that their nature is that of an L2-L1 product used only by speakers of the TL (i.e., L1, where L1 is an Indo-European language).

These three categories, especially if individual features are considered, are prone to a certain overlap. Some compact dictionaries, for instance, do not neglect grammatical

aspects and, although geared mainly for practical use, pursue the highest scientific rigour. There are dictionaries that have a non-dominant language as source language, and yet have all the characteristics of a reference dictionary in terms of the extent and treatment of grammatical information.

2.3 The cultural dimension of dictionaries

The main purpose of a dictionary, be it ‘of reference’, ‘compact’ or ‘(purely) academic’, is to provide the equivalent of an SL term in the TL language. The treatment of cultural context in providing the equivalent of a term is partly influenced by the type of reader/user the dictionary wants to reach. However, this is only one of the secondary aspects that lead to a particular treatment of cultural information. Whatever the format assumed by a bilingual dictionary, the formulation of equivalents and the quality and quantity of information included in an entry, as well as the information that is excluded from it, depend primarily on the fact that dictionaries (bilingual or not) are inherently cultural products. Przemysław Łozowski considers the entry ‘fungus’ and discusses the cultural dimension of its lexicographic treatment in this way:

“[...] whether the plural of *fungus* is *funguses* or *fungi*, and, if it is the latter, whether it is pronounced with /g/ or /dʒ/, and whether or not one knows and uses *fungus* in one of its possible extended senses as “someone who is lazy and does nothing all day” (*urbandictionary.com*) – this is a matter of cultural considerations because it reflects the user’s expected preferences, choices, values, ideologies, knowledge, experience, and mentality, which is all that we typically call culture. So, if your dictionary specifies only one plural form of the singular *fungus*, or it insists on only one of the two pronunciations of *fungi*, or conceals slang meanings of *fungus*, this shows what group of speakers the dictionary makers want you to identify with and what forms and meanings they consider to be (in)appropriate, (un)desirable, (dis)agreeable, or (non)standard, be it in terms of meaning or grammar.” (ŁOZOWSKI 2018: 166)

Łozowski refers to monolingual pedagogical EFL dictionaries, but the same could be said about any lexical description or lexicographic work. Lexicographic descriptions and lexicographic products, however, are ‘cultural’ in two different ways. On the one hand, there are the “cultural considerations” of the compiler, who makes choices of inclusion and exclusion on the basis of what has been said above. These considerations are consciously made and functional to the author’s objectives. On the other hand, there are the choices that the compiler makes unconsciously because he or she operates within a network of background cultural assumptions that reduce cultural differences to the compiler’s reference culture alone.

A first rough-grained observation is that the three types of lexicographic product described in the previous section handle cultural information in distinct ways. More precisely, they operate different choices in providing the TL equivalent of an SL term when the cultural context of the SL group and that of the TL group do not overlap. Consider, for example, the equivalent of the Hausa lexeme *kunu* in the Hausa-English dictionaries by AWDU (1996) (a compact dictionary) and by ABRAHAM (1946) (one of the earliest reference dictionaries, still unmatched):

- (1) a. “gruel [...] N.B. gruel is made preferably with guinea-corn flour, but if none available, then with *maiwa*, and failing that with *gero*. It is flavoured with tamarind juice (*tsamiya*) and honey or sugar. As seen from its epithets above, *kunu* is disliked and is substitute for *tuwo* or *fura* for the sake of speed. [...]” (ABRAHAM 1946)
- b. “gruel” (AWDE 1996)

Regardless of the specific reason for the inclusion or exclusion of certain cultural information in providing the TL equivalent of the SL term (e.g. priority given to compactness, access to cultural data, methodology followed in the lexicographic compilation process, etc.), it is evident that the equivalent of *kunu* given in (1b) with a discrete lexical unit ('gruel') does not take into account a whole range of culturally related information that is instead given in Abraham with a certain depth of detail.

From the point of view of the result, i.e. the effect caused by the exclusion of cultural information, ‘explanatory’ and ‘defining’ dictionaries (cf. ŠČERBA 1940 [1995]) deal with anisomorphism, that is, the lack of interlingual isomorphism, in an opposite manner: Abraham’s dictionary acknowledges that the SL and the TL have two distinct cultural referents and addresses anisomorphism by providing exhaustive definitions, examples, epithets and proverbs; Awdu’s dictionary, on the other hand, overlaps the two different cultural contexts through univocal lexical correspondences, i.e., anisomorphism is not considered ‘by design’ since it falls beyond the scope of the dictionary.

3. Kinship terminologies

Difference in cultural context is relevant in a large number of domains. Terms indicating practices or experiences in two different languages are rarely superimposable with univocal lexical correspondences without loss of cultural information. Beekeeping, hunting, cooking techniques, traditional medicine, and belief systems: these are just some of the domains in which cultures differ and for which ‘explanatory’ lexical equivalents will have to resort to definitions and examples. Some of the aforementioned domains, when productive in a given culture, are included in lexical descriptions; others, either because they are not relevant or because they are not taken into account by the compiler, are excluded. There is one domain, however, that we would expect to find in any lexical description, and that is kinship terminology. This section will discuss the cultural relevance of kinship terminologies and their lexicographic treatment.

3.1 Kinship systems and terminologies

Kinship systems are culturally relevant: they are not universal and exhibit a certain degree of cultural variability. However, as anthropologists soon realised, kinship systems are ascribable to a limited number of nomenclature patterns. Although, as noted by BERNARD (2011: 223), KROEBER’s (1909) 8 features can generate (depending on how many of the eight features are considered and the choice made on the two options provided for each feature) 3,561 different systems, the patterns adopted across human societies – minus the variants – total 6. The studies of SPIER (1925), LOWIE (1928), KIRCHHOFF (1932) and MURDOCK (1949) led to the definition of the well-known Hawaiian, Sudanese, Omaha, Eskimo, Crow, and Iroquois systems. This is not the place to go over the discussion on the classification of kinship systems and I will limit myself

to a general formulation, whereby a kinship system consists of classificatory terms (i.e., terms that minimise kin distinctions) and descriptive terms (i.e., terms that maximise kin distinctions), and what differentiates the systems is the distribution and assignment of these types of terms to the different elements of the kinship structure. Furthermore, the following must be pointed out:

- a) a kinship system is understood here as a naming system, i.e., how a member of the kinship network named Ego (the centre of the kinship map) refers to the other members of the network;
- b) the naming system is a psychological and cultural reality, and is anchored in a system of roles, rights and duties specific to the kinship structure;
- c) kinship terminology collects the kinship system's designations and refers to a position within the kinship network. Since kinship systems identify roles and positions within the kinship structure (which is culture-specific), kinship terms cannot be understood through a simple translation of the lexeme.

3.2 The case of the Hausa Kinship Terminology (HKT)

I will exemplify here the lexicographic treatment of kinship terms by examining the case of Hausa. Hausa, with its numerous lexical descriptions, will allow us to observe the spectrum of solutions formulated by different compilers. The Hausa kinship terminology (HKT) has the typical features of the Sudanese system, i.e., it includes a significant number of descriptive terms that maximise kin distinctions. The system also includes classificatory terms, that is, terms that group components posited at different distances from Ego. In Figure 1, a mapping of kinship terms is proposed based on an algebraic representation of the system (READ 1984, 2013; LEAF and READ 2021). A certain density of terms is observed in the Ego generation and the parental generation. The significant number of terms in the two bands reflects the production relations within the system. In the Ego generation, one distinguishes the terms that Ego will use to address the children of his father and mother (i.e., both parents in common), the children of either parent (i.e., one parent in common), the children of his father (i.e., the parent in common is the father), and so on. In the parental generation, on the other hand, the terms with which Ego will address the children of his parents are indicated; there are four terms, determined by line (maternal/paternal) and gender.

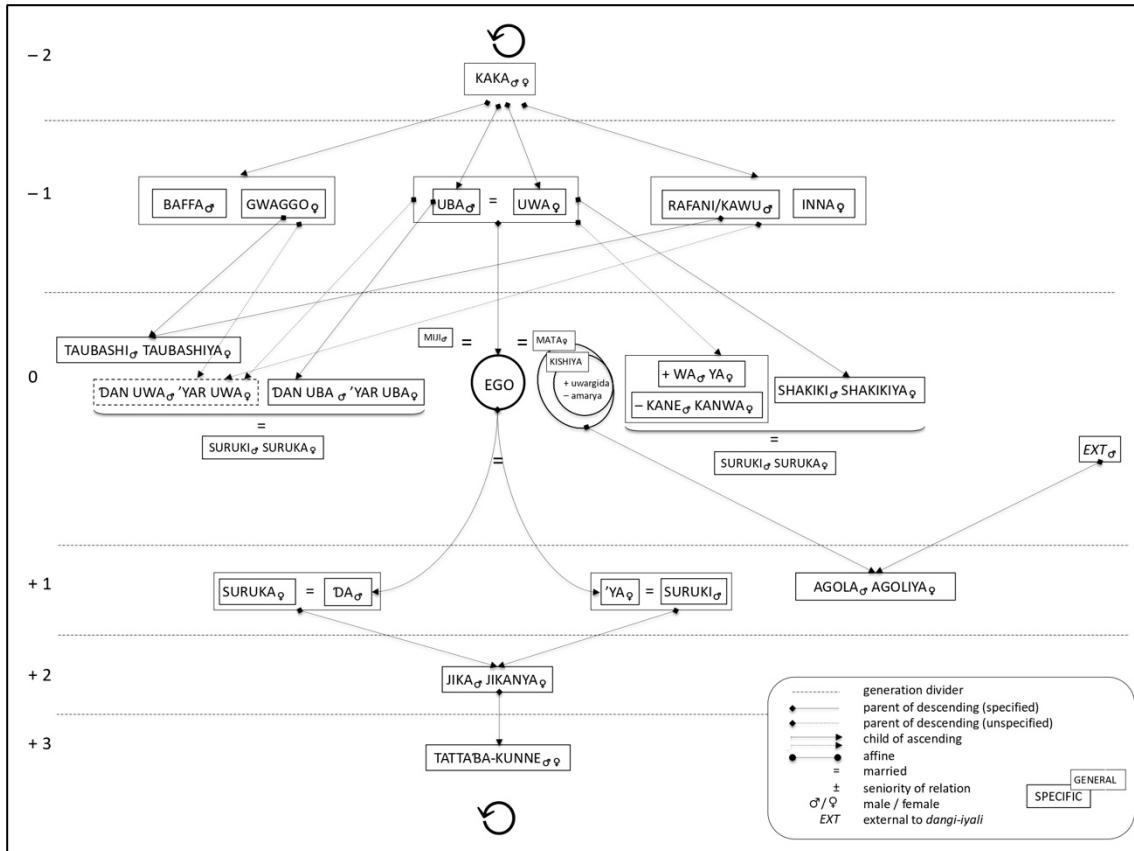


Figure 1 – A kinship map for the HKT

The terms *taubashi* ‘cross-cousin’ and *dan’uwa* ‘same-generation relative, sibling’ exemplify descriptive and classificatory terms, respectively:

- (2) *taubashi*
 - a. “Cousins, but only children of a brother and a sister, not of two brothers or two sisters. [...]”
(BARGERY 1934)
 - b. “cousin(s) or their descendants (but *taubashi* refers only to children of a brother and a sister, not those of brother and brother nor sister and sister)”
(ABRAHAM 1946)
 - c. “cross-cousin, i.e., children of one’s mother’s brother(s) or one’s father’s sister(s)”
(NEWMAN 2007)
- (3) *dan’uwa*
 - a. 1. “Brother (whether full (vide *shakiki*); or by same father only; or by same mother only).”
2. “Any relation by blood or marriage.”
(BARGERY 1934)
 - b. “Brother (*strictly* full brother, *but commonly used* for any brother, relative, fellow-country man”
(ABRAHAM 1946)

Examples (2) and (3) demonstrate how the translation of *taubashi* and *dân'uwa* with a label term is not effective in providing an equivalent. Terms such as ‘cousin’ and ‘brother’, used as label equivalents in a translating dictionary, would provide a partial equivalence: the SL kinship system and the TL kinship system are not isomorphic.

The case of *taubashi* is particularly interesting. In the definitions given in (2), only Newman provides the term used in anthropological science, i.e., ‘cross-cousin’. In other dictionaries, different solutions have been adopted. AWDE (1996) does not include *taubashi* in his dictionary and the equivalents of the English term ‘cousin’ given in the English-Hausa section are “*dân uwa*” and “*'yar uwa*”. BALDI’s dictionary (2015), which is also a compact dictionary with a high number of entries, provides an equivalent that conveys the notion of first cousin, but not that of cross-cousin:

- (4) *taubashi*
- a. $\neg\exists$
(AWDE 1996, L2-L1 Hausa-English / English-Hausa)
 - b. “cugino germano”
(BALDI 2015, L2-L1 Hausa-Italian / Italian-Hausa)

Dictionaries with Hausa as target language show the same variability. Example (5) shows the two equivalents of the term ‘cousin’ given by SKINNER (1965) and CARON and AMFANI (1997). Skinner provides a definition, whereas Caron and Amfani prefer to organise the entry with numbered label terms. Caron and Amfani, as also seen in (4), confuse the notion of cross-cousin with that of first cousin.

- (5) *cousin*
- a. “*dân'wan mutum wanda ya ke ko dân kawu ko dân inna ko dân babani ko dân gwaggo*” [relative who is the child of a maternal uncle or maternal aunt or paternal uncle or paternal aunt]
(SKINNER 1965: 37, L2-L1 English-Hausa)
 - b. “1. (germain) *tobashi*; 2. *dân'uwa*”
(CARON and AMFANI 1997, L2-L1 French-Hausa)

3.3 Kinship terminologies in minority language dictionaries

The heart of the problem, as we shall see, lies in the treatment of kinship terminologies in minority language dictionaries. In this type of academic product, a striking discrepancy can be observed between the compiled terminology (and the kinship system that the terminology represents) and the translation provided by the lexicographer, who often neglect kin terms *tout court* or provides correspondences of the terms of the language described that are based on the terminology and kinship system that are most familiar to the compiler or the user the compiler is addressing.

The analysis of a number of publications allows us to outline three scenarios.² In the first scenario, kinship terms are not included in the lexical compilation. Possible reasons

² Most of the publications consulted are L2-L1 dictionaries with an L1-L2 section (often in the form of a glossary). Apart from a few exceptions, the kinship term was searched in the L1-L2 section and, based on its presence or absence, in the L2-L1 section. The languages and compilations consulted are as follows: Afro-Asiatic (Chadic): Bade <bde> (TARBUTU 2000, DAGONA 2004); Bole <bol> (GIMBA 2009), Bure <bhv> (BATIC 2014, glossaries following the grammatical sketch); Hdi <xed> (FRAJZYNGIER et al. 2015), Karekare <kai> (TIKAU and YUSUF 2009), Muyang <muy> (SMITH 2017), Pero <pep> (FRAJZYNGIER 1985), Mwaghavul <sur> (FRAJZYNGIER 1991), Tangale <tan> (JUNGRAITHMAYR 1991); Atlantic-Congo: Balanta-Ganja <bjt>

for such a choice are discussed in the next section. In the second scenario, the compiler only provides some generating terms (in the sense of READ 2013), such as ‘mother’, ‘father’, and ‘son’. In the third scenario, alongside these generating terms, some sibling terms such as ‘brother, sister’ and ‘brother-in-law’ are also included.

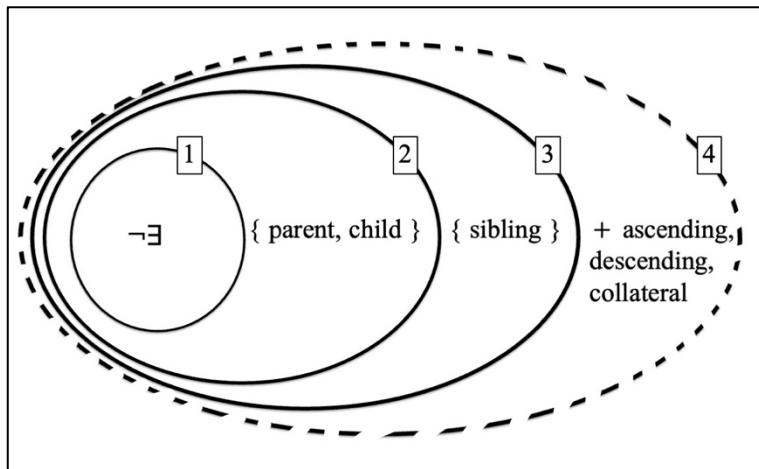


Figure 2 – Inclusion and exclusion of kinship terms in minority language dictionaries:
3 + 1 scenarios

The three scenarios represented in Figure 2 only indicate trends within lexicographic production. It is observed that kinship terminology suffers from little consideration and is included unsystematically. Equivalents, when present, are rendered through label terms; while this does not create any particular problems in the case of terms such as ‘father’ and ‘mother’, in the case of ‘brother’ it is not possible to know what exactly is meant by brother (full-brother, brother apart from mother/father, same-generation relative, etc.).

The presence of some terms and the exclusion of others does not follow a pattern. The assumption we can make is that the compiler included what was at hand, i.e., what emerged during the elicitation work. Elicitation, in turn, is often based on lists/questionnaires compiled in the working language (English, French, or vehicular/areal language), thus on label terms used – erroneously – as meta-terms.

4. Why do we disregard kinship terminologies?

What are the reasons why such an important semantic and cultural domain as that constituted by kinship terms is ignored or underrepresented in the lexical descriptions of minority languages? The causes are various and sometimes concomitant, and I will try to summarise them in four main points. First, there is a methodological deficit in the collection of kinship terms due to the compiler’s lack of training in anthropology. Terms are collected unsystematically, often using lists of basic lexemes (the so-called basic and cultural vocabularies) designed for comparative purposes such as the *SIL African Comparative Wordlist* (ROBERTS and SNIDER 2006) and JUNGRAITHMAIR’s

(SADIO and MANSALY 2017); Mande: Boko <bqc> (JONES 2004a), Bokobaru <bus> (JONES 2004b), Busa <bqp> (JONES 2004c).

Proposed bilingual Chadic word list (1979).³ These lists, organised by semantic and cultural domains, are culture-independent: they employ English and French terms as meta-terms and are therefore not suitable for the collection of kinship terminology. A second cause is to be found in the compiler's consideration that the kinship system is not a priority, i.e., fieldwork should be spent on maximising the number of dictionary entries and collecting grammatical data. The systematic collection of kinship terms is thus postponed to a possible later stage (a stage that, however, rarely takes place). The third cause is a selective disregard for the cultural relevance of kinship terms: if for some cultural areas languages are treated with the lack of interlingual isomorphism in mind, the cultural distance of the systems is simply not recognised when describing kinship terminology. Finally, one might also want to consider the precise choice of the compiler, who decides to crush the cultural diversity of the kinship system on the end-user's kinship system, therefore relying on label terms. This motivation, which as we have seen is openly followed in compact dictionaries, is difficult to detect in 'purely' academic products, and is probably the least common of the causes discussed.

It is certainly true that a description of the kinship nomenclature system requires an anthropological study, that is, a study conducted using the techniques of anthropological science. And it is equally true that a lexical description cannot be the tool adopted to reconstruct a kinship system. However, that being said, it is certainly surprising how widely dictionaries of minority languages ignore kinship terminologies. To the causes already mentioned, we must add three factors related to the fieldwork and the psychology of the relationship between the researcher and the language community. There is certainly one factor determined by the researcher's need to act within defined time limits: collecting data on specific terminologies is time consuming (as well as being energy consuming for both the researcher and the native speaker collaborator), and collecting data on the kinship system itself requires a different approach from the one adopted to elicit other sections of the lexicon. A second factor has to do with the feeling of 'violated intimacy' that the researcher projects onto his or her collaborators: precise questions about the nomenclature system with the collaborator in the position of Ego are often perceived as invasive or inappropriate, and therefore avoided. The last factor concerns the frequency with which the data occur: as much as kinship structures are foundational to social organisation, their terminologies rarely emerge in orature texts. The different genres that are the subject of linguistic documentation (fables, legends, autobiographical narratives, prescriptive texts, etc.) tend not to include non-nuclear kinship terms, and even if they are present, the equivalent suggested by the native speaker is likely to take the form of a label term borrowed or calqued from a contact language (e.g., the vehicular language or the working language used within the project).

Time table and sensitivity apart, a possible solution that could easily be adopted by the compiler would be to structure the collection of kinship terms in algebraic form. The kinship terms would be derived as products of generating terms according to the principle for which "If ego knows what term to use for alter A, and also knows what term A uses for alter B, he can easily work out what term he himself should use for B" (GOOD 1981: 113). In Read's formalisation, the principle is realised as follows: "If ego (properly) refers to alter 1 by the kin term L and alter 1 properly refers to alter 2 by the kin term K, then by the product of K and L, denoted K o L, is meant a kin term (if any)

³ Jungraithmayr's list will form the basis of the Cultural Vocabulary and Basic Vocabulary adopted in the 1990s in the SFB 268 project "History of Culture and Language in the Natural Environment of the West African Savannah" (Goethe University Frankfurt).

ego properly uses to refer to alter 2” (READ 1984). This method would allow the compiler to derive kinship terms consistently from a number of generating terms (e.g. parent, child) without first having to resort to the construction of a genealogical space. Ultimately, the evaluation and choice pertain to the compiler, who will ask him or herself the question: is it really so important to include kinship terms in a lexicographic product?

5. Conclusions

This article has addressed the lexicographic treatment of West African kinship terminologies. The object analysed (the bilingual dictionary) has been defined and categorised in terms of the extent of lexical information and its intended use. The three categories identified are the reference dictionary, the modern and compact dictionary, and finally the ‘academic’ dictionary. These three products differ in their treatment, quality and quantity of lexico-grammatical information. The reference dictionary aims at a comprehensive description of the lexicon: definitions and examples are used extensively, and entries also include grammatical information (part of speech, plurals, verb classes, etc.). The modern, compact dictionary makes inclusion and exclusion choices based on a practicality criterion: instead of definitions and examples, label terms are used. The lexical descriptions of minority languages almost always take the form of an ‘academic’ dictionary, without a commercial vocation and intended almost exclusively for the scientific community. All lexicographical compilations are cultural: they provide equivalents of non-isomorphic languages and cultures and therefore any solution adopted in providing an equivalent has a bearing on the cultural information the terms carry. Reference and compact dictionaries are available for official and dominant languages, that is, for languages that are widely used and with a relative high number of speakers, and the case study of Hausa allowed us to analyse the type of solutions adopted by different compilers in dealing with kinship terminology. There is a stark contrast in the treatment of cultural information in reference dictionaries on the one hand, and in modern, compact dictionaries on the other. Culture-specific terms such as *taubashi* ‘cross-cousin’ are treated unevenly, yet (with a few exceptions) are included in the different compilations. In the lexical descriptions of minority languages, on the contrary, there is a partial or total absence of kinship terminology. This situation is caused mainly by 1) the compiler’s lack of training in anthropology, 2) the consideration of the kinship system as being secondary within the lexical corpus, 3) the (more or less unintentional) disregard of the lack of interlingual isomorphism, and 4) a precise choice made by the compiler, who identifies the audience of the lexical description and adheres to the end users’ cultural framework and needs.

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Macigni che ritornano, fantasmi dal passato. La prospettiva dalle storie giapponesi nel genere *kaidan* per riflettere sul ritorno dell'orrifico nel tempo.

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ABSTRACT

Japan, March 2022: the most infamous *sesshō-seki* (killing stone), tourism hotspot around the Nasu moor, which is said to be the petrified corpse of a nine-tailed fox spirit, has split into two pieces over a night. Locals and online users expressed the fear the *kitsune* (fox spirit) may have come back to life to spread again chaos and political turmoil. The idea of this *kitsune* returning from the dead brings along the frightening association with haunting ghosts from the oral-folkloric born tradition of *kaidan* literature: *yūrei*. *Kaidan*'s themes may have changed shapes over the years, but the core is still alive today in Japanese pop-culture. I will follow the ghost motif in contemporary *kaidan*-like tales and urban legends making a presentation about ethnographic evidence founded in Fukuoka, in order to understand the meaning behind the recurrence of the specter and the persistence of the horror genre. The ghost may in fact act as an agent warning us against the repetition of the horrific through time: its coming out from the shadows may be interpreted as a word of advice to the living to avoid making the same mistakes again. The phantom's appearance may actually reflect human being's actions from the past and its arrival from time to time may be an attempt to try carving a different, brighter future.

Keywords: Japan; Ghost; Kaidan; Horrific; Urban Legends; Folklore.

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In data 05/03/2022 ha avuto luogo in Giappone, tra le montagne vulcaniche di Nasu (prefettura di Tochigi), un evento che ha dapprima attirato l'attenzione a livello locale per poi avere una risonanza mediatica internazionale. In questa data, su *Twitter*, l'utente Lillian (@Lily0727K) ha notato che un macigno noto come *sesshō-seki* (殺生石, «pietra che uccide») si era improvvisamente spaccato a metà dal giorno alla notte¹. *Sesshō-seki* è il nome con cui ci si riferisce a pietre e macigni presenti in aeree in cui vengono esalati gas sulfurei tossici di tipo vulcanico, ma l'oggetto in questione è associato alla leggenda di Tamamo no Mae². Si crede che la pietra abbia avuto una particolare facoltà omicida proprio perché in realtà sarebbe stata il corpo trasformato di Tamamo no Mae, una volpe

¹ Notizia poi confermata dal Nasu Town Tourist Information Center: 「九尾の狐」伝説の「殺生石」が真っ二つ… S N S では「狐が復活しないといいけど」読売新聞オンライン. *Yomiuri Shimbun Online* (<https://www.yomiuri.co.jp/national/20220306-OYT1T50156/>); 「殺生石 真っ二つ 以前からひび、自然現象か那須」下野新聞 *SOON. Shimotsuke Original Online News* (<https://www.shimotsuke.co.jp/articles/-/561829>).

² Cfr. Komatsu, K. (1992). *Nihon yōkai ibunroku*. Tokyo: Shogakukan. 42-74. Komatsu fa riferimento alla storia narrata su un rotolo illustrato (*emaki*) intitolato *Tamamonoma zōshi*.

Per altre versioni si veda Kakubari, E. (1888). *Sangoku yofuden*. Tokyo: Uedaya Honten; de Visser, M.W. (1908). "The Fox and Badger in Japanese Folklore". *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, 36(1), 51-55; Abe, K. (1992). *Yōkaigaku nyumon*. Tokyo: Yuzankaku Shuppan, 49-57; Matsumoto, Y; Shimura, K. (1994). *Nihon kidan itsuwa densetsu daijiten*. Tokyo: Benseishi, 586-7.

a nove code che, assumendo le sembianze di una donna di meravigliose fattezze, si sarebbe presentata alla corte dell'imperatore in ritiro Toba (1107-1123). Sfruttando il favore guadagnato presso il sovrano come concubina, lo spirito si sarebbe progressivamente avvicinato al monarca fino a causarne una progressiva debilitazione fisica. La volpe sarebbe infine stata smascherata e costretta a darsi alla fuga, fino a che gli inseguitori, dopo averne intrappolato il corpo, non avrebbero dato la morte alle spoglie mortali dello spirito, causandone la trasformazione in una roccia. La storia, tuttavia, non ha un lieto fine vero e proprio. Poco dopo l'allontanamento di Tamamo no Mae dalla capitale sarebbe spirato l'imperatore in carica (Konoe, 1139-1155), seguito un anno dopo da Toba, innescando uno scompiglio che avrebbe portato alla fase di declino del potere degli imperatori e alla fine dell'epoca classica (Heian, 794-1185).

Esaminando le reazioni al post pubblicato da @Lily0727K (condiviso 77.887 volte, ha riscontrato l'interesse di almeno 182.400 utenti ed è stato citato in altri 6.089 tweet), ed avendo notato che la notizia è stata riportata non solo da organi di informazione giapponesi (*Yomiuri Shimbun Online, Shimotsuke Original Online News*)³, ma anche da testate giornalistiche estere (*The Guardian, CNN Travel, Insider, The Indian Express*)⁴, oltre che ad essere stata largamente condivisa su social network (come *Facebook, Instagram, Reddit, TikTok*), è possibile accorgersi che la rottura della pietra è stata percepita dal pubblico giapponese ed internazionale in maniera duplice. Da una parte, è stata presto fornita un'ipotesi scientificamente plausibile per dare una spiegazione al fenomeno. Come indicato dal *Nasu Town Tourist Information Center*⁵, è possibile che la grossa pietra si fosse incrinata da tempo, permettendo all'acqua di infiltrarvisi attraverso delle crepe; l'acqua grazie alle temperature molto fredde si sarebbe costantemente espansa dall'interno, indebolendone progressivamente la struttura fino a causare il definitivo cedimento. D'altra parte, l'evento sarebbe stato altresì considerato dall'interno del panorama spirituale e folkloristico: alcuni utenti online e una parte degli abitanti dell'area limitrofa alle montagne di Nasu avrebbero interpretato l'accaduto come un infausto segnale della possibile rinascita dello spirito della volpe.⁶

La preoccupazione che suscita una simile eventualità è da rintracciare in un insieme complesso, che si regge a partire dal ruolo della volpe (*kitsune*) come personaggio mutaforma e *trickster*: figura ambigua e liminale, elude ogni tentativo di categorizzazione, dal momento che è allo stesso tempo animale, spirito e nume, forza della natura e avversario del potere politico⁷. Predatrice delle zone al confine tra lo spazio umano e non umano⁸, messaggera dei *kami* delle risaie e della fertilità, Inari, ma

³ (<https://www.yomiuri.co.jp/national/20220306-OYT1T50156/>); (<https://www.shimotsuke.co.jp/articles/-/561829>).

⁴ (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/mar/07/japans-killing-stone-splits-in-two-releasing-superstitions-and-toxic-gases>); (<https://edition.cnn.com/2022/03/31/world/japanese-killing-stone-spirit-scn/index.html>); (<https://www.insider.com/ancient-japanese-rock-rumor-contain-malevolent-fox-demon-splits-2022-3>); (<https://indianexpress.com/article/trending/trending-globally/killing-stone-splits-triggers-panic-superstitious-believers-japan-7810501/>).

⁵ Vedi note 1, 3.

⁶ Vedi nota 4 e (<https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/killing-stone-split-evil-spirit/>); (<https://www.ndtv.com/offbeat/sessho-seki-in-japan-killing-stone-splits-open-unleashing-legend-of-trapped-demon-2810829>); (<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smarts-news/ancient-japanese-stone-said-to-contain-demon-cracks-open-180979729/>).

⁷ Bathgate, M. (2004). *The Fox's Craft in Japanese Religion and Folklore*. New York, London: Routledge. 7. Oltre a quello di Bathgate sono da segnalare altri lavori a proposito della volpe in Giappone: Smyers, K. (1999). *The Fox and the Jewel. Shared and Private Meanings in Contemporary Japanese Inari Worship*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press; Heine, S. (1999). *Shifting Shape, Shaping Text: Philosophy and Folklore in the Fox Kōan*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press; de Visser, M.W. (1908). "The Fox and Badger in Japanese Folklore". *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, 36(1), 1-159.

⁸ V. Henry, J.D. (1996). *Red Fox: The Catlike Canine*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 35-41; 97.

allo stesso tempo araldo di Dakiniten⁹, la volpe costituisce un motivo ricorrente di racconti e leggende dal IX sec. d.C. al XIX – tanto nella pratica popolare quanto nei resoconti di studiosi e letterati¹⁰.

Il racconto incentrato su Tamamo no Mae è una storia di lunga data che ben esemplifica l’ambivalenza e la doppiezza di quell’insieme di entità classificate come *bakemono*: volpi, serpenti, gatti, cinghiali selvatici, procioni, fantasmi, goblin, divinità e *bodhisattva*¹¹. Questi esseri sono temuti e riveriti in virtù di una capacità metamorfica, che Caroline Walker Bynum definisce come uno «scandalo ontologico»: una sfida grottesca ai limiti della natura e alle convezioni sociali che sono alla base dell’ordine cosmico¹². I *bakemono* atterriscano perché non rientrano in nessuna categoria fissa di appartenenza, mutando continuamente la propria natura; sfuggendo allo sguardo e dimostrando quanto le apparenze possano essere ingannevoli, essi esibiscono la capacità di muoversi fluidamente all’interno dell’ordine naturale e sociale, rendendo di fatto nullo qualunque confine tracciato dagli esseri umani. Le doti trasformative dei *bakemono* costituiscono delle sfide di ordine morale, ontologico ed epistemologico¹³. Tramite la metamorfosi, i *bakemono* mettono in atto la più oltraggiosa capacità: trasgredire i limiti. Esercitare cautela nei loro confronti è molto difficile, perché non esiste un dispositivo che possa assicurare l’immediato riconoscimento della loro natura multiforme. Sono esseri che cambiano continuamente le proprie sembianze, assumendo allo stesso tempo il punto di vista sul mondo di ogni forma corporea che attraversano. Ad ogni trasformazione effettuata corrisponde l’acquisizione di nuove forme di incorporazione e nuove tecniche; sviluppando altri occhi per vedere, percependo l’ambiente in maniera sempre diversa tra una forma corporea ed un’altra, interagendo con una platea potenzialmente infinita di agenti umani e non umani, essi compiono di volta in volta un salto che li trasporta da un piano della realtà ad un altro. Così facendo, essi abbattono ogni senso di naturalizzazione e chiamano in causa la relatività delle fondamenta della morale. Vale a dire che il lecito e l’illecito sono solamente delle parentesi cangianti, che variano al variare degli stati di transizione fenomenica attraversati.

La metamorfosi è dissimulazione, un potere che minaccia di trasgredire e stravolgere l’ordine e, allo stesso tempo, una promessa di liberazione che mitiga ogni cambiamento drastico dello status quo¹⁴. Il motivo per cui la volpe crea confusione e suscita apprensione deriva dal fatto che essa sfugge ad ogni tassonomia, indulgendo in una promiscuità di ambiti (il domestico e il selvaggio, l’umano e il non umano) senza confini netti; essa, in altre parole, rifugge ogni tentativo umano di controllo¹⁵ ed incarna ogni

⁹ Cfr. *dākinī*. Dakiniten: spirito necrofago di origine indiana legato ai cimiteri. Il suo culto si diffuse in Giappone tramite la corrente esoterica del buddhismo, dopo aver riconosciuto Dakiniten come una divinità protettrice soggiogata dal Buddha Vairocana (Dainichi Nyorai), e divenne legato all’ottenimento di benefici spirituali e mondani.

¹⁰ Alcuni esempi sono: la raccolta di storie edificanti della letteratura buddhista (*setsuwa bungaku*) *Konjaku monogatarishū* (1120 ca.); il racconto allegorico del diciottesimo secolo *Hōsei monogatari* di Ando Shoeki; *Ujishūi monogatari* (prima metà XIII sec.); la raccolta di memorie del monaco Tendai, Jien, *Gukanshō* (1120 ca.). Per approfondimenti sul legame tra volpe (*kitsune*), Inari, Dakiniten (buddhismo esoterico Shingon) e *dākinī*, cfr. Smyers, K. (1999:82-5), Bathgate, M. (2004:71-102).

¹¹ Bathgate, M. *Op. cit.*, XV. Come fa notare il folklorista Komatsu Kazuhiko ciò che definisce un *bakemono* è la trasformazione, il suo scopo è ingannare e far cadere le sue vittime in tranelli: Komatsu, K. (1992). *Nihon yōkai ibunroku*. Tokyo: Shogakukan, 40. Per approfondimenti su connotati e associazioni del termine *bakemono*, si vedano anche Ema, T. (1977). *Nihon yōkai henge shi*. In Ema, T. *chōsakushū*, (6). Tokyo: Chūō Kōronsha, 367-452; Abe, K. (1992). *Yōkaigaku nyūmon*. Tokyo: Yūzankaku Shuppan.

¹² V. Bynum, C.W. (2001). *Metamorphosis and Identity*. New York: Zone Books, 179. Sul tema della metamorfosi si vedano anche Abe (1992) ed Heine (1999).

¹³ Bathgate, M. *Op. cit.*, 10; 26.

¹⁴ Ivi, 8-9. Cfr. Smyers (1999:179-83).

¹⁵ Ivi, 18; 23.

aspetto dell'esistenza umana che abbia a che vedere con la paura dell'incertezza e del cambiamento¹⁶. Difatti, il valore della volpe come simbolo e agente sovrannaturale del cambiamento storico può essere fatto risalire a una tendenza dal continente, specialmente al genere di racconti del fantastico *zhiguai* in Cina (conosciuti in Giappone dall'VIII sec.)¹⁷. La storia vuole che Tamamo no Mae avrebbe seminato il caos in India, provocando efferati spargimenti di sangue, ed in Cina, creando gravi disordini politici degenerati nella fine della dinastia degli Zhou occidentali¹⁸.

Oggi giorno, il fatto che in molti siano rimasti impressionati dall'improvvisa spaccatura del macigno è dovuto tanto alla fama della *sesshōseki* come oggetto iconico, quanto alla popolarità degli spiriti volpe (*kitsune*) all'interno della tradizione folklorica e letteraria (basti fare caso agli esempi offerti dal vasto corpus di letteratura didascalica buddhista rappresentato dai *setsuwa bungaku*, 説話文学, come il *Konjaku monogatarishū* e il *Nihon ryōiki*; oppure si pensi ai racconti brevi in prosa noti come *otogi zōshi*; si trovano richiami ai *kitsune* anche nello stesso Genji Monogatari, nel capitolo di Ukiyune); popolarità rinnovata in anni recenti, insieme a quella di altri *bakemono* e figure mostruose, nella cultura popolare grazie a prodotti cinematografici, di intrattenimento *manga/anime* e videoludici.

Yūrei e kaidan: l'eredità delle storie di spettri nella tradizione orale giapponese

Una volta che ci si accorga della corposa presenza di queste entità diviene possibile fare caso a come, a tutt'oggi, il paesaggio (sia esso naturale o antropogeomorfizzato) continua a recare i segni di una confluenza dialogica che articola occasioni significative di contatto tra l'umano e il non umano. Prendiamo il caso della *sesshō-seki*. Da un punto di vista prettamente materialistico, si tratta solo di una roccia come le altre dello stesso tipo, presenti in un'area montana in cui vengono esalati gas sulfurei di tipo tossico. Tuttavia, la leggenda di Tamamo no Mae sovrappone un'altra possibilità di lettura, facendo sì che il macigno in questione possa essere visto o pensato non più come un semplice componente del paesaggio di Nasu, un oggetto inerte senza una storia. L'associazione con lo spirito-volpe trasforma l'oggetto in un agente potenziale: la roccia non è più solo un aggregato di componenti materiali stante in un determinato ambiente, bensì diviene un corpo a cui è riconosciuta una capacità di agire (per l'appunto, una capacità omicida a causa dei gas tossici). Richiamare alla memoria le vicende di Tamamo no Mae significa far tornare in circolazione l'idea di un paesaggio animato, ripristinando la possibilità di incontri e interazioni casuali ma significativi con entità che rispondono alla presenza e alle azioni umane. L'ambiente circostante può rivelarsi ricco di possibilità, distinguendo fra quel che, un momento prima, parrebbe ordinario e comune e quel che, in poco tempo, si apre alla parentesi dello straordinario, ai limiti dell'esperienza umana: il mostruoso, ciò che è avvolto dal mistero, l'inverosimile. Risulta esemplare, a tal proposito, il flusso di condivisioni online di un post su *Twitter*, in cui un utente, alla vista della pietra ridotta in pezzi, ha commentato: “[...] Se si fosse trattato di un manga, sarei stato posseduto dallo spirito della volpe e avrei visto cose che non avrei dovuto vedere.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Ivi. 26-7.

¹⁷ V. Nakamura, K.M. (1997). Miraculous Stories from the Japanese Buddhist Tradition. Surrey: Curzon Press, 34-40.

¹⁸ Bathgate, M. *The Fox's Craft*, cit., 3; 5.

¹⁹ Lillian (@Lily0727K), 05/03/2022, *Twitter*: “九尾の狐の伝説が残る、殺生石にひとりでやってきました。繩でぐるっと巻かれた真ん中の大きな岩がそれ… のはずなのですが、なんと岩は真っ二つに割れて、縄

Nel panorama spirituale giapponese è palpabile una “tensione dialettica tra la percezione della morte al livello filosofico e al livello della comunicazione quotidiana”²⁰. Una parte ragguardevole delle leggende che hanno a che fare con esseri sovannaturali rientra in un sistema simbolico fatto di rimandi tra gli spazi occupati dai viventi e dai defunti. Poiché i morti, come i *bakemono*, possono talvolta sfruttare la propria condizione liminale per prendere corpo sulla terra (come fantasmi redivivi), è necessario tracciare un perimetro intorno a queste figure spettrali per cogliere i riflessi della loro presenza a cavallo tra la vita e la morte all'interno della società²¹. I morti, difatti, continuano ad essere collegati in qualche modo alla vita terrena e possono interagire, o perlomeno tentare di stabilire una sorta di comunicazione, con i viventi. Storie di tale tipologia abbondano nel *minzokugaku* (民俗学, lo studio delle tradizioni folkloriche e vernacolari), ovvero in una letteratura che non è semplicemente raccolta e studio del folklore trasmesso oralmente ma “studio etnografico della gente comune nella vita quotidiana”²², con un taglio attento ai risvolti sociologici ed antropologici²³. Gli elementi orali di una cultura - ciò che è mantenuto e si manifesta in maniera non consapevole al livello della comunicazione quotidiana - sono da considerarsi le componenti che infondono la vita nel sistema culturale di riferimento, animandone profondamente i valori ed i significati²⁴. All'interno del patrimonio orale di racconti popolari che ruotano attorno al tema della morte e al suo impatto sull'esistenza, è possibile talvolta riscontrare un determinato tipo di fruizione performativa (trasmessa storicamente grazie alle figure dei cantastorie): il narratore ricorre a una serie di tecniche - comprendenti l'utilizzo delle corde vocali, del respiro, degli occhi - che permettono di veicolare importanti tradizioni culturali attraverso la gestualità corporea²⁵. Analizzare i contenuti, le modalità e i contesti attraverso cui le narrazioni si dipanano (narrazioni che non fanno altro che rimettere in scena per l'ennesima volta, seppur in forme rinnovate, una tradizione viva), significa entrare a fare parte del pubblico a cui questa è indirizzata, ma allo stesso tempo anche trovarsi quasi fianco a fianco dei personaggi del racconto²⁶. Solo così, attraverso un'indagine che sia empirica e non solo teorica, si possono cogliere i significati orizzontali di specifiche forme di racconto che sono rimaste vive fino ad oggi²⁷.

Una leggenda rappresenta una rielaborazione strutturata di determinati valori, indipendentemente dal caso che contenga informazioni “vere”²⁸. Il fatto che una tradizione orale sopravviva negli anni è dovuto all'iniziativa di un certo numero di persone che, nel rievocarne il contenuto, trovano degli aspetti che fungono da stimolo

も外れていきました。漫画だったらまさに封印が解かれて九尾の狐に取り憑かれるパターンで、見てはいけないものを見てしまった気がします。”

²⁰ Komatsu, K. (1997). “Reviewed work(s): Ghosts and the Japanese: Cultural Experience in Japanese Death Legends”. *Asian Folklore Studies*, 56(2), 411.

²¹ Ivi, 411-12.

²² Iwasaka, M.; Toelken, B. (1994). *Ghosts and the Japanese. Cultural Experience in Japanese Death Legends*. Logan: Utah State University Press, 51. Cfr. Takada, M. (1989). *Edo-kaidan-shu*, vol.1. Tokyo: Toshō Kankōkai, 394-5.

²³ Ivi, 52. Gli autori fanno riferimento soprattutto al pensiero e al lavoro di Yanagita Kunio (1975-1962), una figura di spicco tra gli studiosi del folklore giapponese.

²⁴ Ivi, 11.

²⁵ Cfr. Reider, N.T. (2000). “The Appeal of «Kaidan», Tales of the Strange”. *Asian Folklore Studies*, 59(2), 279. V. Ong, W-J. (1982). *Orality and literature*. London: Methuen, 102.

²⁶ Bathgate, M. *Op. cit.*, 16-7. V. Todorov, T. (1973). *The Fantastic: a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 31.

²⁷ Iwasaka, M.; Toelken, B. *Op. cit.*, 49.

²⁸ Ivi, 43.

valido a giustificarne la ripetizione²⁹. In altre parole, una parte del patrimonio orale probabilmente perdura nel tempo, attraverso fasi di rielaborazione, poiché raccoglie quelle costellazioni di significati e valori che affiorano nel tessuto culturale grazie a dettagli vividamente concreti³⁰. Nel caso del Giappone, è stato documentato nei contesti urbani un interesse per le leggende sull'apparizione di spettri (in luoghi ritenuti infestati ma anche in contesti più ordinari)³¹, veicolando le risposte emotive degli esseri umani nei confronti di quelle zone grigie dell'esistenza che hanno a che fare con il dubbio, il rischio, l'incertezza. Esse esprimono, in poche parole, una risposta che articola la paura secondo i valori culturali di riferimento, e funzionano poiché il timore di ciò che deve ancora avvenire o può verificarsi ha natura irrazionale. Non esistono mezzi o soluzioni per affrontare e risolvere esclusivamente attraverso l'uso della logica una tale paura³².

Le leggende, in quanto genere narrativo di racconti ambientati in luoghi comuni che circolano e si diffondono rapidamente per via orale, accorciano la distanza tra il narratore ed il suo pubblico dal momento che, “a differenza delle storie mitiche, che declamano le vicende di dèi, salvatori e other larger-than-life characters”³³, i suoi personaggi sono persone ordinarie, identiche in tutto e per tutto a chi narra e a chi ascolta³⁴. Gli eventi di cui si parla sono ricondotti nella parentesi di ciò che potrebbe, presumibilmente, prima o poi capitare all'individuo comune; le leggende scandiscono il tempo di un racconto che rievoca ciò che, si implica, abbia già avuto luogo o sarebbe potuto succedere a chiunque. Creando un senso di immediatezza e verosimiglianza, creano allo stesso tempo il senso di ciò che può essere possibile e plausibile³⁵.

I contenuti di una leggenda sono ambientati negli spazi della vita di ogni giorno, eppure gli elementi di cui si avvale la narrazione creano intenzionalmente atmosfere in contrasto marcato rispetto alla tranquillità della routine; le storie presentate instillano nel pubblico la consapevolezza che non sempre la realtà che appare davanti agli occhi corrisponde a ciò che dovrebbe essere o a ciò che vorremmo fosse³⁶. Accade che le storie sugli spiriti utilizzino il quadro della morte come dispositivo per affrontare altri elementi: frequentemente si tratta di episodi che chiamano in causa questioni di responsabilità, codici di condotta etica³⁷, la corretta gestione degli obblighi alla base delle relazioni interpersonali (soprattutto di tipo familiare). Si ha a che fare con storie in cui i fantasmi rimangono aggrappati alla vita in preda alle proprie passioni, a causa di amori non risolti; per esercitare vendetta nei confronti di quei viventi rei di aver commesso un crimine e provocato la morte di altri; talvolta per proteggere o salvare persone care.

Nel corso del tempo, rielaborando le forme di angoscia relative alla preoccupazione del futuro, il rischio dell'incertezza, la paura della morte, le leggende hanno conservato

²⁹ Vedi Bakhtin, M.M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 254. Vedi anche Miyata, N. (1992). “Ikai to no kōryū - toshi no minzoku kūkanron”. *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kyōzai no kenkyū*, 39(9), 56.

³⁰ Iwasaka, M.; Toelken, B. *Ghosts and the Japanese*, cit., 44.

³¹ Cfr. Yanagita, K. (1957). *Japanese Manners and Customs in the Meiji Era*. Tokyo: Obunsha, 311; Konno, E. (1969). *Nihon kaidan-shū*. Yūrei-hen. Tokyo: Shakaishisō-sha.

³² Iwasaka, M.; Toelken, B. *Ghosts and the Japanese*, cit., 58.

³³ Ivi, 59

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid. Cfr. Bathgate, M. *Op. cit.*, 16.

³⁷ Ivi, 82. Cfr. Negrych, M. (2021). “The Dead Speack. Horror and the Modern Ghost in Eiji Ōtsuka's *The Kurosagi Corpse Delivery Service*”, in Pagnoni Berns, F.G.; Bhattacharjee, S.; Saha, A. (eds.) (2021). *Japanese Horror. Critical Essays on Film, Literature, Anime, Video Games*. Laram, Boulder, New York, London: Lexington Books, 67.

e tramandato la percezione dei cambiamenti apportati dall'ingresso della modernità³⁸. L'insieme di quelle domande a cui non era possibile dare una risposta certa si è rivelato essere un'incredibile opportunità per intrecciare storie verosimili, sempre in bilico tra l'ordinario e lo straordinario, il familiare e lo spaventoso, ciò che può essere accettato e ciò che invece crea un'inumana repulsione³⁹. Le idee e i motivi alla base delle leggende giapponesi hanno perdurato perché sono funzionali, riconoscibili, pratiche dal punto di vista dell'utilizzo vernacolare, e sono arrivati oggi a noi attraverso la cultura popolare nella forma di film, fumetti, serie animate e romanzi “featuring ghosts and death, which reveal the same obviously untired shared anxieties about interpersonal obligations dramatized in folk legends”⁴⁰.

Nel caso giapponese, la tradizione delle storie dell'orrore e del sovrannaturale (怪談, *kaidan*. *Kai-* «strano, misterioso», *dan-* «racconto») ha a che fare con la credenza che alcune anime particolarmente infelici possano fare ritorno dopo la morte a causa della mancata esecuzione degli appropriati riti funebri, seminando la sventura tra i vivi e innescando veri e propri cicli di morte e sofferenza⁴¹. I temi principali dei *kaidan*, pur attraverso costanti rimaneggiamenti, sono ancora oggi un materiale molto quotato nei prodotti della cultura popolare, e anche la letteratura accademica ha dedicato ampio spazio allo studio dei contenuti delle storie di entità non umane. C'è un numero notevole di studi sui soggetti *yūrei* e *bakemono*: a) nel folklore e nei prodotti di intrattenimento *anime* e *manga*; b) studi dedicati al filone del cinema horror giapponese noto come *J-Horror* (dalla trilogia giapponese *Ringu*, passando per la serie di *Ju-on*, per citarne una manciata), con una varietà di focus che spaziano dalla frammentazione post-moderna della società e la tendenza all'individualismo, al bio-potere del corpo femminile (il corpo materno come sito di produzione un potere metamorfico e di un'angoscia legata ai cicli riproduttivi, in correlazione con il timore che ogni cosa che sembra essere fissa e familiare possa in ogni momento aprirsi al divenire fluido e alle influenze esterne), passando attraverso la riflessione sull'esperienza nucleare; c) analisi dell'alterità mostruosa in chiave orientalistica e neo-orientalistica; d) indagini sulle trasformazioni in corso nel panorama dei riti funebri; e) indagini che chiamano in causa il concetto di animismo e il fenomeno della possessione spiritica.⁴²

³⁸ Ivi, 118. Cfr. Nakamura, M. (1994). *Kaidan no shinrigaku*. Tokyo: Kōdansha. A partire dall'epoca Meiji (1868-1912) il Giappone dovette affrontare in un brevissimo arco di tempo molti cambiamenti sul piano economico, militare e sociale per superare il divario con le potenze occidentali. La rapidissima industrializzazione, unitamente ad un colossale processo di urbanizzazione e di espansione demografica, alterò il paesaggio umano modificando ritmi e modi di vita, riverberandosi prima di tutto al livello famigliare e comunitario. Nuove sfide, problemi e angosce si andarono accompagnando ad una popolazione disorientata da tante novità imposte dall'alto.

³⁹ Ivi, 119.

⁴⁰ Iwasaka, M.; Toelken, B. *Ghosts and the Japanese*, cit., 118. “Si liberano forme di mostri perché la società vede se stessa come mostruosa; affiorano presenze latenti, perché si comincia a percepire la realtà sociale come caotica, disordinata, rivelatrice di potenzialità fuori dagli schemi e, per questo, paurose.” Raveri, M. (2006). *Itinerari nel sacro: l'esperienza religiosa giapponese*. Venezia: Cafoscina, 223.

⁴¹ V. Blacker, C. (2005) [1975]. *The Catalpa Bow. A Study of Shamanistic Practices in Japan*. London: Routledge, 23; 29.

⁴² Per citarne alcuni: a) Pagnoni Berns, F.G.; Bhattacharjee, S.; Saha, A. (eds.) (2021). *Japanese Horror. Critical Essays on Film, Literature, Anime, Video Games*. Laham, Boulder, New York, London: Lexington Books; Darowski, J.; Pagnoni Berns, F.G. (eds.) (2022). *Critical Approaches to Horror Comic Books. Red Ink in the Gutter*. London, New York: Routledge. b) Wada Marciano, M. (2007). “J-HORROR: New Media's Impact on Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema”, *Revue Canadienne d'Etudes cinematographiques/ Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, 16(2), 23-48; Dumas, R. (2018). “Monstruous Motherhood and Evolutionary Horror in contemporary Japanese Science Fiction”. *Science Fiction Studies*, 45(1), 24-47; Taylor, J.T. (2014). “‘Legend Has It...’ Imag(in)ing the Ethnographic Encounter in *The Grudge* and *The Maid*”. *Visual Anthropology*, 27(1-2), 117-37; Holm, N. (2011). “Ex(or)cising the Spirit of Japan: *Ringu*, *The Ring*, and the Persistance of Japan”. *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 39(4), 183-92; c) Miyake, T. (2014). *Mostri del Giappone. Narrative, figure, egemonie della dis-locazione identitaria*. Edizioni

Sebbene i racconti *kaidan* siano certamente riscontrabili in epoca Edo (1603-1867), la presenza dell'orribile e del grottesco nelle arti risale almeno al IX secolo d.C.⁴³ Ci sono molti modi in cui gli spiriti dei morti (幽靈, *yūrei*) si manifestano, ma occorre ricordare che tutti hanno affrontato le circostanze della propria morte nel modo più traumatico possibile, generando un nucleo di energia negativa residua che è molto difficile dissipare⁴⁴. Proprio perché sono particolarmente legati al sito specifico dove la loro vita terrena ha avuto bruscamente fine, gli *yūrei* esercitano un impatto locale sull'ambiente e la loro presenza funge da monito per scoraggiare ogni comportamento che può tradursi in una grave violazione dei codici di condotta etica.⁴⁵ L'orrore si rivela prima di tutto nelle modalità delle morti narrate, così come nella mancata capacità da parte dei viventi di agire compassionevolmente nei confronti del defunto, che ritorna dalla morte proprio perché nessuno si è fermato a offrirgli una degna cerimonia di addio da una vita che gli è stata crudelmente strappata⁴⁶; difatti da queste storie il senso del raccapricciante emerge prima di tutto soffermandosi a riflettere sulle empietà commesse dai vivi a danno di altri viventi, e solo successivamente subentra il terrore per l'attesa dell'azione vendicativa dei morti⁴⁷.

Gli *yūrei* stessi sono effettivamente parte integrante dell'esistenza quotidiana poiché esercitano una vera e propria influenza sui viventi⁴⁸, continuando a causare una contaminazione negativa che genera sofferenza fino a quando qualcuno non interviene per dare una degna sepoltura ai loro resti⁴⁹ (almeno all'interno dei racconti *kaidan*, mentre la situazione spirituale del Giappone contemporaneo presenta un insieme di sfaccettature differenti, tale per cui alcune credenze hanno perso forza o non sono più molto diffuse). Siano essi *muenbotoke* (gli spiriti dei defunti senza alcun legame terreno, privi di discendenti o altri che prestino gli adeguati riti funebri e di commemorazione; *anime angosciate* che sono costrette ad aleggiare indefinitamente nel luogo della propria scomparsa, portando sfortuna a chi vi si imbatte), *onryō* (spiriti rancorosi e vendicativi, spesso donne vittime di estrema violenza, che attaccano tutti coloro che incautamente invadono il loro spazio), oppure *ubume* (spiriti di donne spirate durante la gravidanza o dopo aver messo al mondo un bambino destinato a rimanere solo)⁵⁰, oggi in Giappone “continuano a esserci persone interessate all'acquisto di amuleti o a sottoporsi a occasionali purificazioni rituali, ‘giusto nel caso’ in cui il sovrannaturale dovesse un giorno irrompere nelle loro vite”⁵¹. È necessario, a questo proposito, specificare che l'interesse occasionale di una parte della popolazione giapponese verso tali misure o

Ca' Foscari – Digital Publishing; d) Kawano, S. (2014). “‘Who will care for me when I am dead?’ Ancestors, homeless spirits, and new afterlives in low-fertility Japan”. *Contemporary Japan*, 26(1), 49-69; Rambelli, F. (a cura di) (2019). *Spirits and Animism in Contemporary Japan: the Invisible Empire*. London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic; e) Rambelli, F. *Spirits and Animism in Contemporary Japan: the Invisible Empire*.

⁴³ Negrych, M. *The Dead Speak. Horror and the Modern Ghost in Eiji Ōtsuka's*, cit., 66. Cfr. Reider, N.K. Op. cit., 265-83.

⁴⁴ Cfr. Boscaro, A. (2012). “Un occidentale stregato dal mondo dei fantasmi giapponesi”. In Amitrano, G.; De Maio, S. (a cura di) *Nuove prospettive di ricerca sul Giappone*. Napoli: Università degli Studi di Napoli “L'Orientale” e Associazione Italiana per gli Studi Giapponesi AISTUGIA, 95.

⁴⁵ Iwasaka, M.; Toelken, B. *Op. cit.*, 82.

⁴⁶ Negrych, M. *The Dead Speak. Horror and the Modern Ghost in Eiji Ōtsuka's*, cit., 67.

⁴⁷ Ivi, 78

⁴⁸ Ivi, 66-7. Cfr. Davisson, Z. (2015). *Yūrei: The Japanese Ghost*. Seattle: Chin Music Press. Kindle.

⁴⁹ Ivi, 67.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, 67. Cfr. Blacker, C. *Op. cit.*, 29-30.

⁵¹ Ibid. Cfr. Reader, I.; Tanabe, G.J. Jr. (1998). *Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

iniziativa è da considerarsi nell'ottica dei cambiamenti intervenuti nel XX e XXI secolo all'interno del panorama spirituale giapponese. Negli ultimi anni si è installato un dibattito tra i fautori di un movimento verso la secolarizzazione, e tra coloro che sostengono un riemergere dell'interesse religioso nel pubblico. Allo stesso tempo è anche vero che, a causa di una serie di eventi (culminati nell'attentato pubblico alla metropolitana di Tokyo del 20 marzo 1995 da parte di Aum Shinrikyō), la fiducia verso i movimenti religiosi di massa è andata progressivamente scemando in Giappone. Parallelamente, si è attestato un doppio spostamento: dalla religione alla spiritualità, e dai movimenti di massa alla pratica individuale (in corrispondenza con l'emergere di alcuni movimenti del New Age giapponese)⁵². Soprattutto, a causa di alcuni fattori socio-economici che evidenziano un trend ormai decennale (come il calo del tasso di natalità unitamente a un numero minore di matrimoni) è stata registrata una diversificazione delle pratiche funebri che va a discapito dell'utilizzo dei servizi rituali offerti dal sistema di templi buddhisti⁵³, sottraendo forza alle possibilità discorsive a tema *yūrei* (poiché viene meno il terreno di credenze e pratiche che ha reso possibile la propagazione delle storie di fantasmi).

Le narrative degli *yūrei* intrecciano il passato, il presente e il futuro in maniera continuativa ma non lineare. Cercano di comunicare con il pubblico attraverso storie terribili di traumi avvenuti in un tempo passato o recente, con lo scopo di intrattenere (esattamente come era il caso per i celebri *hyakumonogatari kaidankai* in epoca Edo: incontri in cui partecipanti riuniti trascorrevano le notti a raccontare *kaidan*, nell'attesa che qualcosa di misterioso sarebbe accaduto una volta raggiunte le cento storie), oppure stimolare in chi ascolta la consapevolezza che non c'è mai fine alla possibilità dell'orrore reale nella vita di ogni giorno. "Just because something occurred in the past does not mean that similar violence is not continuing"⁵⁴: le storie avvertono l'ascoltatore delle insidie che si nascondono in agguato, del male che l'essere umano è stato in grado di continuare a commettere ripetutamente nel passato. Per mettere fine all'incubo occorre indirizzarlo direttamente, portarne all'aperto l'empietà e combattere l'orribile attivamente.

Etnografia: leggende urbane incontrate a Fukuoka

Dai primi mesi del 2018 agli esordi del 2019 mi sono ritrovato in Giappone, principalmente nell'area di Fukuoka (Kyūshū), per poi trascorrere l'ultimo periodo in Hokkaidō, nella zona di Niseko. Dapprincipio, non avevo chiaramente l'intenzione o il progetto di raccogliere dati e materiale sulle storie dell'orrore. Inizialmente, avrei dovuto trascorrere l'intero periodo a Fukuoka, spostandomi saltuariamente per brevi periodi nei

⁵² Thomas, J. B. "Spirit/Medium: Critically examining the Relationship Between Animism and Animation", in Rambelli, F. (a cura di) (2019). *Spirits and Animism in Contemporary Japan: the Invisible Empire*. London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 158. Cfr. Roemer, M. (2009). "Religious Affiliation in Contemporary Japan: Untangling the Enigma." *Review of Religious Research*, 50 (3): 298–320. Vedi anche Haga, M.; Kisala, R.J. (1995) "Editors' Introduction", in *Japanese Journal of religious Studies*, 22(3-4), 235-47; Horie, N. (2009). "Spirituality and the Spiritual in Japan: Translation and Transformation". *Journal of Alternative Spiritualities and New Age Studies*, 5; Mullins, M.R. (2012). "Secularization, Deprivatization and the Reappearance of 'Public Religion' in Japanese Society", *Journal of Religion in Japan*, 1, 61-82; Reader, I. (2012). "Secularisation, R.I.P.? Nonsense! The 'Rush Hour Away from the Gods' and the Decline of Religion in Contemporary Japan", *Journal of Religion*, 1, 7-36.

⁵³ Cfr. Iwasaka, M.; Toelken, B. *Op. cit.*, 13-42; Kawano, S. (2014). "Who will care for me when I am dead?" Ancestors, homeless spirits, and new afterlives in low-fertility Japan". *Contemporary Japan*, 26(1), 49-69

⁵⁴ Negrych, M. *Op. cit.*, 73

territori attigui, allo scopo di tentare di effettuare alcune interviste e raccogliere testimonianze da parte di alcuni esponenti del sottobosco della criminalità organizzata *yakuza* avente sede nella zona di Kita-Kyūshū. Tuttavia, a causa di alcuni imprevisti (quelli che avrebbero dovuto essere degli informatori hanno ritirato la propria disponibilità ad assistermi) e delle conseguenti difficoltà organizzative di una tale impresa, data dal dover cercare di stabilire dei nuovi contatti senza l'intercessione di una terza parte, unitamente alla ritrosia dei locali (dai civili ai membri delle forze dell'ordine) nei confronti di quello che per loro era uno straniero a tutti gli effetti, mi sono ritrovato nella situazione di dover ricominciare da zero. Il caso ha voluto che nella share-house in cui ho alloggiato e nel centro di cultura italiana che ho frequentato (entrambi dalle parti del distretto di Hakata) mi sia capitato di imbattermi in ospiti giapponesi di età, genere e provenienza differenti (ad esempio: Tomoko, donna, all'epoca ventenne e studentessa universitaria, di Fukuoka; Yuriko, donna, trent'anni, impiegata in un esercizio commerciale nel settore della ristorazione, proveniente da Kurume; Ryōta, uomo, quarant'anni, sarto, da Tōkyō) con i quali, alla fine, sono emersi gradualmente e per caso i temi che mi avrebbero portato a interessarmi dei racconti di fantasmi. Mi sono imbattuto in queste storie perché all'epoca (marzo 2018) ero rimasto colpito dalla bellezza del santuario *shintō* di Dazaifu Tenmangu (Dazaifu, prefettura di Fukuoka), dedicato a Tenjin, forma divinizzata di quell'eccellente personaggio di epoca Heian (794-1185) noto come Sugawara no Michizane (845-903). Quest'ultimo, non a caso, costituisce probabilmente l'esempio più famoso di *goryōshin*⁵⁵, ovvero spiriti di imperatori e cortigiani che, soprattutto nei periodi Nara (710-794) ed Heian, sembravano tornare nel mondo dei vivi onde scatenare terribili propositi di vendetta nei confronti di membri della corte imperiale - ma non solo - responsabili del loro fato avverso. Il potere di rivalsa di costoro avrebbe manifestato un'efficacia distruttiva tale da rendere necessaria un'operazione di divinizzazione di tali anime, onde portare a compimento la pacificazione rituale adatta a placarne l'ira. Dopo aver visitato il santuario per la prima volta, mi ritrovai a descrivere il mio sopralluogo ad alcuni inquilini della share-house in cui vivevo, tra cui Tomoko e Yuriko, ed evidentemente il mio interesse per le vicende di quell'illustre cortigiano e letterato trasparì in qualche modo. Quella conversazione costituì l'esordio di un tentativo di ricerca che mi avrebbe portato a cercare di raccogliere attivamente materiali più o meno attinenti al format delle storie *kaidan*, incentrati sulla figura del fantasma.

All'inizio è successo che i primi interlocutori che ho approcciato abbiano condiviso spontaneamente le proprie esperienze, come è capitato nel caso di L., uomo, quarant'anni. Ho incontrato L. al centro di cultura italiana e ci siamo ritrovati a chiacchierare in più occasioni, fino a quando un giorno non mi invitò a passare da casa sua per prendere un tè insieme. Rimasi molto colpito dalla sua abitazione: L. infatti aveva ricevuto il permesso di vivere all'interno di un piccolo santuario *shintō*, a condizione di esercitare le funzioni di custode (fare regolarmente delle offerte al *kami*, permettere la libera circolazione delle persone nell'area recintata, effettuare le pulizie). L. mi raccontò che era riuscito ad aggiudicarsi articoli di buona fattura tramite eBay (nello specifico, piccoli mobili per la casa come un tavolino di legno fatto a mano, una libreria, un armadietto) a prezzi insolitamente vantaggiosi, solamente per rendersi conto, una volta consegnati, che dopo qualche tempo aveva iniziato a sentirsi stanco e a non riposare bene. Dal momento che la sintomatologia continuava a persistere, L. si risolse a contattare il

⁵⁵ Cfr. Borgen, R. [1986] (1994). *Sugawara no Michizane and the Early Heian Court*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 307-336.

venditore per capire se il suo malessere potesse essere imputabile a qualche difetto di fabbrica dei prodotti, magari per via di materiali degradati o anche tossici. Il venditore non rispose, ma facendo delle ricerche L. individuò altri utenti che avevano sperimentato la stessa problematica e capì, suo malgrado, che il motivo dietro alla convenienza dei prezzi stava nella provenienza della merce: Fukushima, sede del disastro nucleare del 2011. Attraverso misurazioni con un contatore Geiger, altri acquirenti online prima di lui si erano resi conti di un insolito livello di radioattività degli oggetti (alcuni ipotizzavano che fossero stati trafugati dalle abitazioni abbandonate), e dopo essersene sbarazzati erano tornati in salute entro qualche settimana. L. mi confidò che la notte in cui scoprì tutto ciò non riuscì a chiudere occhio. Aveva paura che, assopendosi, avrebbe potuto immaginare quelli che erano stati i legittimi proprietari di quegli oggetti, e avvertire il peso del loro dolore o rabbia, perché lui si era appropriato indebitamente dei loro oggetti; oggetti che rappresentavano la quotidianità familiare, la normalità prima dello tsunami e dell'incidente nucleare. Non avendo intenzione di dare spazio al dubbio, L. si decise presto a smaltire la merce e ad acquistare una manciata di talismani nei maggiori santuari della sua zona, soprattutto quelli le cui donazioni sarebbero andate in favore delle famiglie delle vittime.

Un secondo caso, invece, ha che fare con una leggenda urbana a proposito del villaggio di Inunaki, di cui mi hanno messo a parte più individui (su un totale di sessanta persone presso la share-house di Hakata e il centro di cultura italiana, circa la metà era a conoscenza di questa leggenda). Inunaki sarebbe una sorta di villaggio fantasma, nascosto da qualche parte tra la foresta che avvolge il monte Inunaki. Secondo la leggenda, è molto difficile trovare l'ingresso per l'insediamento, vicino al quale ci sarebbe un'insegna che avverte che la Costituzione giapponese non sarebbe in vigore in quel luogo. Ed infatti si vocifera che, nei primi anni Settanta, una coppia si sarebbe avventurata per caso nel villaggio deserto, cercando aiuto dopo un guasto al proprio veicolo, solamente per essere brutalmente assassinata. Probabilmente si tratta di una rielaborazione successiva, poiché sembra che la storia intorno a Inunaki abbia iniziato a spargersi non prima dei tardi anni Novanta, nello specifico a causa del tunnel costruito nel 1949 (ora sigillato con blocchi di cemento) in corrispondenza del Passo di Inunaki. Il tunnel, che si ritiene possa collegare il villaggio in questione con l'esterno, è divenuto in anni recenti una sorta di attrazione turistica, proprio perché non mancano le storie di avvistamenti spettrali (alcune persone dicono di aver sentito l'eco di urla umane e l'abbaiare di cani dall'interno). Il 6 dicembre 1988, all'interno del tunnel, cinque teenager avrebbero rapito, derubato e torturato un uomo, fino ad arrivare a dargli la morte tramite rogo. Nel 2000 un altro cadavere è stato ritrovato nelle vicinanze, all'esterno. In più altri sostengono che qualunque tipo di apparecchio elettrico, automobili incluse, cesserebbero di funzionare una volta introdotti nel tunnel⁵⁶.

Analisi

Sebbene la leggenda urbana legata a Inunaki mi sia stata riportata da più persone, ero in dubbio circa la pertinenza del racconto al genere *kaidan*; purtuttavia, Bernard ritiene possibile classificare la storia all'interno del sottogenere *kaidan jitsuwa* ("kaidan

⁵⁶ Cfr. De Antoni, A. (2019). "Came Back Hounded: A Spectrum of Experiences with Spirits and Inugami Possession in Contemporary Japan". In Rambelli, F. (a cura di) *Spirits and Animism in Contemporary Japan: the Invisible Empire*. London, New York, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, 115; 197 per un confronto con luoghi infestati simili a Kyoto (Kiyotaki tunnel) e Kazandō.

veritieri”⁵⁷. I *kaidan jitsuwa* hanno la caratteristica di presentarsi come discorsi autentici, spesso brevi e disadorni dal punto di vista della costruzione narrativa, che si vogliono porre come testimonianze mediate di eventi realmente accaduti; le vicende di cui si parla sono spesso legate ad aree specifiche di cui però non vengono mai fornite le coordinate precise.⁵⁸ La storia di Inunaki rientra nel pattern documentato da Terai Hiroki, “A Village of Murder You Won’t Find on Any Map”⁵⁹: è contemplabile come un racconto complesso la cui cornice generale è quella di un *kaidan jitsuwa* con alcuni elementi di *kaidan sōsaku* (“*kaidan* romanzati”), ed il sito a cui si riferisce assume le caratteristiche di un *shinrei supotto* (“luogo infestato”, un sito in cui si presume si possano avere contatti con spiriti e fantasmi).⁶⁰

È interessante notare che Bernard rileva una distinzione che può tornare forse utile relativamente ai due casi appena esposti. Episodi come quelli legati a Inunaki vengono narrati dalla prospettiva di un osservatore esterno, e gli elementi enfatizzati servono a costruire una relazione basata “sulla paura della diversità, ovvero sulla paura dell’Altro”⁶¹. Al contrario, il punto di vista sembra spostarsi per appartenere ad un osservatore interno nel caso di storie classificabili come *shinsai kaidan* (“*kaidan* legati a disastri sismici”, particolarmente legati a luoghi colpiti da terremoti e *tsunami*), di cui si è registrata la crescita dopo gli eventi dell’11 marzo 2011.⁶² Considerate come una variante di *kaidan jitsuwa*, le narrazioni classificate come *shinsai kaidan* si costruiscono attorno ad un rapporto non più incentrato sul motivo della paura o vendetta da parte delle anime dei defunti, ma sul tema del rimpianto⁶³. In questo senso sono simili le considerazioni a cui giungono Kudō e Horie. Kudō ipotizza che gli avvistamenti di fantasmi nelle aree affette dal disastro siano una manifestazione di attaccamento positivo da parte dei defunti, che, ritornando di tanto in tanto nei luoghi in cui hanno trascorso l’esistenza in vita, avrebbero dimostrato di piangere la perdita dell’appartenenza alla località a cui erano legati. Stando così le cose, i sopravvissuti avrebbero avuto una reazione emotiva positiva verso i fantasmi, fondata sulla capacità di empatizzare con lo sconvolgimento derivato dalla disperazione e dalla perdita.⁶⁴ Horie invece si dedica allo studio del cordoglio (“continuing bonds”) da parte delle vittime che piangono il lutto nell’area del Tōhoku, rilevando come modi diversi di coltivare la perdita portino alla formazione di comunità che gestiscono il dolore in maniera differente.⁶⁵ Questo, a sua volta, produce modalità di incontro e di interazione distinte con gli spiriti dei defunti: da una parte (in maniera simile alle reazioni positive attestate da Kudō), si rilevano

⁵⁷ Cfr. Higashi, M. (2009). *Kaidan bungei handobukku* 怪談文芸ハンドブック. Tokyo: Media fakutorī, 34; 58.

⁵⁸ Bernard, P.J. (2019). *Rural Japanese Gothic: The Topography of Horror in Modern Japanese Literature*. Doctoral dissertation, Harvard University (<https://dash.harvard.edu/handle/1/42029604>), 114-16.

⁵⁹ Ivi, 117; 120-23. V. Terai, H.; Murakami, N. (2016). *Tōhoku no kowai hanashi* 東北の怖い話. Tokyo: TO bukusu, 133. Cfr. Yamaguchi, B. (2009). *Mura-kei toshi densetsu* 村系都市伝説 (<http://blog.goo.ne.jp/youkaiou/e/c99db61a0ddb757c20c57da1e4307179>).

⁶⁰ Ivi, 120.

⁶¹ Ivi, 122.

⁶² Ivi, 117; 123. V. Kanebishi, K. (2016). “Hajime ni: Yobisamasareru reisei” はじめに——呼び“覚まされる靈性, in Tōhoku Gakuin Daigaku shinsai no kiroku purojekuto 東北学院大学震災の記録プロジェクト and Kanebishi K.(eds.) *Yobisamasareru reisei no shinsaigaku: 3.11 sei to shi no hazama de* 呼び“覚まされる靈性の震災学 3・11 生と死のはざまで. Tokyo: Shin’yōsha; Parry, R.L. (2018). “Fantasmi dello tsunami”, in *The Passenger - Giappone*. Milano: Iperborea, 16-36.

⁶³ Ivi, 127. Cfr. Kudō, Y. (2016). “Shishatachi ga kayou machi: Takushū doraibā no yūrei genshō”. In Kanebishi, K. (ed.) *Yobisamasareru reisei no shinsaigaku*. Tokyo: Shin’yōsha, 1-23.

⁶⁴ V. Kudō, Y. “Shishatachi ga kayou machi”, cit., 16; 19.

⁶⁵ Horie, N. (2016). “Continuing Bonds in the Tōhoku Disaster Area”. *Journal of Religion in Japan*, 5. Brill, 199-126.

avvistamenti rassicuranti di spiriti benevoli (“familiar spirit”: familiari, amici, parenti), mentre dall’altra è stata attestata la presenza di entità non identificate e spesso spaventose (“unfamiliar spirits”).⁶⁶ Sebbene la storia di L. non possegga chiaramente i requisiti per rientrare nel novero dei *shinsai kaidan* (visto che non sembrano a prima vista sussistere nella sua vicenda personale legami evidenti che lo mettano in relazione diretta con la regione e le comunità colpite dal cataclisma, a prescindere dagli articoli acquistati online) rimane comunque aperta la possibilità di classificare il suo racconto come una variante di tipo secondario.

Gli esempi, di cui sopra, che ho potuto annotare sono il frutto di trascrizioni di colloqui informali avvenuti su base spontanea, ad intervalli di tempo non regolari ed in luoghi che non sembravano avere per gli interlocutori particolari connotazioni con gli argomenti trattati. Provando a trovare a ritroso ciò che accomuna questi resoconti, si rileverebbe che: a) entrambi si riferiscono ad un evento di base, che ha rilevanza per la storia narrata, accaduto in passato (11 marzo 2011 e 6 dicembre 1988); b) ambedue le storie ambiscono ad uno status di verità ed autenticità, dal momento che sono costruite a partire da fatti di cronaca in cui delle persone hanno improvvisamente perso la vita; c) i due racconti riconoscono, secondo gradi diversi, una responsabilità umana (in merito ai danni provocati dal maremoto del Tōhoku e il conseguente disastro di Fukushima Dai-ichi, c’è stata una diatriba legale che ha visto coinvolte la Corte Suprema, la Corte Distrettuale di Tōkyō, il Governo e quattro direttori esecutivi della Tokyo Electric Power Company Holding Inc.; fino ad oggi sembra essere stato deliberato che non si può ritenere responsabile il Governo ma deve essere riconosciuta la responsabilità della società TEPCO per l’accaduto⁶⁷). La morte avvenuta nel tunnel di Inunaki è stata classificata come omicidio); d) entrambe le storie vanno a instillare nell’ascoltatore la consapevolezza che gli eventi che hanno portato alla scomparsa repentina delle persone coinvolte sono avvenimenti che, per quanto eccezionali, possono colpire indiscriminatamente. D’altra parte, gli episodi si distinguono perché nel primo caso si fa riferimento ad una catastrofe che si è abbattuta su numerose comunità residenti nella medesima area costiera, che ha generato delle strategie di adattamento per far fronte al dolore di collettività danneggiate a causa dello stesso fenomeno (e che sembra nel caso di L. aver avuto delle ripercussioni anche in zone esterne). I fantasmi che ritornano possono essere avvistati in luoghi particolari ma, una volta che fanno la loro comparsa, essi sembrano venire dislocati attraverso un circuito che amplia la loro capacità di diffusione.

Se è vero che è stato già portato in evidenza il legame che intercorre tra i *kaidan* e le tecnologie di trasporto, ovvero come la diffusione delle storie *kaidan* all’interno dei contesti urbani sia stata associata alla dimensione del viaggio e al consolidarsi

⁶⁶ Ivi, 200-201.

⁶⁷ Si attende il verdetto per la sentenza di appello in data 18 gennaio 2023.
(<https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14638620>); (<https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14644610>);
(<https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/society/crime-courts/20220617-38551/>);
(<https://edition.cnn.com/2022/06/17/asia/japan-court-fukushima-government-intl-hnk/index.html>);
(<https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14647243>); (<https://thediplomat.com/2022/06/japan-top-court-government-not-responsible-for-fukushima-disaster/>); (<https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14647947>);
(<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2022/07/13/national/crime-legal/tepco-fukushima-court-ruling/>);
(<https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14668939>); (<https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/society/crime-courts/20220713-44509/>); (<https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14669884>); (<https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/society/crime-courts/20220714-44746/>); (<https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14670569>);
(<https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/society/crime-courts/20220728-47738/>);
(<https://japannews.yomiuri.co.jp/society/general-news/20221221-78746/>).

dell'utilizzo pubblico di nuovi mezzi di trasporto⁶⁸, allo stesso tempo è possibile ritrovare questi motivi nei casi riportati. Nella storia di L. i fantasmi di Fukushima viaggiano attraverso le voci di altri utenti su *Ebay*, che, ricostruendo a ritroso il percorso compiuto dagli oggetti comprati, associano malesseri fisici al luogo di provenienza degli articoli. Articoli che sembrano alludere alla possibilità di poter veicolare il rammarico e la sofferenza delle famiglie a cui essi sarebbero appartenuti. Inunaki si presta ad un'interpretazione affine, se consideriamo che il racconto ha per oggetto una sezione di strada di montagna, tunnel che un tempo creavano collegamenti e ora chiusi, veicoli e oggetti elettrici che cessano all'improvviso di funzionare.

È interessante notare che la circolazione di queste storie, in maniera simile al formato tradizionale dei *kaidan*, avviene attraverso il passaparola a voce, oppure oggi online. L'ambito dei media digitali e delle telecomunicazioni nei racconti dell'orrore è stato oggetto di indagine, riflettendo sulle potenzialità dimostrate dal genere di espandersi a macchia d'olio sfruttando i supporti a sua disposizione⁶⁹. Questo meccanismo viene illustrato discretamente dai film appartenenti al cosiddetto filone *J-Horror* (Japanese Horror), classificati da Wada-Marciano come “a form of trans-media commodity”⁷⁰, di cui in particolare *Ringu* e *Ju-on*, per la capacità di fare uso della tecnologia “as a medium for the horrific”⁷¹: questi titoli esplorano le possibilità contaminanti dell'orrifugo al pari di una sorta di energia che, allargandosi a dismisura “like an epidemic spiral”⁷², si propaghi grazie a tutti i mezzi disponibili nel tempo e nello spazio.

In effetti, qualcosa dello stesso tipo sembra essersi realizzato relativamente alla diffusione della notizia della frattura della *sesshō-seki*: il fenomeno viene ripreso e documentato sulle piattaforme multimediali nazionali e in seguito su quelle transnazionali, registrando una crescita esponenziale ed esportando allo stesso tempo l'associazione tra la rottura del macigno e il ritorno del fantasma di Tamamo no Mae. Le possibilità di deriva orrifica dell'accaduto, date dalla suggestione di uno spirito redivivo generata nell'immaginario multimediale, hanno permesso alla notizia di erompere cancellando la distanza spaziale tra l'ascoltatore/lettore ed il luogo che all'interno di una rappresentazione cartesiana dello spazio corrisponderebbe al punto zero di origine dell'evento. La voce avrebbe continuato a spargersi nei mesi successivi, facendo sì che in ogni articolo venisse ripreso il *tweet* originale di Lillian (@Lily0727K), ancorando così il lettore ad una narrazione che riduce la distanza tra l'autore ed il suo pubblico e sfocando la distinzione tra punto di vista soggettivo e oggettivo. Il motivo orrorifico della storia collega chi viene in contatto con essa nel presente con gli eventi della leggenda di Tamamo no Mae ambientati nel passato di epoca Heian, ma al tempo stesso genera un ponte con il futuro poiché la notizia è destinata a rimanere impressa sui media intangibili a cui appartiene, aleggiando in attesa di rinnovate interazioni. Il ritorno del fantasma diventa in un certo senso un segnale di allarme contro il ritorno

⁶⁸ Dallo sviluppo di un'economia mercantile nel periodo Edo il rafforzamento della Nazione passò attraverso un potenziamento delle comunicazioni che rinvigorì i contatti e gli scambi di idee e informazioni; si assistette infatti, sotto la spinta della modernizzazione, alla messa in circolo di *kaidan* che fanno uso di elementi narrativi volti a dare risalto agli spostamenti e ai viaggi, quali dapprima cavalli e palanchini, fino ad arrivare all'affermarsi in epoca contemporanea del taxi. Bernarnd, P.J., *Op. cit.*, 127-8. Cfr. Reider, N. (2001). “The Emergence of ‘Kaidan-shū’ The Collection of Tales of the Strange and Mysterious in the Edo Period”. *Asian Folklore Studies*, 60(1). Nanzan University, 80.

⁶⁹ Wada-Marciano, M. (2007). “New Media’s Impact on Contemporary Japanese Horror Cinema”. *Revue Canadienne d’Etudes cinematographique/ Canadian Journal of Film Studies*, 16(2). University of Toronto Press, 23-48.

⁷⁰ Ivi, 24.

⁷¹ Ivi, 27.

⁷² Ibid.

paradossale di ciò che non deve ripresentarsi, vale a dire il passato inteso come ciò che si ripete identico a se stesso nel tempo. Il ripresentarsi dello spirito *kitsune* potrebbe destabilizzare nuovamente l'ordine sociale e politico e condurre ad una crisi come quella che coinvolse la fine dell'epoca Heian; la ricomparsa dei fantasmi da Fukushima fa pensare alle gravi conseguenze in cui si può incorrere allorquando all'abbattersi di un cataclisma naturale si combina anche un disastro radioattivo; l'aura spettrale che circonda il tunnel di Inunaki dovrebbe spingere alla necessità di evitare di avventurarsi lungo luoghi potenzialmente pericolosi. Il fatto che questi incidenti possano ripetersi chiama in causa il problema della memoria, di cosa ricordare e di cosa dimenticare.

È interessante, in tal caso, il neologismo creato da Jacques Derrida, *hauntology*⁷³, un linguaggio per esplorare simultaneamente modalità di conoscere e non conoscere⁷⁴, dato che “remembering and forgetting, and re-remembering amidst efforts to exorcise memory, are continuous processes for individuals as well as societies”⁷⁵. L'importanza di questo linguaggio si riesce a cogliere attraverso la funzione attribuita al fantasma: “[...] hauntology entails the notion that specters of the past both shape the living present and rest ever on the verge of a future return”⁷⁶. Lo spettro rappresenta un qualcosa che non è né presente né assente, né morto né vivo⁷⁷, ed occupa il posto dell'Altro descritto da Levinas: un'intrusione irrecuperabile nel nostro mondo, qualcosa che non riusciamo a comprendere con le capacità intellettuali di cui siamo dotati, ma che siamo tenuti a tutelare proprio per via della sua diversità⁷⁸. Allo stesso tempo, il fantasma è un personaggio con cui vale la pena tentare di comunicare, nonostante le ovvie difficoltà di comprensione. Secondo Derrida è una figura decostruttiva in grado di far vacillare ogni certezza: ciò che essa cela non è una conoscenza segreta o il contenuto di una rivelazione da scoprire, ma un'apertura produttiva di significato⁷⁹, “an essential unknowing which underlies and may undermine what we think we know”⁸⁰. Il redivivo diverrebbe il focus di istanze epistemologiche e posizioni etiche in competizione tra loro, rendendo la hauntologia il luogo dove possiamo interrogare la nostra relazione con i morti, esaminare le sfuggenti identità dei vivi ed esplorare i legami tra il pensato e l'impensato⁸¹. L'attenzione riservata al fantasma e a quell'insieme di esperienze classificabile come inspiegabili o disturbanti che classifichiamo è decisiva per comprendere come i collettivi umani gestiscano gli aspetti violenti dell'orribile⁸². I singoli individui e le comunità studiate dagli antropologi corrono il rischio di essere perseguitate non solo dagli eventi di un passato sanguinario (*the revenant*), ma allo stesso tempo anche da un futuro (*the arrivant*) che serba la promessa di altra violenza omicida⁸³. La sensazione che i trascorsi più angoscianti del passato possano dettare il futuro che verrà apporta solamente l'orrore della ripetizione. Il fantasma è una figura preziosa con cui conversare perché “ghosts

⁷³ V. Derrida, J. (1994). *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*. New York: Routledge.

⁷⁴ Good, B.J. (2020) “Hauntology: Theorizing the Spectral in Psychological Anthropology”. *Ethos*, 47(4), 419.

⁷⁵ Ivi, 424.

⁷⁶ Dumas, R., *Op.cit.*, 41.

⁷⁷ Davis, C. (2005). “Hauntology, Spectres, and Phantoms”. *French Studies*, 59(3), 373.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ivi, 377.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ivi, 379.

⁸² Good, B.J., *Op. cit.*, 424.

⁸³ Good, B.J. et al. (2022). “The Anthropology of Being Haunted: On the emergence of an Anthropological Hauntology”. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 51: 440. Cfr. Chiovenda A: Chiovenda M. (2018). “The specter of the ‘arrivant’: hauntology of an interethnic conflict in Afghanistan”. *Asian Anthropol.*, 17(3): 165. Italics in original.

‘exceed any narrative modality, genre or textual manifestation’⁸⁴. I fantasmi operano come agenti sociali attraverso le ontologie, andando a costituire una presenza misteriosa e non mediata.⁸⁵

Conclusioni

Riflettendo sui generi letterari Pavel Medvedev asserì che “il genere è un modo specifico di visualizzare una data parte della realtà”⁸⁶, e Bakhtin sostenne che “new genres reflect changes in real social life. Those changes lead to new views of experience and to different genres of speech, social behavior, and literature”⁸⁷. Il genere *kaidan* raggiunse l’apice della sua popolarità durante il periodo Edo, decretando l’ingresso dei racconti del sovrannaturale e misterioso all’interno delle città. Nel corso degli anni questa presenza si è mantenuta salda ed il genere è riuscito a sopravvivere poiché le leggende sugli *yūrei* si sono ancorate al tessuto urbano, creando connessioni con quegli spazi percepiti come altri, generatori di estraneità, quali tunnel, ponti, ospedali, scuole e crinali di montagna⁸⁸. I cambiamenti del tessuto sociale che hanno sostenuto la vitalità dei racconti dell’orrore sono da rintracciare da una parte in alcuni motivi precedenti l’arrivo della modernizzazione, e dall’altra in novità apportate dalla modernizzazione stessa. È utile, credo, appoggiarsi alla proposta di rilettura da parte di Maria Teresa Orsi del concetto di “cronotopo”, preso da Mikhail Bakhtin, per porre l’accento su alcuni aspetti delle storie del misterioso e dell’orrorifico. Orsi propone per i *kaidan* l’ipotesi di “cronotopi della mutabilità”, dell’instabilità della forma, “della possibilità di superare i limiti dello spazio e del tempo, di essere presenti contemporaneamente in più luoghi e momenti diversi, di cambiare la propria sostanza non solo nel passaggio dalla vita alla morte, ma anche dopo la morte”⁸⁹. La sensazione di un qualcosa di spaventoso e terribile che può rimanere anche dopo la morte lega in maniera sinestetica proiezioni concrete e fisiche di fenomeni astratti e uditivi, e permette a questo genere di narrazioni di permanere nel tempo, spostandosi nel tempo e nello spazio. In fondo, si tratta di entità che riescono “a sconvolgere un ordine noto, quello tangibile e rassicurante, attraverso la mutazione imprevista che è tipica della fragilità della natura umana e dell’idea che tutto sia transitorio”⁹⁰.

Abbiamo visto che i temi trattati nelle storie sugli *yūrei* rientrano in diversi ambiti di indagine e pertinenza: accanto ad elementi della spiritualità buddhista giapponese associati alle corrette pratiche per il culto dei defunti (e cosa succede nel caso di trapassi bruschi, in cui l’anima del defunto rimane ancorata alla vita terrena a causa di forti passioni), abbiamo preso nota dell’interesse da parte degli studi folklorici (*minzokugaku*) per i racconti che hanno dato spazio alle figure dei morti che ritornano

⁸⁴ Davis, C. “Hauntology, Spectres”, *cit.*, 378. V. Wolfreys, J. (2002). *Victorian Hauntings: Spectrality, Gothic, the Uncanny and Literature*. Red Globe Press: 1.

⁸⁵ Good, B.J. et al. “The Anthropology of Being Haunted”, *cit.*, 446. V. Tappe, O. et al. (2016). “Introduction: global modernities and the (re-)emergence of ghosts”. In *Voices from Around the World*, 5(1). Cologne: Global South Studies Center: 3.

⁸⁶ V. Morson, G.S.; Emerson, C. (1990). *Mikhail Bakhtin: Creation of a prosaics*. Stanford: Standford university Press, 275.

⁸⁷ Ivi, 277.

⁸⁸ Takaoka, H. (2006). “Yūrei no hen'yō, toshi no henbō: Minzokugakuteki kin-gendai kenkyū ni mukete no shiron”. *Kokuritsu rekishi minzoku hakubutsukan kenkyū hōkoku*, 132, 99-120.

⁸⁹ Orsi, M.T. (2012). “Presenze perturbanti”, in Amitrano, G.; De Maio, S. (a cura di) *Nuove prospettive di ricerca sul Giappone*. Napoli: Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale” e Associazione Italiana per gli Studi Giapponesi AISTUGIA, 70. Cfr. Bakhtin, M.M. *Op. cit.*, 84 ss.

⁹⁰ Novielli, M.R. (2010). *Metamorfosi. Schegge di violenza nel nuovo cinema giapponese*. Bologna: Epika Edizioni, 14.

(dopo aver dato uno sguardo al significato delle capacità dei *bakemono*, della metamorfosi come sfida di tipo morale, ontologico ed epistemologico perché nullifica qualunque dispositivo atto a creare barriere, confini, distanze). Dopo aver fornito una caratterizzazione del genere *kaidan* e di come ancora oggi le storie dell'orrore continuino ad essere studiate (anche nelle successive rielaborazioni generate nell'ambito della cultura pop), sono stati presentati due casi di studio raccolti durante un soggiorno nell'area di Fukuoka. È stato possibile cogliere un interesse per storie ambientate in contesti noti o facilmente riconoscibili; storie che intrecciano elementi di cronaca (che difficilmente riescono a sfuggire all'attenzione del parlante) con altri fattori, che rientrano nel campo della percezione sensoriale ed extrasensoriale, del verosimile o plausibile, creando una connessione tra passato, presente e futuro. Rilevando come la figura del fantasma può essere caratterizzata nel genere *kaidan* e nelle leggende urbane, abbiamo dato spazio ad una possibilità interpretativa dell'orribile come elemento che attraversa i media, espandendosi grazie alla non mediazione del redivivo in spazi e tempi transnazionali. Contemporaneamente, è stato postulato che gli avvistamenti di fantasmi (o anche solo le suggestioni derivate), figure sospese tra la vita e la morte, tra presenza e assenza, possono servire come monito per i vivi, onde evitare di reiterare il passato. Potrebbe non essere troppo azzardato fare un paragone tra il senso dell'*hauntology* e la trama del film *Rashōmon*, il film del 1950 diretto da Kurosawa Akira, ispirato all'omonimo racconto di Akutagawa Ryūnosuke, che a sua volta si ispirò proprio ad una raccolta appartenente al genere dei *setsuwa bungaku*, il *Konjaku monogatarishū*. La vicenda al centro della trama del lungometraggio ruota attorno ad un processo istruito al fine di ricostruire i fatti che hanno portato alla morte di un *samurai*. Per chiarire le responsabilità delle parti coinvolte vengono raccolte le ricostruzioni personali, e nel fare ciò è addirittura richiamato lo spirito del *samurai* defunto attraverso una medium. Confrontando le versioni singolarmente ottenute si nota che i resoconti sono contrastanti, che ogni racconto produce una nuova conoscenza a partire dagli stessi eventi. Se nel film non si capisce bene quale sia il contenuto univocamente veritiero (cioè come si presume che le cose siano oggettivamente andate), si intuisce invece che il processo attraverso cui la verità è chiamata ad emergere è composto da una polifonia di voci. La verità o conoscenza proviene da un dialogo, da un confronto che crea delle aperture produttive di significato, dimostrando come non sia possibile individuare un solo colpevole; ad ogni testimonianza depositata divengono sempre più evidenti i dubbi e le incertezze, diventa sempre meno chiaro e facile individuare una conoscenza certa. Le parole del fantasma invocato non fugano il dubbio risolvendo la questione, ma creano altre possibilità interpretative. Il monaco che ha ascoltato le versioni dei personaggi interrogati raffronta le esperienze dei viventi e del defunto (che hanno avuto luogo nel passato), e si interroga su cosa ne sarà del futuro, se altri esseri umani continueranno a comportarsi agendo per interesse personale, ripetendo gli errori trascorsi. Se è vero che in *Rashōmon* lo spirito del *samurai* assassinato non possiede propriamente i connotati degli *yūrei*, e che quindi manca il fantasma così come lo abbiamo inteso fino ad ora, è come se lo spettatore alla fine della proiezione fosse lasciato in compagnia dello spettro del dubbio. Uno spettro insidioso, che in maniera silente pone domande e sollecita risposte, accompagna il pubblico per invitare a fermarsi a riflettere e considerare cosa potrebbe cambiare in noi alla luce delle sue parole: "The ghost's secret is not a puzzle

to be solved; it is the structural openness or address directed towards the living by the voices of the past or the not yet formulated possibilities of the future”⁹¹.

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⁹¹ Davis, C., *Op. cit.*, 379.

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Beyond “noun classes”. Gender and deriflection in two Kulango variants of Côte d’Ivoire¹.

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ABSTRACT

Abandoning the classical philological concept of “noun classes”, the author aims to analyze and describe the mechanisms characterizing the gender systems of two variants of Kulango applying the model proposed by Tom Güldemann and Ines Fiedler (2019) based on the concepts of agreement (AGR), gender, nominal form (NF) and deriflection (classes).

Kulango is a Gur language spoken in the north-eastern territories of Côte d’Ivoire. The two variants considered in this paper are the one spoken in the prefecture of Bouna (Elders 2008) and the one spoken in the sub-prefecture of Nassian (Micheli 2007). Both variants are based on number inflection systems indicating complex SG/PL number features, through specific NFs attached to the lexical basis as suffixes. In the variant of Bouna there are some examples of NFs for transnumeral nouns, which do not occur in the variant of Nassian.

The gender system presents instead a simple animate/inanimate pattern, as it is the case in Akan (the major Potou-Akanic language), as described in Güldemann and Fiedler 2019:114-121.

Agreement in qualitative adjectives seems to be lacking in the variant of Nassian, except for some small traces in color adjectives, while it seems to be present and productive in the variant of Bouna. In any case, the triggered element (i.e. the adjective) is influenced by the animate/inanimate gender of the head noun rather than by its NF. Comparing the data emerging from the analysis of the two Kulango variants, it results evident, specifically from table 2, that the dialect of Nassian, presents a quite larger degree of simplification with respect to the dialect of Bouna. This is probably due to the fact that the sub-prefecture of Nassian lays in a buffer region between the territory of the Kulango kingdom of Bouna and the lands occupied by the Akan kingdom of Gyaman with which cultural and economical networks must have been historically stronger with a consequent higher influence.

Keywords: Grammatical gender, Gur languages, Kulango, Animacy, Deriflection

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1. Introduction

Greville G. Corbett opens his introduction to *The Expression of Gender*² with a perfect slogan: “*Gender is an endlessly fascinating category*” - full stop.

This opening declaration alone suffices to let the reader suspect that under this endless fascination a brave linguist will find a quite complex network of morphological, lexical and cognitive imbricated phenomena.

¹ The contents of this paper have been presented and discussed at the 4th Symposium on West African Languages - Naples, 21-23 September 2022.

² CORBETT 2014:1

If it is true that *gender* is a complex category in itself, it is also true that things become even more complex when trying to grasp and describe the mechanisms underlying African languages in general and, non-Bantu Niger-Congo languages in particular.

In these languages, indeed, the category of gender intersects with some other features, *i.e.*, nominal classes, number and animacy.

In order to better understand how all these features interact with one another, it is first of all urgent to deconstruct some of the classical concepts referring to them.

In their brilliant contribution to the volumes edited by Di Garbo, Olssen & Wälchli in 2019³, Tom Güldeman and Ines Fiedler reached well this aim and proposed a new model for the analysis and description of all those phenomena that until then were too superficially summarized under the umbrella definition of “nominal classes”.

Güldeman & Fiedler, in fact stress the inadequacy of the traditional conceptualization of nominal classes that universally implies a “one-to-one trigger-target mapping”, while conflating in an inconvenient way categories such as agreement class and noun form, which possibly, in the same language, have different behaviors and respond to different rules⁴.

Therefore, abandoning the just mentioned classical, inadequate conceptualization, the Güldeman/Fiedler model makes a distinction among all the different mechanisms underlying it, and identifies four different categories, namely:

1. *nominal form* (NF)
2. *deriflection* (a newly coined term/concept - see below)
3. *agreement* (AGR);
4. *gender*.

In so doing, and in order to give anyway an idea of the interconnection characterizing these four different categories, Güldeman & Fielder propose the use of the concept of *gender systems* as conceived by Corbett 1991, *i.e.*, systems of nominal classification - or categorization - that are reflected *in some ways*⁵ by agreement.

In this paper the author will adopt the Güldeman/Fiedler model describing and discussing the behavior of two Kulango variants concerning number inflection, NFs, and derivation classes on the one hand (paragraph 2) and gender and agreement classes (paragraph 3) on the other hand.

While nominal forms and agreement classes are to be thought as concrete elements anchored in the morphosyntactic contexts in which nominal and non nominal gender marking occur, derivation and gender reflect more abstract aspects bound to the lexical/semantic dimension of the words themselves⁶.

Quoting Güldeman and Fiedler, in fact:

“What is called here derivation (classes) is the morpho(phono)logical counterpart of genders. They are classes of form paradigms operating over nominal lexemes and established on account of identical formal variation that does not need but often does interact with such features as gender, number, etc. Our newly coined term “derivation” (a blend of “inflection” and “derivation”) thus refers here in a more narrow sense to relevant morphology or phonology that interacts with gender”.⁷

³ DI GARBO Francesca; OLSSON, Bruno, and Bernhard WÄLCHLI (2019) *Grammatical gender and linguistic complexity, Vol. I & II* - General issues and specific studies (Studies in Diversity Linguistics 26 & 27) Berlin: Language Science Press.

⁴ See GÜLDEMAN and FIEDLER 2019: 103.

⁵ Italics is mine.

⁶ cf GÜLDEMAN and FIEDLER 2019: 99.

⁷ *Ibidem* 2019: 99.

Kulango is a non Bantu, Niger-Congo, Gur language spoken in a very small area in the South of Burkina Faso bordering Côte d’Ivoire, in the north-eastern territories of Côte d’Ivoire and in two small villages in Ghana. The two variants considered in this paper are the one spoken in the prefecture of Bouna (Elders 2008), and the one spoken in the sub-prefecture of Nassian (Micheli 2007).

The prefecture of Bouna is completely inserted in the Gur speaking world, surrounded by Gur speaking peoples, while the sub-prefecture of Nassian borders the Akan world, whose closeness has possibly caused the language to evolve more quickly and initiated a process of simplification that is particularly visible right in its gender system. The speakers’ total population for Bouna and Bondoukou (Nassian) Kulango is 133.900. For Bouna Kulango, Ethnologue 2022 reports 14.400 speakers in Côte d’Ivoire and 15.500 in Ghana, while for Bondoukou (Nassian) Kulango the speakers are 77.000 in Côte d’Ivoire and 27.900 in Ghana.

Similarly to the situation of Akan (the major Potou-Akanic language) as described by Güldeman & Fiedler (2019: 116-121), in Kulango a very complex number inflection system on the one hand, is opposed to a very simple animacy-based gender system.

2. Nominal forms and number inflection system

In Kulango the specific NFs indicating SG/PL are suffixed⁸ to the lexical basis.

In the variant of Bouna there are some examples of NFs reserved to transnumeral nouns that do not occur in the variant of Nassian.

As the reader will see in picture 1 and 2 below, both systems are complex to describe due to the high degree of allomorphism characterizing the NFs. In addition to this, many SG NFs can combine with more than one PL NF and the reverse is true, creating a multiplication of pairs that is frankly very difficult to manage, even for fluent and mother tongue speakers.

Regarding allomorphism, Elders (2008 - Bouna) and Micheli (2007 - Nassian) adopted different approaches in their respective grammatical descriptions.

In Micheli’s grammar (2007) only the feature \pm ATR was, in fact, considered as key in determining allomorphism, while no other tentative grouping was attempted, due to the high number of exceptions. On the contrary, Elders proposed larger extensions for grouping allomorphs, on the basis of formal (phonological) rules and considered primarily consonant sounds (and not the opposition voiced/voiceless) as *discrimina* for identifying the different groups.

In this paper Elder’s rules have been applied to the representation of both variants.

Here a prospect of Elders’ singular NFs and their allomorphs:

NF *-ɔ* allomorphs *-o*, *-yɔ*, *-yo*, *-ε*

NF *-yo* allomorphs *-yo*, *-ŷɔ*, *ŷɔ*, *-yv*, *yɪ*, *ye*, *-ŷɪ*

NF *-go* allomorphes *-go*, *-wɔ*, *-wo*, *-gɛ*, *-ge*, *-ga*, *-ŋɔ*, *-ŋo*, *-ŋɛ*, *-ŋe*, *ŋa*, *ngɔ*, *-ngɔ*, *-ngɛ*, *-nge*, *-nga*

NF *-ko* allomorph *-ko*

NF *-kpo* allomorphs *-kpo*, *-gbɔ*, *-gbo*

NF *-ro* allomorph *-ro*

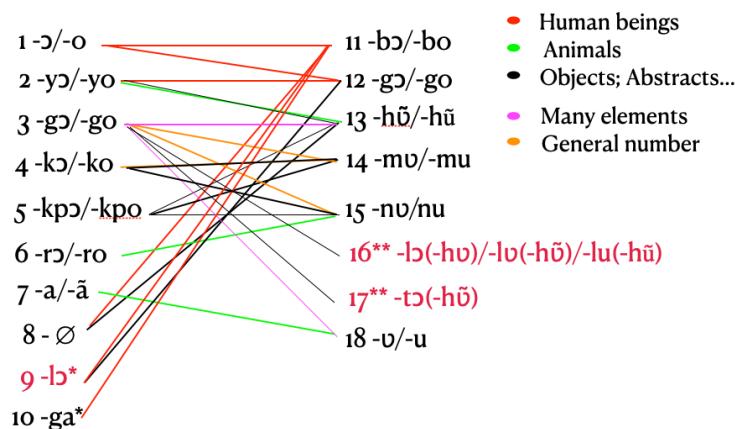
NF *a* allomorph *ã*

⁸ The reader should remember that in Niger-Congo Bantu languages prefixation is the rule rather than suffixation.

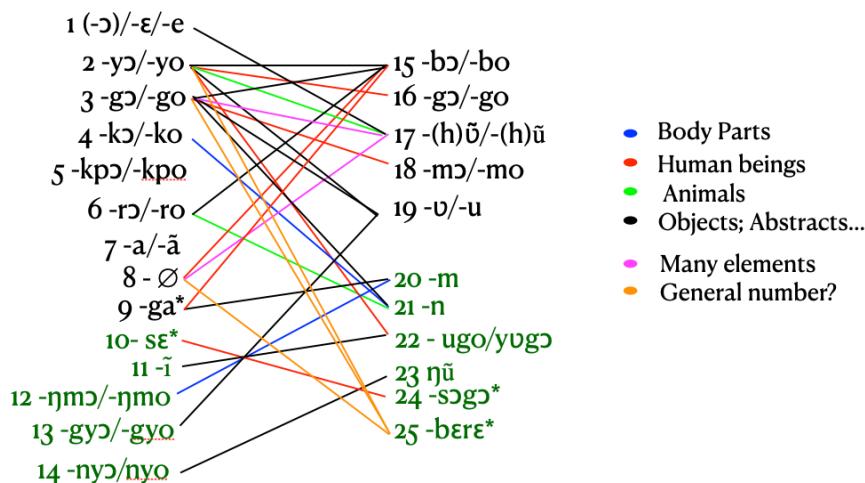
Elders' plural NFs' allomorphs:

- NF *-bo* allomorphs *-bo*, *-mbɔ*, *-mbo*
- NF *-go* allomorphs *-go*, *-wo*
- NF *-hū* allomorphs *-hū*, *hī*
- NF *-mv* allomorph *-mu*
- NF *-nv* allomorph *-nu*
- NF *-lɔ* allomorphs *-lv*, *-lu* only in *-lv-hū*, *-lu-hū*
- NF *-tv* only in *-tv-hū*

Picture 1 - NFs and number inflection system in Bouna Kulango elaborated on the basis of Elders 2008⁹:



Picture 2 - NFs and number inflection system in Nassian Kulango elaborated on the basis of Micheli 2007¹⁰:



Some NFs, attested in one single word in Nassian Kulango, were not considered for the construction of the table. However, it is probably worth pointing them out here. Apparently isolated singular NFs are: *mārā/mābɔ* “dog”; *veelɔ/veebɔ* “brother”; *yere/yebo* “woman”; *heen/heemɔ* “young man”; *dan/danū* “cobra cracheur”; *bikyo/bin* “excrement”; *golonyi/golopū* “hook”, while apparently isolated plural NFs are

⁹ In red those NFs which are not present in Nassian Kulango

¹⁰ In green those NFs which are not present in Bouna Kulango

beregysɔ/beregwɔvū “nail”; *dagogyo/dagozvū* “corn”; *zvɔjɔ/zvrvū* “thing”; *ɔgɔrmyɔ/ɔgoriŋɔ* “rival wife”.

As the two tables demonstrate, the number of NFs in the two cases still remains different. However, considering the behavior of the two variants, some common points emerge:

- In Kulango, NFs conflate information about both the semantic/lexical organization of nouns and of their number. This semantic/lexical organization lays at the basis of the language gender system, anchored to the concept of animacy.
- Although the number inflection system is very complex and to some extent chaotic, with a crossed type of agreement where class convergence is present in both directions, some pairs are semantically coherent, especially those regarding humans and animals (e.g. *rɔ/n(v)* - *yɔ/(h)v* *animals*; $\emptyset/bɔ$ - *yɔ/gɔ* *humans* common to Bouna and Nassian and *kpo/mv* - *ŋmɔ/m* respectively in Bouna and Nassian *body parts*¹¹).
- Generally, we can speak of a number inflection system, in which there is (usually) no conflation of NFs and gender classes, as we will see in a while.
- Both in Bouna and Nassian there are traces indicating that some qualitative adjectives (in Nassian Kulango only “black” *bii-*, several others in Bouna Kulango, see Elders 165-169) are triggered by the gender of the noun.
- Plural NF *-(h)v* represents in both variants the general form people use when they are uncertain about which one correctly applies to a specific singular. The same form is regularly applied to loanwords.

Many are also the points the two variants do not share. Let us focus now on these divergencies.

Concerning Bouna Kulango:

- 2 NFs for general numbers seem to be attested. In Elder’s terminology (p.127) they were indicated as *plural limité*. The NFs involved are: NF3 *-gɔ* (sg) - NF14/15 *-mv/-nv* (pl. lim.) - NF13 *-hō* (pl. ill.) and NF4 *-kɔ* (sg.) - NF14 *-mv* (pl. lim.) - NF15 *-nv* (pl. ill.). In Nassian kulango there is no evidence of anything similar.
- Elders (p.134) attested two pl. NFs (*-lɔhū* and *-tɔhū*) resulting from the combination of two other NFs, respectively NF16 *-lɔ* and NF17 *-tɔ* + the general pl. NF13 *-hū*. In both cases the so formed plurals have an alternative plural displaying only the general *-hū*: *feegɔ* “shoulder” > *feelɔhū/feehū* and *kpeŋe* “granary” > *kpeŋetɔhū/kpehū* - in this last case the plural would be composed by 3 NF.
- Elders (p.127) attested also a SG/PL class *-lɔ/-gɔ* that should have as its only member numeral 20. Its plural would correspond to multiples of 20. Investigating in this direction could be productive in terms of identifying a possible numeral system: *yipilɔ/yipigo* “twenty”; *yipigo bilaa* (twenty - pl. - two) “forty”.

Referring to Nassian Kulango:

- Singular NF class *-lɔ* (not present in the picture) seems to have just a couple of members *veelɔ* (pl. *veebɔ*) “little brother” and (*nda/nna*) *gbolo* (pl. *nda/nnagbolo-bere*) “old man/woman” (Micheli 2007:33);
- Plural NF *-n(v)*, appears also in the SG *heen* (pl. *heemɔ*) “young man”. Otherwise, both in Nassian and Bouna variants, the same NF marks out liquid mass nouns (Micheli 2007:33);

¹¹ In Bouna Kulango the pair *kpo/mv* is not used exclusively for *body parts*, but it includes also other objects. Therefore, in picture 1 the pair is identified in black, i.e., *Objects, Abstracts...*

- some Nassian Kulango NFs characterizing human beings have a peculiar behavior, in that they do not respond to ATR rules. These NFs are SG *-se* and PL *-sɔgɔ* / *-bere*. It is possible that originally these NFs were words in themselves: if we consider the two PL forms, in fact, we see that they are bisyllabic and it has to be said that the majority of Kulango words is made of two syllable (semantic basis + NF). Be it as it may, their etymology is nowadays not transparent;
- NFs *-se/-sɔgɔ* are used also to create a derivate agent noun from a verb: *niase*, “uterine nephew” lit. “the one who washes”;
- PL NF *-bere* can be applied also to an already plural noun, carrying its own NF (often *-sɔgɔ*), stressing in this case the belonging to a specific group of people (or even supernatural beings): *gusɔgɔ* / *gusɔgɔbere* “relatives / people of the family”; *gyināū/gyināūbere* “jinns / people of the jinns”;
- NF *-yɔ* can convey information about number (SG) and dimension (SMALL): in fact, when attached to a NF in a noun referring to a human being, it generates a diminutive: *yere* > *yereyɔ* / *yebɔ* > *yerewɔ*; *heen* > *heenio* / *heemɔ* > *heeniugo*.

3. Gender and agreement (AGR)

As it is the case in Akan¹², the Kulango gender system is not coherent with NFs and presents a simple animate/inanimate pattern.

Nonetheless, in general, specific NFs that can be interpreted as indicative of animacy, characterize proper deriflection classes¹³ encompassing human beings and animals.

This feature suggests a possible original semantic organization of the core vocabulary of the language in which specific NFs were indicative of internally coherent groups of words.

Despite the system is not always regular, some traces of this kind of semantic grouping are still visible, even though corrupted, in part of the vocabulary of some of the classes characterizing inanimate objects, like body parts, food, weather, etc.

Be it as it may, concerning the centrality of animacy in the gender system, the two variants of the language considered here do not show any difference.

The animate gender classes are generally applied to human beings, animals, supernatural beings and trees and plants; in brief to all those elements that are considered possessors of a life-soul (*māyɔ*). Uncertainties about the presence of this life-soul in one particular referent brings the speaker to apply to the word the inanimate gender. Depending on this livelihood, in fact, a word that usually appears with an animate gender, may occur with an inanimate gender. This happens for example with unknown evil spirits, with dried-out trees and plants or with human or animal dead bodies.

Therefore it can be said that animacy is not given in abstract terms.

Rather is is conceived in a very contextualized way and it is dependent from the actual condition of life/death characterizing the element it refers to.

The inanimate gender refers usually to inanimate objects, tools and food, body parts, abstract nouns and natural elements. Animate and inanimate genders are reflected in the presence of trigger and triggered morphemes. The trigger element is not really the NF morpheme. Rather is is represented by the animate/inanimate feature that is especially

¹² GÜLDEMAN and FIEDLER 2019:114-121.

¹³ i. e., recalling again GÜLDEMAN and FIEDLER’s definition “classes of form paradigms operating over nominal lexemes and established on account of identical formal variation that *does not need but often does* [my stress - ndr] interact with such features as gender, number, etc.”

embedded in the most semantically coherent SG-PL NF combinations (see tables 1 and 2 below). Triggered elements are subject and object pronouns, possessive and demonstrative adjectives and, as already discussed in the previous paragraph, in a very few cases, qualitative adjectives.

Below, the author reports two tables displaying trigger and triggered elements in SG and PL AGR classes.

Table 1 - SG agreement classes:

Trigger	(Trigger) NF	(triggered?) Qualitative adjective	Triggered subject pronoun	Triggered object pro- noun	Triggered possessive	Triggered demonstrative
Animate*	1) -ɔ; 2) -yɔ; 8) -∅; 3) -gɔ; 6) -rɔ; 7) -ã*B; 8) -lɔ*B; -n*N; 10) -ee*N	-rɔ**	h̄v	-ɛ***	bɔ (B) v̄ (N)	hini
Inanimate*	3) -gɔ; 4) -kɔ; 12) -ηmo*N	-kɔ**	hɔ	-ge***	hɔ	here

Observations:

- The symbol * indicates those trigger elements (NFs) that are present only in one of the two variants (Bouna OR Nassian);
- The symbol ** indicates the triggered element found in the major classes to which belong the very few qualitative adjectives that still testify the possible previous existence of the triggering mechanisms in the whole class;
- the symbol *** indicates that, due to allomorphism, the quality of the vowel and plosive is influenced by the final vowel of the verb and can be different from the one presented in the table. For example, in Nassian Kulango the vowel becomes -a or -va when the verb ends respectively with -ɔ, -a and -e or -ɛ when the verb ends with -i, -e, -u / -i, -ɛ, -v;
- The letters (B) or (N) indicate that the form appears only in one of the two variants of the language, namely Bouna (B) and Nassian (N).

Table 2 - PL agreement classes

Trigger	(Trigger?) NF	(triggered?) Qualitative adjective	Triggered subject pronoun	Triggered object pronoun	Triggered possessive	Triggered demonstrative
Animate	11B/15N) - bɔ; 12B/16N) -gɔ; 16B) -lɔ*; 17B) - tv*; 22N) - ugo*; 24N) -sɔgɔ*; 18N) -mɔ*	-rɔ**	bɔ	-be (B) -bɔ (N)	bɔ	bere*** (B) nini (N)
Inanimate	13B/17N) - (h)v; 14B/20N) - m(v);	-kɔ**	ŋɔ (B) v (N)	-(h)v	hɔ (B) v (N)	ŋene (B) wīnī (N)

Observations:

- Symbols * and ** have the same meaning as in table 1;
- Symbol *** reminds the reader that the same form in Nassian Kulango corresponds to a frozen NF indicating groups of people or supernatural beings. The form can never be applied to animals.

The data emerging from the comparison of the two Kulango variants, especially those presented in Table 2, seem to confirm that the variant spoken in Nassian presents a quite large degree of simplification with respect to the variant spoken in Bouna.

This is probably due to the fact that the sub-prefecture of Nassian lays in a buffer region between the territory of the Kulango kingdom of Bouna and the lands occupied by the Akan kingdom of Gyaman with which cultural and economical networks must have been historically much stronger with a consequent much higher influence.

4. Final Remarks

In conclusion, the application of the Güldeman/Fiedler model based on the concepts of deriflection, nominal forms, gender and agreement classes has been shown to be much more appropriate to the description of the peculiarities of the Kulango language than the classical model of nominal classes.

The comparative analysis proposed in this paper has demonstrated that in both variants deriflection and gender are key concepts that allow a more precise description of all those phenomena implied in the mechanisms governing a highly complex (and most of the times chaotic) number inflection system with a crossed scheme of SG-PL NFs combinations that must match with a very simple gender system based on animacy.

Although the mapping of NFs in the number inflection system and of AGR classes in the gender system is superficially different in the two variants, our comparison outlines a fundamentally very similar core structure.

Especially, similarities are evident in the most coherent NF pairs (e.g. those regarding humans, animals and body parts or objects and deverbal nouns) in the number inflection system and, in the SG AGR classes in the gender system.

In both variants there are traces of a trigger-target mechanism connecting nouns and qualitative adjectives, which is, however, much richer in Bouna Kulango. This is possibly due to the fact that Bouna Kulango is closer to other Gur languages showing the same feature (e.g. Lohron), while it has already been pointed out above that Nassian Kulango has probably been much more influenced by the Akan languages spoken in the neighboring territories. Suffice it to say that the Kingdom of Gyaman is an Akan kingdom which shortly after its foundation adopted Kulango as its official language¹⁴.

In both variants the major number inflection class is becoming more and more functional.

Indeed, both in Bouna and Nassian applying the major plural NF -(h) to no matter what noun, is not really perceived by the speakers as a mistake.

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¹⁴ cf MICHELI 2012: 137-139.

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Language and its sound in ‘Allayl Dumay’ by Raage Ugaas Warfaa

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ABSTRACT

In this article I present a detailed analysis of a famous poem by Raage Ugaas Warfaa. Raage, who lived in the nineteenth century, is acknowledged as one of the greatest poets of all time among the Somalis. A good number of his poems have been passed down over the years and in more recent decades have been written down. I consider here one of his most famous *gabay* poems. It is a lament, *calaacal* in Somali, which was prompted by Raage’s fiancée being married to another man when he had been away for some time after the initial marriage agreement had been made. The poem is very widely known and appreciated and one of my main aims here is to show why this is so. In the analysis I outline grammatical aspects of the poem with a view to providing a study of some of the interesting linguistic features. Then, in the main part, I look at the images and language used and, in particular, consider the way sound, both words related to sound and the actual use of sound in the poem relate to its message and to the idea of subjectivity.

Keywords: *Somali, poetry, poetics*

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Introduction

Yaasiin (1984: 61) makes the following comment about the poet Raage Ugaas Warfaa: ‘Se si domanda ad un qualsiasi somalo chi sia il piú grande poeta della sua gente, la risposta è sempre la stessa: Raage Ugaas.’ He then asks the question ‘Ma quando gli si chiede perché Raage è unanimemente considerato tale, la risposta diventa difficile.’ (Yaasiin 1984: 61). In this article I hope to contribute to an answer to this question by presenting a poem which is widely known and loved by Somalis and which I consider to be one of the finest examples of lyric poetry in any language. I shall do this by first presenting an introduction to the poet and the poem, presenting the text of the poem and a detailed analysis of the language and the way in which sound in particular plays an important role in shaping the poem as an aesthetic object.

I am grateful to a number of people for discussions about this poem on various occasions, in particular Maxamed Cali Xasan ‘Alto’, Faarax Axmed Cali ‘Gamuute’, Cabdulqaadir Warsame, Rashiid Sheekh Cabdillaahi ‘Gadhweyne’, Giorgio Banti, Jaamac Muuse Jaamac and Saciid Saalax. I am also grateful to attendees of the Fifth Annual Seminar on African Language Literature and to Wendy Belcher, who organised it as part of the Annual Meeting of the American Comparative Literature Association 2018 at the University of California Los Angeles where some of these ideas were first aired. I also thank attendees at the Expressive Culture Panel of the Somali Studies International Congress in Hargeysa in 2018 in which some revisions and other ideas were also presented.

Raage Ugaas Warfaa the poet

We don't know exactly when Raage was born, and there are quite widely differing opinions. Andrzejewski (1985: 396) and Maxamed (1989: 11) give it as ca. 1810 and don't say when he may have died. Axmednuur (2015: 27) on the other hand gives his birth as being approximately 1840 and his death in about 1880 (p.54). He was born around Sasabane in the region of Dhagaxbuur in what was to become part of Ethiopia. His father was an *ugaas* 'lineage leader' within the Ogaadeen clan (Axmednuur 2015: 25) and he is known to have had a high level of education and to have travelled with an itinerant sheekh as part of the sheekh's *xer* 'group of students'. He was, by all accounts, a diligent student and also studied in Harar and Axmednuur (2015: 39) states that he travelled overseas as well as overland. With respect to poetry, Axmednuur (2015: 39) also suggests that he was familiar with early classical Arabic poetry, mentioning Imru'ul Qays and Labid as well as al-Mutanabbī, something that would be expected given his education.

There are a number of stories about his life. Andrzejewski (1966: 32–39) recounts one such story regarding his early life as a student of the sheekh. Perhaps the most famous, however, is the story of his betrothal to Cabban Cilmi Xuseen (Cilmi Hagoog) and the way that betrothal was broken. The basic story is that Raage approached Cabban's family and they agreed to the betrothal and the marriage. Raage brought some *yarad* 'initial bride payment' to the family and the marriage was formally agreed to. He then left with the intention of returning to contract the marriage. It has been said that he sent more *yarad* wealth to the family but he was away for a while dealing with some matters (I have heard both lineage political matters and drought as being possible reasons). During this time, another suitor approached Cabban's family, namely Faarax Garaad Xirsi. Cabban's family agreed to her marrying Faarax despite the engagement to Raage, and Faarax, aware of the betrothal to Raage, had the marriage contracted there and then quickly. Raage was unaware of this and when he returned to the family of Cabban he found his fiancée already married. It is this situation that prompted the composition of the poem. The final part of the story is that, although Raage did not marry Cabban, he did marry her younger sister Faadumo. This was arranged due to the wrong done by Cabban's family to Raage and his kin. By all accounts this was a good marriage and he became extremely fond of Faadumo, sentiments which are expressed in another famous lament he composed after her death from being attacked by a lion.

There is another aspect to the story which has to do with avenging the wrong done to Raage and his lineage when Cabban was married to Faarax. Banti (1988: 36), for example says 'Ai suoi amici che premevano perché vendicasse questo affronto, il poeta rispose con questa poesia spiegando che nonostante il dolore che provava avrebbe accettato la soluzione di compromesso che gli veniva offerta', the compromise being the marriage to Faadumo. I have also heard the idea that Raage wanted to take revenge and it was his kin who convinced him not to press for that. Whatever the precise details, the matter of avenging the wrong is part of the poem, as is the lament for not marrying Cabban. It is the perspective of the lament regarding not marrying Cabban which seems, by most people I have spoken to, to be remembered most.

The poem

The poem is a *gabay*, considered to be the most prestigious genre and as such falls within the category of *maanso* poetry. Genres in this general category are characterised in particular by two things: recognition of the original poet, who is always

acknowledged, and verbatim memorisation. The notion of verbatim memorisation relates to the idea of what I have called elsewhere a *definitive text* (see Orwin 2003, 2005 and 2021, see also Banti 2007). There is the conceptualisation of a specific text which a poet composes and which cannot be changed and which anyone who recites such a poem must adhere to. Having said that, with older poems such as the one considered here being passed on by word of mouth through many chains of transmission over the decades, some variation does creep in. These variations then manifest themselves in the written texts of these poems when they are eventually written down by different people.

With the poem presented here, the variations I have come across are, by and large, relatively small given the age of the poem. I don’t present a full critical edition with apparatus of the poem in this article, that would require a specific work in its own right. The text of the poem used here is the version that is in the school text book Xafiiska Manaahijta (1976: 8–9). I have then based some variations on the text in Axmednuur (2015: 64–65) and Maxamed (1989: 12). Other differences are spelling and revision based on metre in ll.1 and 4.¹ Axmednuur (2015) has some lines which are not found in the others, these can be seen in the appendix with English translations. I comment on these at the appropriate point in the discussion. It is interesting, and not insignificant in my view, that in all versions the first few lines and the final line are the same apart from minor spelling issues.²

The *gabay* form has a particular metrical pattern in accord with the principles of the quantitative metrical system of Somali. It is a long line divided into two half-lines of unequal length the template of which is given below.

	(˘)	∞∞	(˘)	˘˘	˘	˘˘	˘˘	˘	˘˘	:	˘˘	˘	˘˘	˘˘	˘
MP H1	1	H2	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		

˘˘: A position in which two short-vowel syllables or one long-vowel syllable may occur. If there are two short-vowel syllables, then the first may not end in a consonant, a fact that implies that a geminate consonant or a virtual geminate cannot be present ‘between’ the two syllables;³ there cannot be a word boundary between the two syllables.⁴

∞∞: A position like that represented by the symbol ‘˘˘’ but in which the constraints above do not hold.

˘: A position in which only a short-vowel syllable may occur.

(˘): A possible hypermetrical short-vowel syllable may occur in one and only one of the positions marked in this way.

In the second half-line there must be two, and only two, long-vowel syllables, in other words, the second half-line always comprises six syllables.

MP stands for ‘metrical position’, each of which is numbered in order to refer to parts of the line in the discussion below; H stands for ‘hypermetrical position’.

¹ The abbreviations ll. and ll. are used for ‘line’ and ‘lines’ respectively.

² Spelling in Somali is not fully standardised. We find, therefore, variant spellings for the same word, for example the first word of the poem may be written as both *allayl* and *alleyl*. In pronunciation it is the same and is the same word despite the difference in spelling.

³ Virtual geminates are phonetically simplex consonants which, in the metre and some parts of the phonology, behave like geminate consonants. They are ‘f’, ‘j’, ‘s’, ‘sh’, ‘k’, ‘t’, ‘w’ and some instances of ‘y’ (see Orwin and Mohamed 2010).

⁴ Note it is possible for there to be a boundary between some function words and a lexical word in these positions, but these are very specific instances.

The poem alliterates in the vowels. This is referred to as alliterating in *alif* in Somali (see below for further discussion on this). All the vowels alliterate with each other and because of this, and other reasons, the alliteration is assumed actually to be in the glottal stop. See Orwin (2011) for more on alliteration in Somali.

I present the poem here with a gloss of each word followed by a translation.⁵ The gloss is not a detailed linguistic gloss, neither is the translation a literary translation, rather the aim is to provide what is needed for readers who know Somali and those who don't know Somali to be able to follow the discussion.⁶

1. *Allayl dumay albaabbadoo⁷ la xidhay uunku wada seexday*
[As] fell [as] the one had [as] the together had
night doors closed creation fallen asleep

As night fell, as the doors had been closed, as all creation had fallen asleep

2. *Onkod yeedhay uugaamo roob alif banaadiiq ah*
[As] thunder called rumbles rain a thousand rifles [which] are
As thunder called out, rumbles of rain [the sound of] a thousand rifles

3. *Iihdayda bixi baa libaax iman la moodaaye⁸*
My *ihi* [which will] FOCUS a lion [which will] one thinks
come out approach

My *ihi* [cry] which will come out will be thought to be a lion approaching

4. *Ragse⁹ adhaxda iyo ooftu waa udub-dhexaadkiye*
But [for] men the spine and the ribcage are the central pole
But [for] men the spine and the ribcage are the central pole

5. *Labadii wax laga eegi jiray waan ka awdnahaye*
The two something one-from to see used to *waa*-I from fenced-off am
The two [eyes] one used to see out of I am fenced off from

⁵ All translations in this article are by myself unless otherwise stated.

⁶ Given the popularity of the poem, there are translations elsewhere which the interested reader may wish to consult Banti (1988: 36–37), Maxamed (1989: 12–13), Andrzejewski and Andrzejewski (1993: 9), Saeed (1999: 260–61) and Orwin (2007).

⁷ The conjunction *oo* (appended here to the noun *albaabbada*) is in a short-vowel metrical position. This conjunction is one of the morphemes which has been assumed to be anceps with respect to the metre (see Banti and Giannattasio 1996: 87, footnote 7 among others). Given that assumption, it is legitimate in this metrical position, however, such examples do seem to be rare.

⁸ The *-e* which concludes the line is a vowel which fills the final metrical position, MP12, (an obligatory short-vowel syllable position) and is heard often in *gabay* poems. I have heard it suggested that it is a contracted form of the conjunction *ee*, though I disagree with this from a synchronic perspective; whether it derives diachronically from the use of *ee* at the end of lines in poems I cannot say.

⁹ Other versions including Xafiiska Manaahijta (1976) have *Raggase* at the beginning of this line. This seems to me unmetrical in the context it is present and I discussed it with Xasan Daahir Ismaaciil ‘Weedhsame’ who is a famous poet and very knowledgeable about Somali metre. He confirmed that it was not metrical. I think this has to do with the presence both of the geminate ‘gg’ and the virtual geminate ‘s’ close together in this metrical position (*raggase* does also affect later syllables). Further work needs to be done to be more sure about this and it may be something which is marginally metrical. The change does not affect the main discussion here though. I am grateful to Weedhsame for his help and insight.

or The two one used to look out from and guard against [danger with] I am fenced off from (This interpretation is not certain. See below for discussion.)

6. *Halkaan ‘aa’ ka leeyahay Illaah keli ah uun baa og*
 The aa from I say God alone is only FOCUS aware
 place [which]

Only God is aware of the place from where I say ‘aa’

7. *Abootigu ma lalo garab hadduu iin ku leeyahaye*
 The secretary bird not fly shoulder if it an injury in has
 The secretary bird does not fly if it has an injury to its shoulder

8. *Orod u ma hollado ooglihii adhaxda beelaaye*
 Running to not try the stallion the spine lacks
 The stallion does not try to gallop if he lacks the spine

9. *Ma aarsado il iyo oof nimay¹⁰ iimi kaga taalle*
 Not take revenge eye and ribcage a man-it an injury in-against is
 A man does not take revenge in whom there is an injury in eye and ribcage

10. *Aroos u ma galbado¹¹ nimuu wadnaha arami jiifaaye*
 A wedding to not go a man-it the heart a wound lies
 A man in whose heart a wound lies does not go to a wedding

11. *Geeluba kolkuu oomo waa ool badnaadaaye*
 The camels ba¹² when they are thirsty waa¹³ cries become many
 The camels, when they are thirsty, their cries become many

12. *Sidii inan yar oo hooyadeed aakhiro u hoyatay*
 Like a girl young and her mother hereafter to has gone to reside
 Like a young girl whose mother has gone to reside in the hereafter (i.e. who has died)

13. *Oo aabbeeed aqal mid kale meel illin ah seexshay*
 And her father hut [of] other place entrance [which] made
 one is sleep
 And whose father has made her go to sleep at the entrance [outside] a hut of another

14. *Hadba waxaan la urugoonayaa uur-ku-taallada e*
 Again and again FOCUS-I with am grieving the sad/hurting e
 remembrance

Again and again I grieve with the sad/hurting remembrance of it

¹⁰ I follow Axmednuur (2015) here in writing *nimay* rather than *ninkii* as in Xafiiska Manaahijta (1976: 8) given consistency with the next line.

¹¹ This verb has the more specific meaning of a newly married couple going to their new home together.

¹² The clitic *-ba* is an emphatic.

¹³ This is an indicator particle which implies a positive declarative here.

15. *Ninkii ooridiisii rag kale loo igdhaan ahaye*
 The man his wife men other one-to given¹⁴-FOCUS-I am-e
 I am the man whose wife has been given to another
16. *Ninkii ilo biyo leh soo arkoo ooman baan ahaye*
 The springs water [that] DEICTIC sees- thirsty FOCUS- am-e
 man have and I
 I am the man who sees springs of water [but] who is thirsty
17. *Nin ugaas walaalkiis yahoo eeday baan ahaye*
 A man clan leader his brother [who] is - and accused FOCUS-I am-e
 I am a man whom a clan leader who is his brother has accused
18. *Nin abkiis Ogaadeen yahooon aarsan baan ahaye*
 A man his forefathers¹⁵ Ogaadeen are-and-not avenged FOCUS-I am-e
 I am a man whose lineage is Ogaadeen and who has not been avenged
19. *Af-dhabaandhow aayar ah ninkaa aammusaan ahaye*
 patting the mouth to a little / [which] that [who] is am-e
 make someone gently is man silent-
 silent FOCUS-I
 Gently patting the mouth, I am that silent man¹⁶

Syntax and overall structure

The syntax of lines 4-19 is clear, and all except ll.12 and 13 (discussed below) are end-stopped lines which coincide with main clauses in which the syntax is transparent. Ll.1-3, however, display some particularly interesting syntactic features and require some discussion. The first point is the lack of any sentence particles in ll.1-2. This may be explained in two ways: either the verbs are subordinate verbs, in which case we expect no sentence particles, or they are main verbs lacking a sentence particle. The latter can be ruled out since the only two forms of the verb found in such sentences are the positive imperative mood and the independent past tense, neither of which is the form found here.¹⁷ This leaves the verbs to be interpreted as subordinate. However, the syntax of these is still not particularly clear. I have discussed these lines with Somali friends who are knowledgeable about the language and poetry and follow their intuitions in assuming these to be instances of temporal adverbial constructions.¹⁸ The clause *albaabbadoo la xidhay*, is clearly such a clause, given the use of the conjunction *oo* in what Bell (1968: 110) calls a participial clause construction. This is analogous, to what

¹⁴ This is weak as a translation since the Somali verb *igadh* has a much more precise and complex meaning which is explained below. In the present context, it is felt to be sufficient here for the reader to gain a sense of the meaning of the line.

¹⁵ Maxamed (1989: 12) has *tolkiis* for this word and Axmednuur (2015: 64) has *abkii*, both of which are possibilities given the close meanings. I chose to use *abkii* because it alliterates but took the possessive ending of Maxamed (1989) given that that possessive has been used more consistently earlier in the text.

¹⁶ See below for discussion on the interpretation of this line.

¹⁷ For verbs of the type found here, the independent past is marked only by the fronting of the vowel. For the middle-voice verbs ending in *-o*, the diphthong marking past tense is actually present (see Muuse 1956: 66 and Kapchits 2005: 112).

¹⁸ I am particularly indebted to Maxamed Cali Xasan ‘Alto’, Faarax Axmed Cali ‘Gamuute’ and Cabdulqaadir Warsame for conversations at different times on this topic which were very helpful.

Saeed (1999: 216–17) calls absolutive adverbial clauses in which an appositive relative clause qualifies an independent pronoun (see also Gebert 1984 and references therein).¹⁹ The clauses *allayl dumay*, *uunku wada seexday* in 1.1 and *onkod yeedhay* in 1.2 are also to be interpreted as temporal adverbial clauses, although they lack the conjunction *oo*. We might explain the lack of *oo* in *allayl dumay* as due to the fact that *allayl* lacks a defining suffix in Somali. The word includes the Arabic definite article *al-* but, as with *albaab*, this does not make it definite in Somali. Undefined nouns in Somali may be qualified only by restrictive relative clauses which are marked, for the first relative clause, by the lack of *oo* as we see here.²⁰ I have reflected this interpretation in the translation above. This interpretation was confirmed to me by Faarax ‘Gamuute’ who suggested they be interpreted in the same way as the impersonal use of this construction with the 3.f.sg. independent pronoun, e.g. *iyadoo allayl dumay*.

Turning to the clause *uunku wada seexday*, this is particularly interesting because the defined noun *uunku* displays the subject marker *-u*. If the antecedent of a subordinate verb is the subject of that verb then it is not marked as subject: ‘the created beings who had gone to sleep’ would thus be *uunka wada seexday*, with the absolutive ending on *uunka*. The presence of the subject marker here may be explained by the clause being an impersonal absolutive adverbial construction in which the independent pronoun with the conjunction *oo* is lacking: *[iyadoo] uunku wada seexday* ‘while the created beings all fell asleep’ (see example (35) in Saeed 1999: 217 for an analogous example with subject marking albeit in the negative). There is one version of the poem (Axmednuur 2015: 64) which hints at another possibility. He has the word *unkoo* rather than *uunku*. This alternative is not metrical and I assume is a typographical error for *uunkoo*, which is metrical if we assume the conjunction *oo* to be anceps (see above). This would make the clause a participial clause: *uunkoo [uunka oo] wada seexday* and it may be that this is what was originally in the poem. I leave both possibilities open here, whichever is correct, the meaning is the same.

L.2 begins with the temporal adverbial clause *onkod yeedhay* which is assumed to be analogous with *allayl dumay* mentioned just above. The rest of the line comprises three noun phrases: *uugaamo*, *roob* and *alif banaadiiq ah*. The syntactic status of these is uncertain. The verb *yeedh* is intransitive so *uugaamo* cannot be its object.²¹ Looking at what follows *uugaamo* we find another undefined noun *roob*. I assume these two nouns to constitute an associative/possessive-type construction *uugaamo roob* ‘clamours of rain’. This is followed by the noun phrase *alif banaadiiq ah*. The noun *alif* is taken from the Arabic word for ‘thousand’ which is ‘*alf*'.²² However, this is not a regular loanword in Somali, in which the word *kun* is used for ‘thousand’.²³ Numbers, such as *kun*, when used to count nouns are in an associative construction with the counted noun, thus, *kun bunduq* (*bunduq* here in the singular) would be the regular way of saying ‘a thousand

¹⁹ Saeed states that such clauses are tenseless and allows only for the present progressive with dynamic verbs and the present general for stative verbs. Bell has an example in which the verb is in the past tense, and instances of the past tense in such clauses are not uncommon in my experience. I assume the variety of such clauses may be greater than has hitherto been discussed in the grammar literature of Somali though do not pursue the issue further here.

²⁰ Second and subsequent relative clauses on undefined nouns are conjoined with *oo*.

²¹ The preverbal particle *u* governs the person being called with this verb: *Axmed u yeedh* ‘Call Axmed’.

²² Note the epenthetic second vowel ‘*i*’ in *alif* allows for the word to be syllabified legitimately in Somali in which there are no biconsonantal syllable codas or onsets.

²³ This observation is based on current usage. It seems unlikely to me, however, that *kun* was not used generally in Raage’s time, particularly as it is a word with cognates in other Cushitic languages. I didn’t find the meaning of ‘thousand’ for *alif* in any of the dictionaries I consulted.

rifles'. We do not see this construction with *alif*, rather it is the head noun of a relative clause with the verb 'to be' (*ah*) and the complement *banaadiiq* 'rifles' (the Arabic broken plural of singular *bunduq*), 'a thousand which are rifles'. This phrase constitutes the whole of the second half-line. I suggest below that this phrase has greater significance than appears on the surface.

In 1.3 we hear the first sentence particle of the poem, namely the focus marker *baa* and the main verb *moodaa* 'thinks'. There are however two interesting verb forms in this line, namely *bixi* and *iman* used as relative verbs but which are in the infinitive. I assume these to be parts of the periphrastic future form in which the auxiliary verb *doon* may be omitted (see Muuse 1956: 71, note 26b). This was also confirmed to be a possibility in discussing the line with Maxamed 'Alto' and the meaning was paraphrased by Faarax 'Gamuute' in the same conversation to be the same as *baxaysa* 'which is coming out/which will come out' in the present progressive.²⁴ Assuming this explanation, when we add the auxiliary verb, the clauses become *ihibitayda bixi [doona]* 'my *ihi* which will come out' and *libaax iman [doona]* 'a lion which will come' each a head noun and relative clause construction, which fits with the syntax of the line. Note also that assuming the periphrastic future implies, according to Saeed (1999: 90), a certainty which also fits well with the interpretation of this line. The subject of the verb is the impersonal pronoun *la*, which points to the agent of the verb *moodaa* as being the people in the scene, those who were asleep. In the same line, however, we also hear the first reference to first person at the beginning in: *ihibitayda* 'my *ihi*' (see below for more on this).

The rather amorphous syntax of the first two lines seems to highlight the fact that they do not present a scene which forms part of a narrative but provide much more of an atmosphere into which the *ihi*, the lament, can enter.

The next group of lines (ll.4-6) is more transparent syntactically. There is a sentence particle in each one: *waa* in ll.4 and 5 and *baa* in 1.6.²⁵ Ll.7-10 are all negative main clauses; 1.11 is a positive declarative with *waa* and seems to be somewhat isolated as a line. Ll.12-14 are a sequence which comprise a single main clause in which ll.12 and 13 are not end-stopped but display enjambement and 1.14 concludes the sentence with a focus construction *waxa(a)*. I return to the significance of this sequence of lines below. The remaining lines are all positive declaratives with the focus marker and the 1.sg. subject pronoun followed by the verb *ahay* '[I] am'.²⁶ In addition ll.15-18 begin with the noun *nin*, either defined with *-kii* or undefined. The noun is also present in 1.19 but in MPs 6 and 7 (I return to this below).

Vocabulary, imagery and the aesthetics of the poem: ll.1-3

I turn now from the syntax and structural linguistic matters to a discussion of the content, the use of vocabulary and the aesthetics which the poem displays. I shall concentrate on the issue of sound and show how reference to sound and sound itself, the acoustic materiality of the poem, come together in a powerful way which, in my opinion, is part of the reason why it is so well appreciated. It is also a feature which contributes to making it a stereotypical lyric poem in ways expressed in the literature on lyric poetry

²⁴ I write *baxaysa* in the reduced paradigm as that is what would be used if it were present.

²⁵ Aside from the focus marker *baa* focussing what immediately precedes it, the word *uun* may also be considered part of the expression of focus in this sentence (see slide 18 of Banti 2019).

²⁶ In ll.15 and 19 the focus marker coalesces with the verb that precedes it: *igdhaan* for *igdhay baan* and *aammusaan* for *aammusay baan* respectively.

more widely such as Culler (2015) and Blasing (2009). I do not pursue this more comparative perspective here though do think that poems such as this have much to offer the more theoretical literature on lyric poetry cross-linguistically.

Although the vocabulary used in the poem is readily understandable, there are, nevertheless, some words which are worthy of note. The first word in the poem is one such. *Allayl*, is a loan from Arabic, though it is not, at least in modern Somali, used generally for ‘night’ or ‘evening’ (*habeen* and *fiid* are used). Puglielli and Mansuur (2012: 23) have *alleyl* as referring to ‘habeen bar, saqdhexe’ ‘middle of the night’, Ahmed (1990: 1) has *allayl* meaning ‘the second half of the night’, and so it may have been that Raage had such a more specific meaning in mind. Another feature of *Allayl* at the beginning is that when we hear the word, there is a similarity acoustically between its sound and that of the word ‘*Alleylee*’ (*Allaylehe*) which is from ‘Allaa i lehe’ ‘God has me’ which is used when one is ‘making sure, ascertaining that something has happened’.²⁷ Given the importance of sound in this poem the echo of this in the first word does not seem unreasonable.²⁸ It is one of two alliterating words in the first half-line, the second being another loan from Arabic, which also retains the Arabic definite article: *albaabbada*.

When we hear the first line as a whole we are presented with a scene of quiet, a peaceful night in which everyone has fallen asleep. This seems further captured by the alliterating word in the second half-line, *uunku*, which implies not just people, but all living creatures, thus hinting at a quiet such that not even the livestock are heard.

In 1.2 that silence is shattered by the reference to the thunder calling, the pouring rain and the sound image of a thousand rifles, which also conjures a hint of menace. Some accounts of the story behind the poem recount that when Raage arrived at the family of Cabban to contract the marriage it was raining heavily which may be another reason for this image being used. The word *uugaamo* is, according to Puglielli and Cabdalla (2012: 826) the same as *uugaan* which in their dictionary has two meanings: ‘Daruuro cokan’ ‘clouds heavy with water’ and ‘Yabaq, buuq’ ‘a crashing noise, a loud noise’ both of which are relevant here, though I would say that here it is the latter, the noise aspect, which seems to be particularly pertinent in the context of the poem. In Aadan (2013: 1411) the singular form *uugaan* also has the meaning of clamouring sound of people and livestock moving together, further supporting the idea that it is the sound aspect of this word that is significant. Finally, the word is onomatopoeic and so the sound of it literally plays a role in its interpretation as well as in its use here in the poem.

The next word which stands out is *alif*, the syntactic context of which was mentioned above. Here I propose that there is more to the word’s use than the simple meaning of ‘a thousand’. It is the alliterating word in this half-line and echoes the Arabic words in 1.1, *alleyl* and *albaab* given both the alliteration and indeed the assonance of the first syllable in *a*. It is its meaning, however, that leads me to consider further significance. As mentioned above, the Arabic for ‘thousand’, *’alif* is not used as a loanword in Somali.²⁹ However, a homonym (that is a homonym in Somali, not in Arabic), *alif*, is in fact a

²⁷ Zorc and Madina (1993: 12), for example, have this as ‘honestly speaking, in truth’; Puglielli and Mansuur (2012: 23) give ‘Erey la yiraahdo marka wax dhacay ay sidii loo filayay noqdaan; akkidid [sic] in wax dhacay ay sidaas noqonayaan. Wuxuu ka koobanyahay “Alle”, “i” iyo “lehe”’.

²⁸ Yet another possible sound echo is with the name Layla famous from the poem by Qays bin al-Mulawwah, the story of which one may assume must have been known to Raage given the proximity geographically and culturally to the Arabic-speaking world and his education.

²⁹ None of the dictionaries give this meaning of the word. The only written source of this interpretation of the word is given in a note to this poem in Xafiiska Manaahijta (1976: 9).

loanword in Somali, but one which means the first letter of the Arabic alphabet. As mentioned above, this is also the word used to express alliteration in the vowels; the poem alliterates in *alif* when the vowels are the alliterative sound, as is the case in this poem. It is not uncommon for poets to use the alliterative sound to refer to the poem itself, and I suggest the word *alif* here may be such an instance. The word *alif*, as well as meaning ‘a thousand’ might, therefore, simultaneously be interpreted as the alliterative sound of the poem and thus be an instance of poetic self-reflexivity. This means that, along with ‘a thousand rifles’, the interpretation ‘this poem alliterating in *alif* which is rifles’ may also be possible. Thus Raage may be referring not only to the rain sounding like a thousand rifles, but also to his poem sounding that way: the sound of *alif*—referring to the poem—is a thousand rifles. Given the importance of sound both in imagery and iconically in this poem as well as the sheer skill of Raage in making poems, this interpretation seems not unreasonable. It seems also to be supported by the next line in which both reference to sound and the actual sound of the line come together to make a wonderfully rich line: *Iihdayda bixi baa libaax iman la moodaaye*.

Assonance and consonance are particularly prominent here, something we can ‘see’ if we extract the vowels (writing the diphthong as a sequence of ‘a’ and ‘i’) and the consonants (including the glottal stop of the alliteration) in the two half-lines:

ii-ai-a-i-i-aa-i-aa i-a-a-oo-aa-(e)
 '-h-d-d-b-x-b-l-b-x '-m-n-l-m-d-(y)

The sequence of the vowels ‘i’ and ‘a’, both long and short, is striking and is broken only by the ‘oo’ and the final ‘e’, though the latter is in parentheses since it is not part of a substantive word in the line. Equally, the limited set of consonants and the consequent consonance in each half-line lends a distinct acoustic quality to each half-line and the line as a whole. From a personal perspective, I find this line aesthetically tremendously appealing, as indeed do others I have spoken to about it. The first word that introduces all this, *iihdayda*, comprises the echomimetic word *iih* with the 1.sg. possessive suffix. It is at once both an iconic, acoustic representation of the lament and a denotative representation.³⁰ It is also, as mentioned above, the first expression of the first person in the poem. This is significant as it is the first direct expression of the lyric voice, though not in the form of a personal pronoun or noun subject, but as the possessive suffixed to the ‘cry’, the *iih*. Given both the echomimetic manner of its expression and the possessive suffix, this word at once represents the sound of the cry iconically and the lamenting lyric voice of the poem.

Vocabulary, imagery and the aesthetics of the poem: ll.4-6

L.4 begins with the noun *rag* and the adversative clitic conjunction *-se* which makes a contrast with what has come before.³¹ *Rag* means ‘men (collective)’, and I interpret the contrast to be between someone lamenting and wailing, as in the previous line, and what it is to embody the expectations of a man of Raage’s age in his society, namely a *waranle* ‘warrior’ who can be depended on to protect and support his family and kin. The idea of support is expressed metaphorically in *adhaxda iyo ooftu waa*

³⁰ I use echomimetic here to contrast with onomatopoeic since the word *iih* is not one that is used to express a lament or other such concept in general (*calaacal* is used which may be considered onomatopoeic). The word *iih* is not a regular noun, but is a phonetically derived word to express the poet’s vocal crying out which behaves just as any other noun.

³¹ See above for a note on *Ragse* being assumed rather than *Raggase* for reasons of metre. The difference in meaning is that in the first ‘men’ is not defined and in the second it is defined. This difference is minor and makes no difference to what I say here.

udub-dhexaadkii ‘the spine and the ribcage are the central pole’. The use of *udub-dhexaad* is a reference to the central pole of the *aqal* ‘the portable hut of the nomads’; it is the central pole which supports all the other parts. Given the family dwelling metaphor, it may be being used figuratively not only with respect to the strength and stamina of a man like Raage, but to include the sense of being the support of the household. This notion may be continued in 1.5 if we take the meaning of *eeg* with *ka* as ‘guard against neglect / harm / mistreatment’.³² Previous translations have interpreted the verb *eeg* as ‘to see’ without reference to the extended meaning with the preverbal adposition *ka*. It seems, however, that the more specific interpretation of *ka eeg* fits better with the adversative in the previous line: ‘The two [eyes] one used to look out from / guard against harm’.³³ This does, however, lead to the problem of how to allow for the preverbal adposition *ka* to reflect ‘against’ and ‘from’ and I don’t pursue the matter further here. I assume the first interpretation to be correct with potential hints at the second; others may hopefully be able to shed further light on this or show it not to be a possible interpretation. Another feature of 1.5 is that it is the first in which we hear the subject pronoun ‘I’, the lyric ‘I’, in *waan* (*waa + aan*).

L.6 ends this second triplet with a line that echoes 1.3. We hear another echomimetic word *aa* (cf. *iil* of 1.3) in MP2 which is also the alliterating word in this half-line. This, though, is not presented as a noun in the way *iil* is, rather it is a more ‘raw’ representation of the sound of the lament presented as the literal sound being uttered by the lamenting lyric voice. In contrast with *iil* in 1.3 which is about to be heard by others mentioned in the poem the *aa* in 1.6 is heard directly in the poem’s present. We hear the *aa* as it is expressed by the lyric voice itself which then goes on to say that the emotions that give rise to that cry are known only to God. This is interesting when considering subjectivity in the poem. It presents the feelings expressed in the poem as directly internal to the subject since it is the lyric subject which voices the cry and there is no further mention more directly of what those feelings are. We hear the cry and recognise the anguish of the voice that made it. Even though we know the story, in the context of the poem’s present, we are said to be unaware—only God is aware—of what prompted the cry. We are, therefore, in a lyric sense, hearing the actual cry of the lament in the raw sound of *aa* which is an echo of the poem itself given that the whole poem is the cry of this lyric voice.

This is in contrast to the personal subjectivity expressed directly in the series of love poems by Cilmi Boodhari composed in the 1930s. These are generally considered to be the beginning of the expression of a personal subjectivity in which direct feelings of love can be expressed. Cilmi Boodheri, in his poems, speaks directly of his love for Hodan Cabdullaahi and also of the reactions of others to his predicament as he expresses it directly in his life, not only in his poetry. Although both poets present personal emotion, they do it in quite different ways and part of the way Raage does it (more so than Cilmi in my view) is through words which reference sound and the iconic

³² Cf. ‘hawl laguu dhiibay, ilaali oo daranyada ka dhaw’ (Aadan et al 2013: 482) also ‘halis ka ilaalin’ (Puglielli and Mansuur 2012: 280).

³³ Another possible reading might interpret the word *labadii* as referring back to *adhxada* and *oofta* in the previous line. The use of the -*ii* anaphoric defining suffix hints at this possibility. If this were accepted, then the spine and ribcage are the things with which the poet/the voice of the poem used to guard against things, but from which he is now cut off. I am not convinced of this, but mention it as an interesting possibility.

soundscape of his poem highlighted in the words *iīh* and *aa*.³⁴ Supporting this idea further there is also a parallelism in assonance between the words *Iibaax* in 1.3 and *Illāah* in 1.6 which are present in the same metrical positions (MPs 6 and 7). Both words are central to what I have just presented: the sound of the *iīh* in 1.3 is like the call of a *Iibaax* ‘lion’ and it is only God, *Illāah*, who knows what causes the *aa* in 1.6. Both words are present in the same metrical position (MPs 6 and 7) and the assonance echoes the vowels in the echomimetic words themselves: *iīh* in 1.3 and *aa* in 1.6 as well as the sequence of ‘i/ii’ and ‘a/aa’ in 1.3. These lines display a complex interplay of assonance, echomimesis, words referencing sound and subjectivity which makes a rich aesthetic experience for the listener. I return to these lines when discussing the final line also.

I have discussed these lines as grouped into triplets. Of written versions of the poem, only Axmednuur (2015) formats the poem in this way, but my analysis clearly supports the grouping of these lines in this way. Sayid Maxamed Cabdille Xasan is well known for having made poems in triplets, and on the basis of this poem by Raage, it seems that it was a feature present in even earlier poetry. Axmed (2017: 6) mentions most *gabay*s as grouping lines in two or in three and uses the first three lines of this poem as an example of the latter.

Before leaving these lines, it is worth mentioning an interesting intertextual reference in another poem which points to Raage’s poem being widely known already in the early twentieth century. The words *adhax* and *oof* are heard with *aa* all together in the third line of a poem by Yuusuf-Dheere documented in Yaasiin (1984: 84–85). The line is ‘Araxdiyo haddaan oofta midig Aa! ka lee yahaye’ ‘If I say ‘aa’ from the spine and the right-hand ribs’.³⁵ The poem is a *baroordiq*, an elegy, in the *gabay* form composed on the death of Yuusuf Cali Keenadiid (the first sultan of the Hoobyo Sultanate) which, I assume, was composed in 1911 when he died. Finding these words in a single line of a poem which expresses sadness and loss is reminiscent of Raage’s use and suggests that his poem had become widely known as a *calaacal*, a lament, in which sad feelings are expressed. The fact that all these words occur, in particular the inclusion of *aa*, is particularly striking and leads me to conclude that this is an intertextual reference which speaks to the fame of Raage and this poem.

Vocabulary, imagery and the aesthetics of the poem: ll.7–10

The following four lines in the poem are grammatically negative thus display a loose syntactic parallelism. It is interesting that we hear a group of four lines rather than three. Whether or not the whole poem did have line groups of three and that the number here is due to some changes and/or loss or addition of lines during the history of transmission of this poem I cannot say and leave the lines as they are here. It could also be the case that we have four lines as a multiple of two (see above for *gabay*s also grouping lines in two).

These lines are not as distinctive as the first six with regard to sound. The first two mention animals and actions that are natural to them which they cannot do when injured. The secretary bird cannot fly when it has an injury to its shoulder and the stallion cannot

³⁴ See Banti (1988: 58) for a brief reference to this personal subjectivity with reference to Cilmi Boodheri and Raage Ugaas. See also Woolner (2018 and 2022) for more on the expression on love, particularly in more recent love songs. See also Jamal (2014) and Abdirashid (2017) for more on subjectivity and the poetry of Cilmi Boodheri.

³⁵ It is translated by Yaasiin (1984: 84) as ‘E io piango pel dolore che mi ha fulminato i lombi e il costato’.

gallop when it has an injury to its spine.³⁶ The word *adhax* for ‘spine’ picks up the imagery in 1.4 giving a concrete metaphorical reference to the more abstract reference in the earlier line. I suggest that the repetition brings a greater emphasis to this second instance where it is the alliterating word in the second half-line of 1.8. Repetition of alliterating words so closely together in a poem might be considered weak technique. However, in the first half-line of 1.4, there are in fact two alliterating words, *adhaxda* and *ooftu*, thus the word *adhax* in that line can be considered to be an extra alliterating word and thus allows for the single alliterating *adhaxda* in the second half-line of 1.8. That is to say we do not have a single alliterating word being repeated in two half-lines. Note that in the next line, 1.9, we hear another repeat, this time of *oof*. In this line, it is the second of a pair of alliterating words *il* ‘eye’ and *oof* ‘ribcage’. In 1.4 we needed to allow *oof* to be the main alliterating word because of the repetition of *adhax*, now we see that in 1.9 it can be the extra alliterating word, given that we have *il* which can act as the main alliterating word which is not repeated nearby. The word is, though, repeated later, but in the plural, *ilo*, and in 1.16 where it has the meaning ‘springs [of water]’.³⁷ In the same half-line in 1.16, there is nevertheless another alliterating word: *arkoo* [*arkayoo*] which can then act as the main alliterating word in that half-line which is not repeated anywhere in the poem. The way repeated alliterating words are used in this poem does, I think, speak very much to the intricate way in which these systematic sound aspects of the poem are crafted and point to Raage’s great skills in making poems.

There is also one further instance of repetition of the alliterating word in ll.7 and 9 with *iin* and *iimi* respectively (*iimi* is the subject form of *iin*). However in each case the word is the only alliterating word in the second half-line. This is, therefore, a case of repeating the alliterating word close together which does seem a little incongruous and one for which the only justification I can think of is emphasis, putting weight on the wound, presented in a metaphor in 1.7 and more directly in 1.9 with the reference to it being in a man who cannot take revenge because of it.

It is to be noted that Axmednuur (2015: 64) has another line between ll.9 and 10 of this version. This is *Usha qaadan waa shaybihii, arag dareeyaaye* ‘Taking the stick is [being] the old man whose eyesight is getting weak’ which I have not seen or heard in any other version of the poem. I don’t include the line here given its absence in the other versions. It would, of course, make a triplet with ll.10 and 11.

In the next line, 1.10, we hear a direct reference to marriage, which is important given the topic of the poem. A wound is mentioned again, the word for which is *arami*. This is a wound which is not obvious on the surface and which has not properly healed and can lead to illness later. This might be read to mean that the emotional wound he feels at not marrying Cabban is one he knows he cannot show openly for fear of ridicule, but which may yet persist. Alternatively, the reading of not taking revenge might lend a sense of this being a wound which prevents a man from marrying. The reference to marriage here is expressed in an impersonal way, the poet does not explicitly mention his own situation.

³⁶ The word *aboodi* has been translated in a number of ways: Saeed (1999: 261) has ‘vulture’, Banti (1988: 36) in Italian has *grifone* ‘griffon vulture’, Maxamed (1989: 13) in French has *griffon* ‘griffon vulture’ and Andrzejewski and Andrzejewski (1993: 9) have ‘osprey’. The latter seems rather unlikely given that it is a fish-feeder (I have myself observed them on the Djibouti coast, but inland I assume them to be little known if at all). I choose to translate it as secretary bird here given that Puglielli and Mansuur (2012: 8) describe the reddish parts of the secretary bird and Aadan Xasan Aadan and et al (2013: 18) have a picture of a secretary bird with the entry for *aboodi*.

³⁷ As with the Arabic word ‘ayn, the word for ‘spring [of water]’ and ‘eye’ is the same in Somali.

Vocabulary, imagery and the aesthetics of the poem: ll.11-14

L.11 stands out somewhat as isolated, though I choose to group it with the following three lines for reasons given below. The word *olo!* that we hear in this line is the sound of the camels when they are in some distress, either because they are thirsty (as they are said to be here) or when they call out to their young which are not with them for some reason. We hear therefore yet another direct reference to a lamenting sound expressed in an onomatopoeic word which is the alliterating word in the second half-line. Although there is no expression or reference to the voice of the poem in this line, the context of the line allows it to be interpreted metaphorically to reflect the lament of the lyric voice. The isolation or abstraction from the voice of the poem expressed through the cry being that of the camels may be related to the next three lines in which we don't have any direct sense of a cry, but indirectly can imagine crying taking place.

Ll.12-14 are striking for a number of reasons. Firstly, as mentioned above, the lines constitute a clear triplet which is a single main clause with ll.12 and 13 displaying enjambement.³⁸ Enjambement is not common in the *gabay* form given the long line and, when we hear it, we experience the anticipation at the end of the lines that run on giving the poem a great movement.³⁹ Thirdly, the first line of the triplet, 1.12, begins with *sidi* ‘like’ (literally ‘the way’) which introduces a simile. Although metaphor is very common in Somali poetry, the use of simile seems to me to be less common and I sense the direct manner in which this simile is presented seems to make it stand out. Following *sidi* we hear the vehicle in the next word, *inan* ‘a girl’. This noun is qualified with *yar* ‘small, young’ and then a relative clause ‘whose mother has gone to reside in the hereafter [who has died]’. The next line, 1.13, begins with *oo* which immediately implies another relative clause and we hear one which takes up the rest of that line ‘whose father has made her go to sleep at the entrance [outside] of a hut of another’.⁴⁰ Then in 1.14 we hear *hadba* ‘again and again’ followed by *waxaan la urugoonayaa uur-ku-taallada* ‘I grieve with the sad/hurting remembrance of it’. This is highly striking. Raage Ugaas was a young man who was well known, well educated, was a leading figure in his lineage and, we might assume, was already regarded as a poet of repute. In other words, he was a *waranle* who would have been well respected and who would have been expected to behave according to the ways of men of his age and stature. Nevertheless, in the poem, using the first person pronoun in *waxaan*, the lyric voice likens himself to a young girl whose mother has died and who is living with a step-mother. Such a girl can be considered one of the most vulnerable members of the society, quite the opposite of the warrior, the *waranle*. Raage uses the two alliterating words in this third line of the triplet, *urugoonayaa* and *uurkutaallada*, to express how he feels within the comparison of himself in the simile with the young girl. The direct manner in which the simile is presented seems to make it stand out. He would not have been able to say such things in normal speech; it is only in a poem that such a sentiment could have been expressed in this way. This shows the way in which the poetic voice, the lyric ‘I’, which, though on one level is the voice of the poet, is also a voice in its own right that can express things which cannot be said in normal speech. We accept that the lyric ‘I’ can

³⁸ Although enjambement is heard in that the lines are not main clauses, the ends of ll.12 and 13 do nevertheless coincide with syntactic boundaries internal to the main clause, namely the ends of relative clauses on the head noun *inan* ‘girl’.

³⁹ See Orwin (2000) for analysis of another well-known poem in which enjambement is present.

⁴⁰ There is a relative clause within this matrix relative clause: *illin ah* ‘which is an entrance’ qualifying the head noun *meel* ‘place’.

voice something such as this striking simile when the poet himself, outside of the poem, could not.

Vocabulary, imagery and the aesthetics of the poem: ll.15-19

The rest of the poem comprises a set of lines which are syntactically parallel (see above). Although all versions share the final line, which I return to below, it is in this final part of the poem that the greatest variation is found, with some lines being present in some versions and not in others. Axmednuur (2015) has the greatest number of lines and these are given in the appendix where the version in his book is reproduced. All these lines express similar sentiments and are syntactically parallel as mentioned above. They express, more directly than previous lines, the predicament the poet found himself in when he made the poem. The lines are easily understood, although the use of *igadh* needs to be teased out a little.

The meaning of *igadh* here relates to the homophonous noun *igadh* which is used for a milk-camel which is still in milk but whose calf has either died or been slaughtered. In order to induce the mother to give milk the hide of the dead calf is placed over another calf which, since it now smells of the original calf, is allowed by the mother to suckle. This induces her to give milk and the calf is removed. Since it is still suckling from its own mother, it does not need to take much from the *igadh* camel. When it is removed, the people can then take milk from the *igadh* camel for their own consumption. In this image, Raage is like the calf who has been killed as another benefit from being married to Cabban (in the metaphor the milk camel).

In the next line, l.16, the voice in the poem sees springs of water (representing the marriage to Cabban) but remains thirsty (does not marry her). L.17 refers to the matter of taking revenge and I assume refers to Raage being admonished for what he as suggested with regard to taking revenge for the wrong (see above). The next line, l.18, is one which is not found in the school textbook Xafiiska Manaahijta (1976). This is a known issue and all who I have heard speak about it explain it by the fact that in a school textbook at that time, it was counter to the prevailing political ideas to mention clans in such contexts. The line was, therefore, left out of that version. Note that in each of these lines 15-18 the word for ‘man’ is at the beginning of the line, either defined as *ninkii* or undefined *nin*.

In l.18 we expect the same basic syntactic structure that we have heard in these previous lines, but the pattern is broken and we hear at the beginning the word *Af-dhabaandhow* ‘making someone be quiet by patting the mouth’ followed by *aayar ah* ‘gently, slowly’. As in the first three lines, the syntax here is not particularly clear. The word *af-dhabaandhow* is the action of patting one’s mouth with a view to making someone be quiet. The agent of this action, however, is not quite clear from the wording. Is it someone else or is it Raage who is doing this? Discussing this with others has not allowed me to come to any firm conclusion. What is very clear, however, is the meaning of the final words *ninkaa aammusaan ahaye* ‘I am that silent man.’ This is a stunning end to this poem. We have heard so much richness in the poem in the careful structure, in the imagery and, crucially, in the sound imagery and the very sound itself. For the lyric voice to then, in the very last words, state that he is that silent man is striking and leaves us with a strong impression. The contrast points to the fact that, despite all the sound that he has made in this lament, he is nevertheless going to remain quiet with regard to taking any revenge. It also points to the sadness which emerges from the poem

and the notion that, although he has expressed that sadness in the poem, he will remain silent ‘outside’ of the poem.

There is a final echo in these last words which is also striking. I mentioned above two key words earlier in the poem which display assonance: *libaax* and *Illaah* in ll.3 and 6 respectively which are heard in MPs 6 and 7. In the last line we hear the word *ninkaa* which also displays this pattern of vowels in the same metrical position. This word is also crucial in that it draws attention to the tension between the poet, *ninkaa*, and the lyric subject of the poem which speaks the words. The lyric subject has been far from silent and has presented one of the most memorable poetic utterances we know in Somali—or indeed in any other language. Within the poem itself, the lyric subject has expressed feelings not only through imagery, metaphor and simile, but also through the materiality of the language (*ihi*, *aa*, the assonance etc.). This has allowed the poet as subject, Raage, to express himself in a manner that makes his voice heard whilst, being ‘that man’ of the final line, remaining silent. Despite this silence at the end of the poem, we hear still the lyric subject’s voice today. We hear it each time someone gives voice to the words, or when we ourselves voice the words and even each time we silently voice the words of the poem in our own minds.

Conclusion

I hope to have shown in this article the way that sound plays a fundamental role in the poem. There is the metrical structure and the alliteration which underpin the soundscape of the poem, but it is the wonderful way in which the materiality of sound has been aesthetically crafted that contributes to making this such a memorable and striking poem. This ties in strongly with ideas of iterability, remembering, formalization and other notions relating to the use of sound in lyric poetry more widely. However, it is not only for these functional reasons that these features are present, they afford an aesthetic experience to the listener which prompts the wish to hear the poem again and again (as it does this particular listener). It is this that has made it a lasting work of art.

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Appendix

Text used here adapted from Xafiiska Manaahijta (1976: 8)

- 1 Allayl dumay albaabbadoo la xidhay uunku wada seexday
- 2 Onkod yeedhay uugaamo roob alif banaadiiq ah
- 3 Iihdayda bixi baa libaax iman la moodaaye
- 4 Ragse adhaxda iyo ooftu waa udub-dhexaadkiye
- 5 Labadii waxa laga eegi jiray waan ka awdnahaye
- 6 Halkaan ‘aa’ ka leeyahay Illaah keli ah uun baa og
- 7 Aboodigu ma lalo garab hadduu iin ku leeyahaye
- 8 Orod u ma hollado ooglihii adhaxda beelaaye
- 9 Ma aarsado il iyo oof nimay iimi kaga taalle
- 10 Aroos u ma galbado nimuu wadnaha arami jiifaaye
- 11 Geeluba kolkuu oomo waa olol badnaadaaye
- 12 Sidii inan yar oo hooyadeed aakhriro u hoyatay
- 13 Oo aabbeheed aqal mid kale meel illin ah seexshay
- 14 Hadba waxaan la urugoonayaa uur-ku-taallada e
- 15 Ninkii ooridiisii rag kale loo igdhaan ahaye

- 16 Ninkii ilo biyo leh soo arkoo ooman baan ahaye
- 17 Nin ugaas walaalkiis yahoo eeday baan ahaye
- 18 Nin abkiis Ogaadeen yahoon aarsan baan ahaye
- 19 Af-dhabaandhow aayar ah ninkaa aamusaan ahaye

Text as in Xafiiska Manaahijta (1976: 8)

- 1 Alleyl dumay, albaabadoo xidhan uunku wada seexday
- 2 Onkod yeedhay uugaamo roob alif banaadiiq ah
- 3 Iihdaydabixi baa libaax iman la moodaaye
- 4 Raggase adhaxda iyo ooftu waa udub dhexaadkiye
- 5 Labadii waxa laga eegi jirey waan ka awdnahaye
- 6 Halkaan Aa' ka leeyahay Ilaaah keliya uun baa og.
- 7 Aboodigu ma lalo garab hadduu iin ku leeyahaye
- 8 Orod uma hollado ooglihii adhaxda beelaaye
- 9 Ma aarsado il iyo oof ninkii iimi kaga taale
- 10 Aroos uma galbado nimuu wadnaha arami jiifaaye
- 11 Geeluba kolkuu oomo waa olol badnaadaaye
- 12 Sidii inan yar oo hooyadeed aakhiro u hoyatey
- 13 Oo aabaheed aqal mid kale meel illin ah seexshey
- 14 Hadba waxaan la urugoonayaa uurkutaallada eh
- 15 Ninkii oridiisii rag kale loo igdhaan ahaye
- 16 Ninka ila biyo leh soo arkoo ooman baan ahaye
- 17 Nin ugaas walaalkiis yahoo eeday baan ahaye
- 19 Afdhabaandhow aayar ninkaa aamusaan ahaye

Text in Axmednuur (2015: 64–65) with translations of the lines not present in the version used here

- 1 Allayl dumay albaabadoo la xidhay, unkoo wada seexday
- 2 Unkad yeedhay uugaama roob, alif banaadiikh ah
- 3 Iihdayda bixi baa libaax, iman la moodaaye
- 4 Raggase adhaxda iyo ooftu waa, udub dhexaad kiiye
- 5 Labadii wax laga eegi jiray, waan ka awdnahaye
- 6 Halkaan aa ka leeyahay Ilaaah, kaliya uun baa og
- 7 Aboodigu ma lalo garab hadduu, iin ku leeyahaye
- 8 Orad uma holado ooglihii, adhaxda beelaaye
- 9 Ma aarsado il iyo oof nimay, iimi kaga taale
- 10 Usha qaadan waa shaybihii, arag dareeyaaye (see text for translation)
- 11 Aroos uma galbado nimuu wadnaha, arami jiifaaye
- 12 Geeluba markuu oomo wuu, olol badnaadaaye
- 13 Sidii inan yar oo hooyadeed, aakhirow hooyatay
- 14 Oo aabeheed aqal midkale, meel illina seexshay
- 15 Hadba waxaan la urugoonayaa, uur ku taalada e
- 16 Nin abkii Ogaadeen yahoo, aarsan baan ahaye
- 17 Ninka ilo biyaleh soo maree, ooman baan ahaye

18 Ninka ayradiisii ku kale, loo eryaan ahaye

‘I am the man whose best milk camel has been chased away to the other’

19 Ninka ooridiisii rag kale, loo igdhaan ahaye

20 Taladii adoogii ninkaa, eeday baan ahaye

‘I am that man who regretted/blamed the advice of the forefathers’

21 Ninka ila-xidhkiisii mid kale, eegay baan ahaye

‘I am the man whose curtain in the *aqal* another has looked at’

22 Af-dhabaandow aayara ninkaa, aamusaan ahaye

Saho Corpus: Semi-automation of Verb Conjugation in Saho: Verbs Class I

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ABSTRACT

This article develops a semi-automatic morphological analysis module (*SaCoFlexor*) to generate all inflection forms of the 585 verbs in class 1 (C-I) in the Saho language registered in the current Saho Corpus as a basic data dictionary and presents the results. *SaCoFlexor* correctly identified 98.8% of the items present in the corpus and classified them in 4 major subcategories according to the initial phonemes of the word, with the correct generation of their inflectional morphology forms generating 13,455 new words, tagged, and linked to their respective roots. The output data increased the number of words in the Saho Corpus and improved performances of the computational linguistics functions, including word frequency generation, word identification mechanism, concordance, collocations, and spell checking.

Keywords: *Saho Language, Saho Corpus, Parts-of-speech Tagging, NLP*

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1. Introduction

Saho is an East Cushitic language spoken mainly in two regions of Eritrea, in the Southern and the Northern Red Sea regions; and in the north-eastern Tigray (Ethiopia). Saho is linguistically closer to Afar language, and it is estimated that 5% of Eritreans speak Saho (Redie Bereketeab, 2010). It can be considered one of the well-described languages since a systematic scientific study of the language began in the second half of the nineteenth century with the works of Leo Reinisch in 1878 that described the Northern Saho and printed a collection of texts and a Saho (mainly Central) - German dictionary (see Reinisch, 1877, 1878a, 1878b, 1889, 1890). Prior to him, European travellers who had access to the region also documented the language with a collection of word lists published, for example, in Salt (1814) and D'Abbadie (1843) who wrote basic grammatical notes. Apart from that initial description, and because the language did not get an official orthography until recently, it remained basically spoken and had no written literature. Despite this oral prevalence, Saho in written form has been practiced since 1814 in *ad hoc* alphabets (i.e., Latin (Salt, 1841), Ge'z (Reinisch, 1878a)) and Arabic scriptures²), but in 1983 the Saho alphabet was officially introduced in Sahil (Eritrea) (see more on the introduction of the official alphabet Tekle Abraha, 2005; Chefena Hailemariam, 2002; and Ghirmay Negash 1999), and it was chosen a modified

¹ The author is grateful to Ahmedsaad M Omar [Axmadsacad M. Cumar] for constant support in understanding the Saho language and its grammar, as well as providing accurate corrections whenever conflicting output arrives for a specific verb conjugation calculated by the method developed by this paper. So as to Moreno Vergari and Professor Giorgio Banti.

² According to [Axmadsacad M. Cumar, Banti and Vergari, 2014], “It is not known when the Ajami Saho writing tradition began, because all the identified witnesses are not earlier than the last century.” The oldest known Ajami script in Saho must be the work of Ibrâhîm al-Mukhtâr (1909-1969).

Latin alphabet with minor adaptation, with the first Saho books published in 1985³. This official orthography has 36 signs, 9 of them being digraphs, and has both long and short vowels. The Saho language has been introduced into the Eritrean national curriculum as the medium of instruction language for elementary schools in Saho-speaking regions of Eritrea after the war for dependence in 1991, with the publication of school textbooks for Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, Life Skills, and Saho Language starting 1997⁴ (See Ministry of Education 2011, 2015, 2016). Different scholars described and studied the language's grammar and morphology (Ahmedsaad Mohammad Omer, Giorgio Banti, Richard Hayward, Ibrahim Mohammed Ali, Marcello Lamberti, Didier Morin, Esayas Tajebe, Moreno Vergari, Roberta Vergari, William Evert Welmers, Andrzej Zaborski, Herma Plazikowsky and Ewald Wargner, Francis Mahaffy, and others). In Banti and Vergari, 2005, where the phonology and morphology of the language have been described, the Saho verbs have been classified into four classes based on the rich inflectional system of the Saho language. The first class (C-I) are verbs with both prefix and suffix in their inflectional system. The second class (C-II) are the verbs with only suffixes in their inflectional system. The third class (C-III) are the stative verbs that indicate states and conditions. The last class (C-IV) are the compound verbs. This paper aims to limit the discussion on the first class C-I. See Banti and Vergari, 2005 & 2023 (forthcoming) for further details on the classification of the verbs and for a basic grammar of the Saho.

Saho Corpus (SaCo) is an electronic corpus of Saho language and literature that is growing fast and today contains over 250,000 tagged and classified words. The Corpus has been initiated by the author of this paper and hosted by the Hargeysa Cultural Centre⁵. With the support of linguists already working on Saho language, and the Saho-speaking community worldwide. The corpus is rapidly being populated regularly⁶. The technical structure of the corpus is derived from the online Somali Corpus (SC) (Jama Musse Jama, 2016) and it comprises a base data of 4,650 root words, with 1,201 verbs in four classes (C-I, C-II, C-III, and C-IV); 2,787 nouns; 69 particles; 39 pronouns; and other in minor numbers of parts of speech (Jama Musse Jama, 2023). Most of these entries and their classifications in Parts of Speech are coming from (Vergari and Vergari, 2003 (revised ed 2007)), but also additional root words come from other sources, including the Eritrean school curriculum textbooks (Ministry of Education, 2011, 2015, 2016), legal documents (i.e., Eritrea Constitution), other publications (collection of poetry and prose short texts), as well as social media posts, articles, and comments. The basic computational linguistics and Natural Language Processing (NLP) functionalities have been developed, and the corpus system has now *Search&Retreival*, synonym finding, word frequency lists, collocations, and concordances functions, as well as online basic spelling checker and Saho-English, Saho-Italian bilingual dictionaries. The Saho Corpus is accessible with a user interface in three languages (Saho, Somali, English) via

³ The first books published were Grade 1 of Language, Science, and Mathematics [source Ministry of Education, Eritrea].

⁴ After the first schoolbooks used during the struggle, the first new Saho schoolbooks have been published from 1997; the so-called new curriculum schoolbooks from 2004.

⁵ Hargeysa Cultural Centre is a cultural hub established in 2014 in Hargeysa, Somaliland, and focusing among others research related to tangible and intangible heritage preservation.

⁶ Saho Corpus was designed and directed by Jama Musse Jama (Redsea Cultural Foundation), author of the Somali Corpus Project (www.somalicorpus.com), with the collaboration of Ahmedsaad Mohammed Omer (Saahot Makaado, Ethnorêma); Giorgio Banti (University of Naples "L'Orientale", Ethnorêma), and Moreno Vergari (Ethnorêma).

www.somalicorpus.com/saho (see Jama Musse Jama, 2023, for how to use the corpus). The Corpus also contributes to East Cushitic Languages General Corpus, where the focus is on Omo-Tana Family, but the collection of data is extended to the East Cushitic Languages too (see Tirsit Yetbarek and Jama Musse Jama, 2022).

The verbs in class C-I, as said, are verbs with both prefixes and suffixes in their conjugation, and in the current corpus base data, they constitute 585 entries, over 10% of the total root words. The aim of this paper is to subclassify the C-I class and find common stem generation methods for each identified subclassification and generate automatic algorithms for flexing verbs, to allow the parser of the Saho Corpus to recognize both the root words and flexed forms of the C-I verbs. To attain this target, we developed an automatic flexor module (*SaCoFlexor V.1.0*) which combines rule-based algorithms for most of the classes, and hard-coded conditions for some irregular verbs for each class identified.

Verbs are listed in the corpus in their perfect form of the first person singular as “[t]his form has been chosen as citation form because it is closer to the bare verbal stem and is easily recognized.” (Banti and Vergari, 2005). C-I verbs in Saho are alliterated to the vowel *Aleph* (i.e., all verbs start with vowels: *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, *ee*, *oo*). In the listed items there are no C-I verbs that start with the vowel *a* or with the long vowels *aa*, *ii* and *uu*). All the listed forms of the C-I verbs end with *e*. These tone characteristics help the application to categorize the listed verbs.

The verb *e* [to say] of which conjugations are built on the stems IMPE = *a*, SUBJV = *o*, and IMPV = *ee* is an abbreviation (spoken language) of the verb *erhxe*. Therefore, the corpus does not generate the conjugations of the verb *e* but instead, it links to *erhxe* inflectional rules.

The rest 584 verbs of the C-I class are divided into 4 major subcategories according to their initial phoneme: verbs starting with /e/, /i/, /o/ and /u/. Each subcategory will have its own internal subclassification, for instance, differentiating the long vowel /ee/ from /e/, and the long vowel /oo/ from /o/. There are no C-I verbs in the data so far collected, starting with the long vowel /ii/ or /uu⁷. Each subclassification may have a group of verbs that does not follow the generic rule of the inflectional system of their subcategory, for instance, verbs starting with /i/ but ending with /ye/ need to be treated separately as they differ from others of the same subcategory in the Subjunctive and Imperative conjugations (see paragraph 3.1.1 for more details). Similar cases when the C-I verbs start with /u/ and end with /we/, then they need to be treated separately as they differ from others of the same subcategory in the Subjunctive and Imperative conjugations (see paragraph 3.4.1 for more details).

2. Methodology

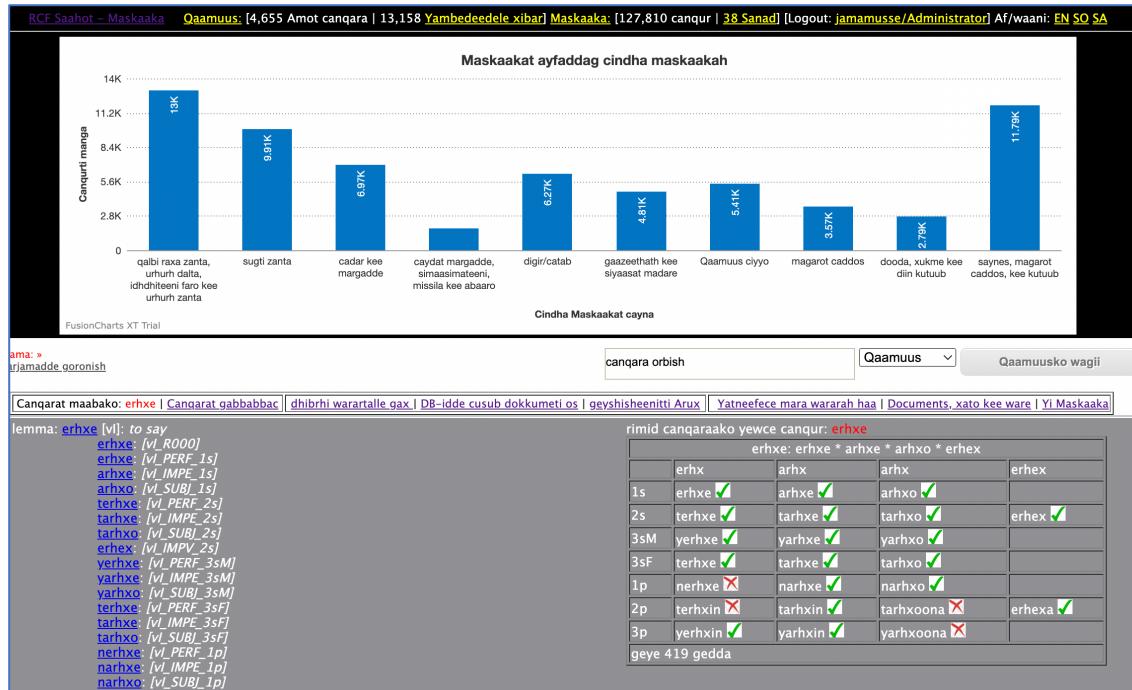
Apart from the perfect form of the C-I verb, the structure of SaCo database contains other three fields which construct the imperfect, subjunctive, and imperative forms for the 1st person singular of the verb respectively [Jama Musse Jama, 2023]. The contents for these fields have been collected from different sources, initially mainly from Vergari & Vergari, 2007(r), and have been extended by including resources on morphology for

⁷ The current Saho Corpus database might not be exhaustive enough to confirm the absolute non-existence of such verbs. We have some (rare) Saho words starting with uu- (like *uuna*, variant of *unnay* ‘be wet’). We have to remember that Esayas’ grammar is only about Irob (South Saho).

those verbs that are not found from (Vergari & Vergari, 2003)⁸. *SaCoFlexor* is an automatic process of SaCo that learns from the corpus the basic behaviour of similar verbs in morphology. Its methods, whether hard-coded grammatical and morphological rules, or statistically calculated from the corpus, have been progressively developed, and with each execution time, the process 'learning' from the previous scan of the corpus. In this way, for each class of verbs, a dedicated function is written, which calculates the four stems that generate the complete inflection forms of the verb in imperfect, subjunctive, and imperative form for 1st-person, 2nd-person and 3rd-person, singular, and plural form. If the imperfect, subjunctive and imperative forms generated by the module coincide with their respective fields, the verb is declared regular in that class. Otherwise, it is listed as 'irregular', and requires a specific hard-coded programming script to generate the inflection forms. For instance, given as input the verb *eebexe* [to sell], the application *SaCoFlexor* produces the stems *eebex*, *aabix*, *aabax*, *ibix*, and the perfect, imperfect, subjunctive and imperative form generated from these base stems are *eebexe* [perfect form: *I sold*], *aabixe* [imperfect form: *I sell*], *aabaxo* [subjunctive form: *to sell*], *ibix* [imperative form: *sell*], which coincides with the values stored in the database, therefore *eebexe* is the regular form in this class of C-I verbs. Once declared a verb being regular, the *SaCoFlexor* application produces all inflection forms of the verb, for the case of *eebexe*, which produces the words: *eebexe*, *teebexe*, *yeebexe*, *neebexe*, *teebexin*, *yeebexin*, *aabix*, *taabixe*, *yaabixe*, *naabixe*, *taabixin*, *yaabixin*, *aabaxo*, *taabaxo*, *yaabaxo*, *naabaxo*, *yaabaxoona*, *ibix*, *ibixa*, *aabixii*.

The second step looks through the forms of inflection generated by the procedure on the corpus and so builds the word frequency usage for each flexed form, which gives us a confirmation if the procedures used to produce have been confirmed by the broader typology of different writings by the different authors. This second step is not interested in the correctness of the generated flexed form. However, if none of the inflection forms are used in the corpus, further research is needed to be done for the specific verb. Vice versa, if almost all flexed forms are used in different context and different documents in the corpus, this is proven that the *SaCoFlexor* is correct in producing the right inflection forms. See below the example for *erhxe* [to see]:

⁸ With the automatic calculation and counterchecking with the dictionary [Vergari & Vergari, 2007(r)], a small number of spelling errors and misplacement in the dictionary has been noted and corrected. See paragraph 4.1.

Figure 1: Screenshot of the output of the *SaCoFlexor* for the verb *erxhe* [to say].

On the left-side of the output, the tree-like structure shows the derivation form of the lemma *erhxe* of the class *VI* (in this case *VI* == C-I verbs), the meaning of the lemma in English (this case = “to say”), and each flexed form generated correctly by the *SaCoFlexor* as well as the rule for which it was generated (i.e. *yarthxe* : [VI_IMPE_3sM] = class *VI*, Imperfect form of the 3rd person singular masculine conjugation). On the right-side table, again all generated forms are listed and their verification whether it has been used in the corpus or not. A green tick sign means that at least one time is used this flexed form in the corpus. A red cross does not mean the generated form is incorrect, but it means until now, no one used this form in the corpus. In this case the four flexed forms *nerhx*, *terhxin*, *tarhxoona*, *yarthxoona* have not been used yet in the corpus when the query has been done.

Out of the 585 C-I verbs listed in the *SaCo*, the *SaCoFlexor* correctly produced all inflection forms for 578 verbs which is almost 99% of the base words of this verb class. In so, the module produced automatically new 12,870 correctly spelled words, tagged them for their parts of speech, and connected them to their respective root words. All modules of the *SaCo* (i.e. Word recognition, lemmatization, concordance generation, collocation identifier, as well as search & retrieve modules) will use these semi-automatically generated words and their relations to their respective root words (see Jama Musse Jama, 2023).

For example, the word *eerhege* [to know, to be familiar with], it is not found in the corpus as such, but it is present in the dictionary with all its inflectional morphology entries produced by *SaCoFlexor*. Therefore, if you search from the corpus the word *eerhege*, you will find all inflected forms of the word in the concordance two boxes as shown below.

Masarrat kin canqarahi yenkeleelebe xibar eerhege			
<i>amot-caqara: eerhege (vl)</i>			
rimid canqaraako yewce canqur eerhege (vl) [malammih ab]: <i>eerhege eerhege teerhege yeerhege neerhege teerhegin yeerhegin aarhige taarhige yaarhige naarhige taarhigin yaarhigo aarhago taarhago yaarhago naarhago taarhagoona yaarhagoona irhig aarhigii [remove them all]</i>			
<i>amot-canqarahi agleko yimfillice xibar eerhege</i> <i>amot canqarahi aglel migeytiminna (eerhege)</i>			

Figure 2: Screenshot from the SahoCorpus showing the current relations between the root word eerhege and its conjugations.

canqurti hoor: amot-canqarahi nafaaca eerhege			
canqurti hoor amot-caqara: <i>eerhege</i> (vl)			
TIR	<i>Yoo mece mablo kinniki</i>	taarhige	<i>mara teellemko akah deecim aken.</i>
TIR		Taarhige	<i>maassene hidoo angar cedar uktub.</i>
TIR		Aarhago	<i>aththawwaro</i>
TIR	<i>madrasah yedeyinii sinni cindhamhi gondo</i>	yaarhagoona	<i>eltane.</i>
TIR	<i>tane Kaa xifzeh ayim abneh</i>	naarhige	
TIR	<i>Carkobkobayi tibleh</i>	taarhige	
TIR		Taarhige	<i>dalta ko wuli tiya tuktubeh fasleh</i>
TIR	<i>Xawaz xagarahi zacabah ayim</i>	naarhige	
TIR		Taarhige	<i>mece zantatko tiya uktub.</i>
TIR	<i>Jawaab tuktubeh</i>	taarhige	<i>Aymih</i>
TIR	<i>Bacshaara cadaaga geyo kee cadaaga</i>	yaarhago	<i>darasatti irhga geyo kee irhgo akah</i>
TIR		Yeerhegin	<i>zantat/qisas kataaba kee afah yashraxoona dhiican.</i>
TIR	<i>yexeesabe sixde yifhimiini Yifhimiini aaginah</i>	naarhago	<i>dhicna</i>
TIR	<i>Thiliyaan istimaarko</i>	taarhige	<i>zanta taariikh uktub.</i>
TIR	<i>Ishiwakalille</i>	taarhige	<i>baheyimhi zacabah faqhara.</i>
TIR	<i>ayidhdha yiksibem kee ayidhdha yikhsirem</i>	yaarhige.	
TIR	<i>ayidhdha yiksibem kee ayidha yikksirem</i>	yaarhago	<i>ciloh max-yeenimhi ishi nashaatha yaktube.</i>
TIR	<i>kee nifh yamxaarab mirhiicam adde</i>	yeerhege	<i>waqte kinni.</i>
TIR	<i>Cafur cafur aseena</i>	yaarhige.	
TIR	<i>kee yamudhdhe gedda le xuquhuqh</i>	yaarhige	
TIR	<i>dhawrhodde asheereki fadhdhitimta zuruuf</i>	yaarhago	<i>waajib leya.</i>
FB	<i>tardawo waqte kok beyto kinam</i>	irhig.	<i>Ayeh Mango dhaacimtok lakalle akah abte</i>
FB	<i>Atu</i>	taarhige	<i>xiyawti yi nangalo kinni</i>
TIR	<i>Muluu xisbabti cayna barhisheenih</i>	yaarhagoona	<i>kee xaajuj araxah yashraxoona alle yatnaafacoona</i>
TIR	<i>Yaqhriyeti</i>	yaarhige	
TIR	<i>kee masarrat kin qawaacidiit nizaam</i>	yaarhagoona	<i>kinon.</i>
poe	<i>Anu</i>	aarhige	<i>sheethan labcaadeya yoh yashshe labcaade waye</i>
TIR	<i>abittot kee taarikh lel lemille</i>	yaarhagoona	<i>kee sittiya esseroona caashir geyan.</i>
TIR	<i>ta margadi aamiizan luuk yinem</i>	naarhige.	
TIR	<i>moxaarii abbubuh tine xiyawko garo</i>	yeerhegin	<i>gedda lel cadaaren yan.</i>

Figure 3: Screenshot from the SahoCorpus showing the concordance list of the root word.

3. Classification of C-I verbs in subcategories

3.1 Subcategory 1: verbs starting with vowel *i*.

In the current Saho Corpus data dictionary, there are no C-I verbs starting with long vowel /ii/⁹, and we have 276 verbs in this subcategory, all of them following one generic rule with a minor exception of the 25 verbs ending with “ye”(indicated below with *) and one verb with less than 3 phonemes (indicated below with **). These have a slight

⁹ see note 7

variation of inflectional system to generate the stems for Subjunctive and Imperative conjugations (see paragraph 3.1.1 and 3.1.2).

i-iwwije, ibbirhe, ibhige, ibiddile, ibissire, ibittine, ibkhile, ibrhiye, ibrike, icbide, icdire, icikkine, icimmize, icizzibe, icizzime, iclishe, icrhiye*, ictite, idbile, iddirire, ifdibe, ifdiye*, ifhime, ifiddine, ifinfine, ifittishe, ifqire, ifride, ifrime, ifrixe, ifriye*, iftixe, igdife, igdile, iggidile, igizzire, igrive, igrice, igziye*, ihjime, ikbire, ikfile, ikhzine, ikkitiye*, iklibe, iklithe, ikmile, ikshife, iksibe, iksise, ikxine, ilike, ilillige, ilimmitse, iliqhliqhe, illikkixe, imbiddile, imbissire, imbittine, imcikkine, imcizzibe, imcizzime, imfice, imfiddige, imfiddine, imfilliye*, imfiride, imfittishe, imfittixe, imfiye*, imibbixe, imirrishe, imishshithe, imjillide, imjinnine, imlike, imlillige, immicimmize, immillike, immingide, immirixe, immissile, imniccibe, imniffiye*, imnitstsige, imsiccire, imsinniqhe, imthinqiqhe, imtikkile, imtixine, imtsiqqithe, imwiddixe, imwirrishe, imxibbishe, imxillike, imxinkishe, imzikkire, incibe, indhibbirhe, indhibbishe, indhiggile, indibile, indime, ine**, ingiddife, ingide, inkillibe, inkillithe, inkissise, inqirrabe, inqishshishe, inqissibe, inqitscise, inqiyide, inqiyire, insire, insixe, inthirrife, intsize, intsqhe, inzibbite, iqhdibe, iqhirrire, iqkishshishe, iqhiyyide, iqhliye*, iqhriye*, iqhtsice, irgide, irhibbishe, irhiggile, irhxine, irkibe, irqiqhe, isbire, iscibide, iscilishe, iscillime, iscimire, iscire, iscirhiye*, isfire, isgidife, isgigice, isgiribe, ishhide, ishiqqithe, ishrixe, ishshibixe, ishshimine, isiile, isimmire, isirrite, iskibire, iskifile, iskilithe, iskimile, iskire, iskisibe, iskitiye*, iskixine, iskiyyide, islixe, isnibe, isniqhe, isqidibe, isqiliye*, isqiriye*, isqirrabe, isqithe, isqiyyire, isriye*, issifiddige, issilliye*, issiximmide, isticmire, istilime, istintine, istishhide, isxibbire, isxibire, isxibishe, isxinkishe, isxiqhqhe, isxiriqhe, isxizine, itbirrige, itcibbire, itcibe, itcijjibe, itcillime, ithbice, ithhire, ithimmite, ithinqiqhe, ithirrife, ithlime, ithmice, ithrice, iththiwwire, itkibbire, itkile, itrare, itsqitscise, itsriye*, itsstsibbire, itsxiye*, itticikkine, ittiminniye*, itxirrike, iwilwile, iwrish, ixbir, ixbishe, ixfile, ixgide, ixgire, ixkishe, ixlike, ixqiqhe, ixriqhe, ixtime, ixzine, iybiddile, iybirike, iybirkite, iydirire, iyfiddige, iyfiddine, iyfidibe, iyfidiye*, iyfiliye*, iyfiride, iyfirime, iyfiriye*, iyfissire, iyfitixe, iyjillide, iyjinnine, iylikkixe, iylllige, iymingide, iymirixe, iymissile, iyniddife, iynifice, iynisire, iyrhibbishe, iyrhibbirhe, iyshidhdhige, iyshihide, iysihile, iysikire, iysilliye*, iysimmire, iysixixe, iythihire, iythimmite, iythirrife, iythiwwire, iyticide, iytikile, iytirire, iytiriye*, iywiddixe, iyzikkire, iyzihire, izbit, izikkire, iziwwire, izzikkire.*

For the generic rule of this subcategory, we use as an example the verb *ibbirhe* [to hold, to keep, to arrest, to catch] for which the *SaCoFlexor* module generates the four stems *ibbirh*, *abbirh*, *abbarh* and *ibbirh* from which it generates the following flexed forms [note the same stem for both Perfect and Imperfect forms, *ibbirh*].

Table 1: generic rule for C-I verbs starting /e/.

Formula	Flexed form	Rule Id	Conjugation
i-irhe	ibbirhe	PERFEC-1s	PERFECT 1st person singular
ti-irhe	tibbirhe	PERFEC-2s	PERFECT 2nd person singular
yi-irhe	yibbirhe	PERFEC-3sM	PERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
ti-irhe	tibbirhe	PERFEC-3sF	PERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
ni-irhe	nibbirhe	PERFEC-1p	PERFECT 1st person plural
ti-irhin	tibbirhin	PERFEC-2p	PERFECT 2nd person plural
yi-irhin	yibbirhin	PERFEC-3p	PERFECT 3rd person plural

a-irhe	abbirhe	IMPERF-1s	IMPERFECT 1st person singular
ta-irhe	tabbirhe	IMPERF-2s	IMPERFECT 2nd person singular
ya-irhe	yabbirhe	IMPERF-3sM	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
ta-irhe	tabbirhe	IMPERF-3sF	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
na-irhe	nabbirhe	IMPERF-1p	IMPERFECT 1st person plural
ta-irhin	tabbirhin	IMPERF-2p	IMPERFECT 2nd person plural
ya-irhin	yabbirhin	IMPERF-3p	IMPERFECT 3rd person plural
a-arho	abbarho	SUBJUN-1s	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person singular
ta-arho	tabbarho	SUBJUN-2s	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person singular
ya-arho	yabbarho	SUBJUN-3sM	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular masculine
ta-arho	tabbarho	SUBJUN-3sF	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular feminine
na-arho	nabbarho	SUBJUN-1p	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person plural
ta-arhoona	tabbarhoona	SUBJUN-2p	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person plural
ya-arhoona	yabbarhoona	SUBJUN-3p	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person plural
i-irh	ibbirh	IMPERA-2s	IMPERATIVE 2nd person singular
i-irha	ibbirha	IMPERA-2p	IMPERATIVE 2nd person plural

3.1.1 C-I Verbs starting with /i/ and ending with /ye/

The 25 verbs of this subcategory that ends with “ye” modify the above-mentioned generic rule in their Subjunctive and Imperative forms. We use as an example the verb *iyfiliye* [to separate, to divide]. The *SaCoFlexor* module generates the four stems *iyfiliy*, *iyfiliy*, *ayfalaw*, and *iyfili*, where the Perfect and Imperfect conjugations follow the generic rule expressed Table 1, while the Subjective substitutes the final /o/ with ‘aw’ and the Imperative ends with /ii/ instead of the final phoneme of the generic rule (i.e., /ii/ [*iyfilii*] instead of /rh/ [*ibbirh*]). The flexed forms in this case are:

Table 1.1: Additional rules for C-I Verbs starting with /i/ and ending with /ye/

Formula	Flexed form	Rule	Conjugation
a-alaw	ayfalaw	SUBJUN-1s	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person singular
ta-alaw	tayfalaw	SUBJUN-2s	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person singular
ya-alaw	yayfalaw	SUBJUN-3sM	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular masculine
ta-alaw	tayfalaw	SUBJUN-3sF	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular feminine
na-alaw	nayfalaw	SUBJUN-1p	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person plural
ta-alawoona	tayfalawoona	SUBJUN-2p	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person plural
ya-alawoona	yayfalawoona	SUBJUN-3p	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person plural
i-ii	iyfili	IMPERA-2s	IMPERATIVE 2nd person singular
i-ii-ya	iyfiliya	IMPERA-2p	IMPERATIVE 2nd person plural

3.1.2 C-I Verbs starting with /i/ and having less than 3 phonemes

If the verb has only 2 phonemes, the Subjunctive and Imperative conjugations change, and in the case of *ine* [to be (present), to exist, to survive], they become *annaw* and *ennaa* respectively. This subcategory has only the verb *ine* with two phonemes.

Table 1.2: Additional rules for C-I Verbs starting with /i/ having less than 3 phonemes [verb ine]

Formula	Flexed form	Rule	Conjugation
a-naw	annaw	SUBJUN-1s	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person singular
ta-naw	tannaw	SUBJUN-2s	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person singular
ya-naw	yannaw	SUBJUN-3sM	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular masculine
ta-naw	tannaw	SUBJUN-3sF	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular feminine
na-naw	nannaw	SUBJUN-1p	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person plural
ta-nawoona	nannawoona	SUBJUN-2p	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person plural
ya-nawoona	yannawoona	SUBJUN-3p	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person plural
e-aa	ennaas	IMPERA-2s	IMPERATIVE 2nd person singular
e-aay	ennaay	IMPERA-2p	IMPERATIVE 2nd person plural

3.2 Subcategory 2: C-I verbs starting with the vowel *u*.

In the current Saho Corpus data dictionary, there are no C-I verbs starting with long vowel /uu/¹⁰, and we have 129 verbs in this subcategory and all of them follow one generic rule with a minor exception of the 12 verbs ending with “we”, 3 verbs with the same root (*uluuse* [to knead, to mix], *ulluuse*, and *umluuse*) that has the long vowel /uu/ in their second phoneme, and one verb (*uble* [to see]) with less than three phonemes. These have a slight variation of inflectional system to generate the stems for Subjunctive and Imperative conjugations (see paragraph 3.2.1, 3.2.2, and 3.2.3).

ubbuxute, uble, ucbude, uckure, ucluwe, ucrufe, ucundhuwe, ucussube, udhdhurhe, udluse, udruse, udumdume, uffutute, ufkune, ugshuwe, ujuure, ukhdume, ukhluqhe, uktube, ukummuse, ukunkune, ukuskuse, ukuxdude, ukuxkuxe, ulluuse, uluuse, umbulluwe, umcube, umcuge, umcure, umfukune, umluuse, umrure, umsuluge, umuccuge, umudhdhuwe, umuggure, umundhuce, umuqouce, umurrufe, umuttuke, umxufuse, umxukume, umxurruse, undhue, undufule, unkulluqhe, unkuttube, unkuxkuxe, unqule, unqullufe, unquse, unqutstsuwe, unshurufe, unsuffure, unsulkune, unsummuqhe, untufurhe, untullule, unturjume, uqhlufe, uqhruse, uqqususe, urhuwe, urhxurhe, urkute, urxude, uscrufe, usculuwe, uscundhuwe, uscussube, usfire, ushshucube, ushshucuge, ushshukume, ushshurufe, ushshutuke, ushtuqhule, uskhudume, uskute, uskutube, uskuxdude, usluge, usmundhuce, usmuqhe, usquruse, ussubulluwe, ussucurrufe, ussufukkune, ussukute, ussumurrure, ussuxuttute, usulkune, usxukume, usxurtume, usxuruse, utlule, utsmuqhe, uttukuttube, uttuxuffuse, uttuxurruse, uturjume, uxfuse, uxkume, uxmude, uxmuge, uxruse, uxturne, uxulkuse, uxullufe, uxurtume, uybulluwe, uybxute, uydumdume, uyduruse, uykune, uytutute, uymurure, uynuqhule, uynuqhuse, uyshuqhule, uysuluge, uysulkune, uysussule, uytufurhe, uyturjume, uyzuure, uzuure.

Let us take as an example *udruse* [to learn] for the general rule of this subcategory: *SaCoFlexor* generates the four stems *udrus*, *adrus*, *adras*, *udrus*, respectively for Perfect, Imperfect, Subjunctive and Imperative forms, from which it generates the following conjugations.

¹⁰ see note 7

Table 2: Generic rule for C-I verbs starting with the vowel /u/.

Formula	Flexed form	Rule Id	Conjugation
u-use	udruse	PERFEC-1s	PERFECT 1st person singular
tu-use	tudruse	PERFEC-2s	PERFECT 2nd person singular
yu-use	yudruse	PERFEC-3sM	PERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
tu-use	tudruse	PERFEC-3sF	PERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
nu-use	nudruse	PERFEC-1p	PERFECT 1st person plural
tu-usin	tudrusin	PERFEC-2p	PERFECT 2nd person plural
yu-usin	yudrusin	PERFEC-3p	PERFECT 3rd person plural
a-use	adruse	IMPERF-1s	IMPERFECT 1st person singular
ta-use	tadruse	IMPERF-2s	IMPERFECT 2nd person singular
ya-use	yadruse	IMPERF-3sM	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
ta-use	tadruse	IMPERF-3sF	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
na-use	nadruse	IMPERF-1p	IMPERFECT 1st person plural
ta-usin	tadrusin	IMPERF-2p	IMPERFECT 2nd person plural
ya-usin	yadrusin	IMPERF-3p	IMPERFECT 3rd person plural
a-aso	adraso	SUBJUN-1s	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person singular
ta-aso	tadraso	SUBJUN-2s	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person singular
ya-aso	yadraso	SUBJUN-3sM	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular masculine
ta-aso	tadraso	SUBJUN-3sF	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular feminine
na-aso	nadraso	SUBJUN-1p	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person plural
ta-asoona	tadrasoona	SUBJUN-2p	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person plural
ya-asoona	yadrasoona	SUBJUN-3p	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person plural
u-us	udrus	IMPERA-2s	IMPERATIVE 2nd person singular
u-usa	udrusa	IMPERA-2p	IMPERATIVE 2nd person plural

3.2.1 C-I Verbs starting with /u/ and ending with /we/

The 12 verbs of this subcategory that ends with “we” modify the above-mentioned generic rule in their Subjunctive and Imperative forms. The verbs are *ucluwe*, *ucundhuwe*, *ugshuwe*, *umbulluwe*, *umudhdhuwe*, *unqutstuwe*, *urhuwe*, *usculuwe*, *uscundhuwe*, *ussubulluwe*, *utsmuqhe*, *uybulluwe*. We use as example the verb *ucluwe* [to escape, to flee, to run away]. The *SaCoFlexor* module generates the four stems *ucluw*, *acluw*, *aclaw*, and *ucluu*, where the Perfect and Imperfect conjugations follow the generic rule [see Table 2], while the Subjunctive substitutes the final /o/ with 'aw' and the Imperative ends with *uu* instead of the final phoneme of the generic rule (i.e., /uu/ [ucluu] for *ucluwe* instead of /r/ [uckur] for *uckure*). The flexed forms in this case are:

Table 2.1: exception rule for C-I verbs starting with the vowel /u/ and ending with “we”

Formula	Flexed form	Rule Id	Conjugation
a-aso	aclaw	SUBJUN-1s	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person singular
ta-aso	taclawo	SUBJUN-2s	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person singular
ya-aso	yaclawo	SUBJUN-3sM	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular masculine
ta-aso	taclawo	SUBJUN-3sF	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular feminine
na-aso	naclawo	SUBJUN-1p	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person plural
ta-asoona	taclawoona	SUBJUN-2p	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person plural
ya-asoona	yaclawoona	SUBJUN-3p	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person plural
u-uu	ucluu	IMPERA-2s	IMPERATIVE 2nd person singular
u-uuya	ucluuya	IMPERA-2p	IMPERATIVE 2nd person plural

3.2.2 C-I Verbs starting with /u/ with the presence of long vowel /uu/ in the second phoneme

The following three cases (*umluuse* [passive form of *uluuse* = to knead, to mix], *uluuse* [to knead, to mix], and *ulluuse* [middle of *uluuse*]) need specific adjustment where the Imperative form is abridged into short vowel (i.e., *umlus* instead of the predicted *umluus*, *ulus* instead of *uluus*; and *ullus* instead of *ulluus*). The rest of the conjugations follow the generic rule for this subcategory (see Table 2). The example we use here is the verb *uluuse*.

Table 2.2: Exception rule for C-I verbs starting with /u/ and have long vowel /uu/ in the second phoneme

Formula	Flexed form	Rule Id	Conjugation
u-us	ulus	IMPERA-2s	IMPERATIVE 2nd person singular
u-usa	ulusa	IMPERA-2p	IMPERATIVE 2nd person plural

Further data collected from Saho speaking still confirms the correct version should be following the generic rule, meaning Imperative form of these verbs should be *umluus*, *uluus*, and *ulluus*¹¹.

3.2.3 C-I Verbs starting with /u/ and having less than 3 phonemes

Exception: If the verb has only 2 phonemes, the Subjunctive and Imperative conjugations change, and in the case of *uble* [to see], they become respectively *able* and *ubul*. This category has only the verb *uble* with two phonemes.

Table 4.3: Exception C-I Verbs starting with /u/ and having less than 3 phonemes [Uble]

Formula	Flexed form	Rule	Conjugation
u-e	uble	PERFEC-1s	PERFECT 1st person singular
tu-e	tuble	PERFEC-2s	PERFECT 2nd person singular
yu-e	yuble	PERFEC-3sM	PERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
tu-e	tuble	PERFEC-3sF	PERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
nu-e	nuble	PERFEC-1p	PERFECT 1st person plural
tu-in	tublin	PERFEC-2p	PERFECT 2nd person plural
yu-in	yublin	PERFEC-3p	PERFECT 3rd person plural
a-e	able	IMPERF-1s	IMPERFECT 1st person singular
ta-e	table	IMPERF-2s	IMPERFECT 2nd person singular
ya-e	yable	IMPERF-3sM	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
ta-e	table	IMPERF-3sF	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
na-e	nable	IMPERF-1p	IMPERFECT 1st person plural
ta-in	tablin	IMPERF-2p	IMPERFECT 2nd person plural
ya-in	yablin	IMPERF-3p	IMPERFECT 3rd person plural
a-o	ablo	SUBJUN-1s	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person singular
ta-o	tablo	SUBJUN-2s	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person singular
ya-o	yablo	SUBJUN-3sM	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular masculine
ta-o	tablo	SUBJUN-3sF	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular feminine
na-o	nablo	SUBJUN-1p	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person plural
ta-oona	tabloona	SUBJUN-2p	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person plural
ya-oona	yabloona	SUBJUN-3p	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person plural
u-ul	ubul	IMPERA-2s	IMPERATIVE 2nd person singular
u-ula	ubula	IMPERA-2p	IMPERATIVE 2nd person plural

¹¹ Conversation with Saho Speaking community members in London of 30th October 2022.

3.3 Subcategory 3: C-I verbs starting with vowel *e*.

We differentiate the case for the long vowel /ee/ from the short vowel /e/ (i.e., verbs starting with /e/ followed by a consonant). For the first case, let us take as example the verb *eebexe* [to sell]. The *SaCoFlexor* module generates in this case the four stems *eebex*, *aabix*, *aabax*, *ibix* to generate the following flexed forms.

Table 3. Generic rule for C-I verbs starting with vowel /e/.

Formula	Flexed form	Rule	Conjugation
ee-exe	eebexe	PERFEC-1s	PERFECT 1st person singular
tee-exe	teebexe	PERFEC-2s	PERFECT 2nd person singular
yee-exe	yeebexe	PERFEC-3sM	PERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
tee-exe	teebexe	PERFEC-3sF	PERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
nee-exe	neebexe	PERFEC-1p	PERFECT 1st person plural
tee-exin	teebexin	PERFEC-2p	PERFECT 2nd person plural
yee-exin	yeebexin	PERFEC-3p	PERFECT 3rd person plural
aa-ix	aabix	IMPERF-1s	IMPERFECT 1st person singular
taa-ixe	taabixe	IMPERF-2s	IMPERFECT 2nd person singular
yaa-ixe	yaabixe	IMPERF-3sM	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
taa-ixe	taabixe	IMPERF-3sF	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
naa-ixe	naabixe	IMPERF-1p	IMPERFECT 1st person plural
taa-ixin	taabixin	IMPERF-2p	IMPERFECT 2nd person plural
yaa-ixin	yaabixin	IMPERF-3p	IMPERFECT 3rd person plural
aa-axo	aabaxo	SUBJUN-1s	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person singular
taa-axo	taabaxo	SUBJUN-2s	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person singular
yaa-axo	yaabaxo	SUBJUN-3sM	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular masculine
taa-axo	taabaxo	SUBJUN-3sF	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular feminine
naa-axo	naabaxo	SUBJUN-1p	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person plural
taa-axoona	taabaxoona	SUBJUN-2p	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person plural
yaa-axoona	yaabaxoona	SUBJUN-3p	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person plural
i-ix	ibix	IMPERA-2s	IMPERATIVE 2nd person singular
i-ixa	ibixa	IMPERA-2p	IMPERATIVE 2nd person plural

This category has a total of 12 verbs in the corpus. The following 10 verbs follow the general rules of this subcategory. The only two verbs identified with this category that do not follow the same rule are those with two phonemes (*eelle* and *eerre*: see for these paragraph 3.3.1).

eebexe, eecete, eedece, eefece, eeleme*, eelle***, eemene**, eemere*, eerhege, eerre***, eexete, eezeze**

(*) if the first phoneme is *d*, *l*, *m* and *z*, then the imperative 2nd person follows the rule of *eedece* (i.e. *eedec*), otherwise it follows the rule of *eebex* (i.e. *ibix*).

(**) the imperative 2nd person singular follows both the rules and can be both *imin* and *eemen*.

(***) verbs with two phonemes [see this exception in paragraph 3.3.1].

3.3.1 C-I verbs starting with /e/ and with less than 3 phonemes

The two above mentioned verbs (*eelle* and *eerre*) need to be managed separately. The following is the rule for conjugation (example *eelle*):

Table 3.1 Rule for C-I verbs starting with vowel /e/ and with only two phonemes.

Formula	Flexed form	Rule	Conjugation
ee-le	eelle	PERFEC-1s	PERFECT 1st person singular
tee-e	teelle	PERFEC-2s	PERFECT 2nd person singular
yee-e	yeelle	PERFEC-3sM	PERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
tee-e	teelle	PERFEC-3sF	PERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
nee-e	neelle	PERFEC-1p	PERFECT 1st person plural
tee-in	teellin	PERFEC-2p	PERFECT 2nd person plural
yee-in	yeellin	PERFEC-3p	PERFECT 3rd person plural
aa-e	aalle	IMPERF-1s	IMPERFECT 1st person singular
taa-e	taalle	IMPERF-2s	IMPERFECT 2nd person singular
yaa-e	yaalle	IMPERF-3sM	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
taa-e	taalle	IMPERF-3sF	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
naa-e	naalle	IMPERF-1p	IMPERFECT 1st person plural
taa-in	taallin	IMPERF-2p	IMPERFECT 2nd person plural
yaa-in	yaallin	IMPERF-3p	IMPERFECT 3rd person plural
aa-o	aallo	SUBJUN-1s	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person singular
taa-o	taallo	SUBJUN-2s	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person singular
yaa-o	yaallo	SUBJUN-3sM	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular masculine
taa-o	taallo	SUBJUN-3sF	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular feminine
naa-o	naallo	SUBJUN-1p	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person plural
taa-oona	taalloonaa	SUBJUN-2p	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person plural
yaa-oona	yaalloonaa	SUBJUN-3p	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person plural
ee-aa	eellaaa	IMPERA-2s	IMPERATIVE 2nd person singular
ee-aanta	eellaanta	IMPERA-2p	IMPERATIVE 2nd person plural

3.3.2 C-I verbs starting with /e/ but not /ee/.

In the case of a verb starting with the vowel /e/ followed by a consonant, we have 106 C-I verbs. Subdivided into 3 classifications, the flexor application generic rule successfully generates the flexing forms for the following 106 verbs with only 13 cases that need to be treated separately: 7 of these are verbs with less than 3 phonemes: *edee*, *ekke*, *ele*, *emce*, *erde*, *erhxe*, *eshshe*, *ewce*, *eylee*.

eddebbe, *edebbe*, *edee**, *edhdheerhe*, *edhdheeexe*, *egeeceze*, *egeeleebe*, *egeerece*, *eggerre*, *ekette*, *ekeye*, *ekke**, *ekkele*, *ele**, *elleepze*, *elleepze*, *emce**, *emcelle*, *emeete*, *emege*, *emerre*, *emfeere*, *emlelekke*, *emmeceeceze*, *emmeege*, *emmeezene*, *emmenga**, *emmeseesele*, *emneeberre*, *emneesexe*, *emreredde*, *emrocoocoze*, *emseene*, *emsemeeemece*, *emsheeqhele*, *emweesebe*, *emxeesebe*, *emzeegexe*, *endedebbe*, *endedeedebbe*, *endeewe*, *endhewwe*, *enebe*, *eneye*, *engeece*, *engeeleebe*, *engele*, *enkeere*, *enkeexede*, *enqeese*, *enzeewere*, *eqheese*, *eqheeweme*, *erde**, *ereeqhebe*, *erheerhe*, *erhxe*, *eseemexe*, *esgeeceze*, *esgeegelle*, *esgeeleebe*, *esgelle*, *eshshe**, *eskeere*, *eskette*, *esseece*, *essekette*, *essexeedere*, *esxeedere*, *esxeesebe*, *esxesee*, *eththeecese*, *eththeehere*, *etteelee**, *ettemege*, *ewce**, *exeesabe*, *eybeereke*, *eydedebbe*, *eydedebedde*, *eydeewe*, *eyfeere*, *eylee**, *eylelee**, *eylelekke*, *eymeceeceze*, *eymeece*, *eymeezene*, *eymenge**, *eymeseesele*, *eymexeedere*, *eynebe*, *eyreredde*, *eyrheerhe*, *eyrhewwe*, *eyseelexe*, *eyseene*, *eyseememece*, *eysheeqhele*, *eyteelee**, *eytheehere*, *eyweesebe*, *eyweesele*, *eyyece*, *eyzeegexe*, *ezeekere*.

3.3.2.1 Subclassification 1: the generic rule for verbs starting with /e/ and not /ee/. Total verbs 96. We use the verb *egeeceze* [to transfer oneself, to move]. The following morphological conjugations are produced:

Table 3.2 Generic rule for C-I verbs starting with vowel /e/ and with only two phonemes.

Formula	Flexed form	Rule	Conjugation
e-le	egeeceze	PERFEC-1s	PERFECT 1st person singular
te-e	tegeeceze	PERFEC-2s	PERFECT 2nd person singular
ye-e	yegeeceze	PERFEC-3sM	PERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
te-e	tegeeceze	PERFEC-3sF	PERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
ne-e	negeeceze	PERFEC-1p	PERFECT 1st person plural
te-in	tegeecezin	PERFEC-2p	PERFECT 2nd person plural
ye-in	yegeecezin	PERFEC-3p	PERFECT 3rd person plural
a-e	ageeceze	IMPERF-1s	IMPERFECT 1st person singular
ta-e	tageeceze	IMPERF-2s	IMPERFECT 2nd person singular
ya-e	yageeceze	IMPERF-3sM	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
ta-e	tageeceze	IMPERF-3sF	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
na-e	nageeceze	IMPERF-1p	IMPERFECT 1st person plural
ta-in	tageecezin	IMPERF-2p	IMPERFECT 2nd person plural
ya-in	yageecezin	IMPERF-3p	IMPERFECT 3rd person plural
a-o	agaacazo	SUBJUN-1s	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person singular
ta-o	tagaacazo	SUBJUN-2s	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person singular
ya-o	yagaacazo	SUBJUN-3sM	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular masculine
ta-o	tagaacazo	SUBJUN-3sF	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular feminine
na-o	nagaacazo	SUBJUN-1p	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person plural
ta-oona	tagaacazona	SUBJUN-2p	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person plural
ya-oona	yagaacazona	SUBJUN-3p	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person plural
e-	egeecez	IMPERA-2s	IMPERATIVE 2nd person singular
e-a	egeeceza	IMPERA-2p	IMPERATIVE 2nd person plural

3.3.2.2 Subclassification 2: rule for verbs starting with /e/ and not /ee/ and have < 2 phonemes.

Total verbs 7. We use the verb *ewce* [to go out]. The following morphological conjugations are produced:

Table 3.3 Rule for C-I verbs starting with vowel /e/ and with only two phonemes.

Formula	Flexed form	Rule	Conjugation
e-le	ewce	PERFEC-1s	PERFECT 1st person singular
te-e	tewce	PERFEC-2s	PERFECT 2nd person singular
ye-e	yewce	PERFEC-3sM	PERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
te-e	tewce	PERFEC-3sF	PERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
ne-e	newce	PERFEC-1p	PERFECT 1st person plural
te-in	tewcin	PERFEC-2p	PERFECT 2nd person plural
ye-in	yewcin	PERFEC-3p	PERFECT 3rd person plural
a-e	awce	IMPERF-1s	IMPERFECT 1st person singular
ta-e	tawce	IMPERF-2s	IMPERFECT 2nd person singular
ya-e	yawce	IMPERF-3sM	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
ta-e	tawce	IMPERF-3sF	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
na-e	nawce	IMPERF-1p	IMPERFECT 1st person plural
ta-in	tawcin	IMPERF-2p	IMPERFECT 2nd person plural
ya-in	yawcin	IMPERF-3p	IMPERFECT 3rd person plural

a-o	awco	SUBJUN-1s	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person singular
ta-o	tawco	SUBJUN-2s	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person singular
ya-o	yawco	SUBJUN-3sM	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular masculine
ta-o	tawco	SUBJUN-3sF	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular feminine
na-o	nawco	SUBJUN-1p	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person plural
ta-oona	tawcoona	SUBJUN-2p	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person plural
ya-oona	yawcoona	SUBJUN-3p	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person plural
e-	ewec	IMPERA-2s	IMPERATIVE 2nd person singular
e-a	eweca	IMPERA-2p	IMPERATIVE 2nd person plural

3.3.2.3 Subclassification 3: The following 6 verbs of this subcategory need to develop a separate rule in this category, and they are: *emmenga*, *emroocoocoze*, *eteellee*, *eylelee*, *eymenga*, *eyteelee*.

3.4 Subcategory 4: C-I verbs starting with the vowel *o*.

In this subcategory, we differentiate the case for of long vowel '*oo*' than single '*o*'. For the first case, we use the example *ooboke* (to be born). The *SaCoFlexor* module calculates the four stems *oobok*, *aabuk*, *aabak*, *ubuk* that generate conjugations of following forms.

Table 4: C-I verbs starting with /o/.

Formula	Flexed form	Rule	Conjugation
oo-oke	ooboke	PERFEC-1s	PERFECT 1st person singular
too-oke	tooboke	PERFEC-2s	PERFECT 2nd person singular
yoo-oke	yooboke	PERFEC-3sM	PERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
too-oke	tooboke	PERFEC-3sF	PERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
noo-oke	nooboke	PERFEC-1p	PERFECT 1st person plural
too-okin	toobokin	PERFEC-2p	PERFECT 2nd person plural
yoo-okin	yoobokin	PERFEC-3p	PERFECT 3rd person plural
aa-uke	aabuke	IMPERF-1s	IMPERFECT 1st person singular
taa-uke	taabuke	IMPERF-2s	IMPERFECT 2nd person singular
yaa-uke	yaabuke	IMPERF-3sM	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
taa-uke	taabuke	IMPERF-3sF	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
naa-uke	naabuke	IMPERF-1p	IMPERFECT 1st person plural
taa-ukin	taabukin	IMPERF-2p	IMPERFECT 2nd person plural
yaa-ukin	yaabukin	IMPERF-3p	IMPERFECT 3rd person plural
aa-ako	aabako	SUBJUN-1s	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person singular
taa-ako	taabako	SUBJUN-2s	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person singular
yaa-ako	yaabako	SUBJUN-3sM	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular masculine
taa-ako	taabako	SUBJUN-3sF	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular feminine
naa-ako	naabako	SUBJUN-1p	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person plural
taa-akoona	taabakoona	SUBJUN-2p	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person plural
yaa-akoona	yaabakoona	SUBJUN-3p	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person plural
u-uk	ubuk	IMPERA-2s	IMPERATIVE 2nd person singular
u-uka	ubuka	IMPERA-2p	IMPERATIVE 2nd person plural

This subcategory totals 13 verbs in the corpus. The following 11 verbs follow the general rules of this subcategory. The only two verbs identified with this subcategory but that do not follow the same rule are *oobbe* and *oome*.

ooboke, oocobe, oocoge, oocore, oofowe, oogore, ookome, ooqhoce, oorofe, oosole, ootoke.*

(*) The verb *oofowe* can be pronounced as *oofoye*, and therefore Subjunctive becomes *aafaw* [because of the exceptional rules for verbs ending with 'ye', see Table 1.1], and Imperative could be both *oofoo* and *ufuu* [see Table 1.1].

3.4.1 C-I verbs starting with /o/ but not /oo/.

In the case of the verb starts with /o/ followed by a constant, and taking as example the verb *omroocod* (to be agitated, to wriggle), the following stems are calculated by the *SaCoFlexor* (*omroocod*, *amroocod*, *amraacad*, *omroocod*) from which the below list of flexed forms are generated:

Table 4.1: Rule for C-I verbs starting with /o/ but not /oo/.

Formula	Flexed form	Rule	Conjugation
o-ode	omroocode	PERFEC-1s	PERFECT 1st person singular
to-ode	tomroocode	PERFEC-2s	PERFECT 2nd person singular
yo-ode	yomroocode	PERFEC-3sM	PERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
to-ode	tomroocode	PERFEC-3sF	PERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
no-ode	nomroocode	PERFEC-1p	PERFECT 1st person plural
to-odin	tomroocodin	PERFEC-2p	PERFECT 2nd person plural
yo-odin	yomroocodin	PERFEC-3p	PERFECT 3rd person plural
a-ode	amroocode	IMPERF-1s	IMPERFECT 1st person singular
ta-ode	tamroocode	IMPERF-2s	IMPERFECT 2nd person singular
ya-ode	yamroocode	IMPERF-3sM	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular masculine
ta-ode	tamroocode	IMPERF-3sF	IMPERFECT 3rd person singular feminine
na-ode	namroocode	IMPERF-1p	IMPERFECT 1st person plural
ta-odin	tamroocodin	IMPERF-2p	IMPERFECT 2nd person plural
ya-odin	yamroocodin	IMPERF-3p	IMPERFECT 3rd person plural
a-ado	amraacado	SUBJUN-1s	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person singular
ta-ado	tamraacado	SUBJUN-2s	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person singular
ya-ado	yamraacado	SUBJUN-3sM	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular masculine
ta-ado	tamraacado	SUBJUN-3sF	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person singular feminine
na-ado	namraacado	SUBJUN-1p	SUBJUNCTIVE 1st person plural
ta-adoona	tamraacadoona	SUBJUN-2p	SUBJUNCTIVE 2nd person plural
ya-adoona	yamraacadoona	SUBJUN-3p	SUBJUNCTIVE 3rd person plural
o-od	omroocod	IMPERA-2s	IMPERATIVE 2nd person singular
o-oda	omroocoda	IMPERA-2p	IMPERATIVE 2nd person plural

We have 25 verbs in this category. The following 21 verbs follow the above generic rules. The only four verbs that are irregular in this case are *omobbe*, *oshshoobbe*, *ottoxoye*, *oxoye*. Furthermore, among the 25 listed, the verbs with * below needs to be checked in one or two flexed forms.

obboohose, ogoofofe, oloole, omgoofofe, ommookokome, ommoofowe*, ommookome, omroocode, oqqoomote, oshshoome*, oshshoome, osoome, osqoome, otoobe*, ottoocore**, ottoxoye, oxoye, oyloole, oymookome, oyqhoce**, oyroocode*

(**) The verb *oyqhoce* has two forms, *oyqhoce* and *uyqhoce*.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, we have developed an NLP method and written an application using it as part of the Saho Corpus tools, to automatically generate the inflectional forms of the C-I verbs (using the terminology of Banti and Vergari, 2005) present in the current Corpus database. A total of 586 verbs have been classified, and for each of them the morphological conjugations of Perfect, Imperfect and Subjunctive forms have been introduced, for the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd person in the singular and in the plural, and furthermore for the third person, have been introduced both masculine and feminine forms. Only 7 verbs (out of the 586) needed to manually produce the conjugation forms, therefore the module managed automatically 98.80% of the C-I verbs present in the current database. A total of 13,455 words (12870 new flexed forms plus 586 already present) have been tagged correctly and codified for further use of the Saho Corpus tools on search, lemmatization, collocation, and concordance utilities. The application's codified output data fed into the Saho Corpus database, to enhance NLP functions, including word identification, concordance, and collocation listing, as well as word usage frequency functions. In the following paragraph 4.1 a list of typos in verb conjugations corrected by the module is listed.

4.1 Spelling error or need for normalization on the dictionary

The major reference to check and verify the correctness of the data collected and/or calculated has been the basic dictionary of the Saho Language by [Vergari & Vegari, 2007]. The following type errors has been noted in the dictionary for the conjugation of the verbs analysed in this paper. They are reported here to be checked for the next edition by the curators. For each verb it is indicated which conjugation form that has some issues to check (Perfect, Imperfect, Subjunctive and Imperative), and if necessary, the case (1st, 2nd, 3rd, plural, and genre). The page number is not reported as the reference has been done a PDF edition shared directly by the curators.

Verb	Conjugation	Correct value	Dictionary
ottoocore	IMPE	attoocore	att <u>a</u> c <u>o</u> re
unqullufe	SUBJ	anqallafo	anqallaf <u>a</u>
uqlufe	SUBJ	aqhlafo	aqhlaf <u>a</u>
uyshuqhule	IMPV	uyshuq <u>h</u> ul	uyshuq <u>h</u> ul
umuccuge	SUBJ	am <u>uc</u> cago	am <u>uc</u> cago
icrhiye	SUBJ	acrhawk	acrhawk <u>o</u>
imjillide	IMPV	imjillid	ijillid [missing m]
iyfirixe	IMPV	iyfirix	iyfrix [missing i]
imwirrishe	IMPV	imwirrish	imwirish [missing r]
isgiribe	IMPV	isgirib	isgirib <u>u</u>
igribe	IMPV	igrub	igrub
imwirrishe	IMPE	amwirrishe	imwirrishe
iskire	SUBJ	askaro	askiro
imibbixe	IMPE	amibbixe	amibbixe
ishshimine	IMPE	ashshimine	ashshamine
iskimile	IMPE	askimile	askimila

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MONDOFOTO

Il Ciné Museum di Bolzano

Foto di Samuel Girolametto (SG) e Moreno Vergari (MV) – Ethnorêma

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foto 1 (SG)

Vale la pena cercare e trovare il civico 8 di via Kravogl a Bolzano. Ci vuole la passione e la tenacia di Natalino Bernato per tenere in vita un museo che rischia di chiudere per difficoltà economiche.

Nei suoi 550 mq di esposizione, Bernato ha raccolto centinaia di cimeli cinematografici, alcuni estremamente rari. A partire dalla lanterna magica modificata del 1898 (foto 7), passando per le più moderne attrezzature per il montaggio video, una raccolta di rari manifesti, locandine per la musica e colonne sonore, una perfetta riproduzione di una cabina della biglietteria, ecc., la visita al piccolo Ciné Museum è un vero viaggio emozionante nella storia della cinematografia degli ultimi 120 anni.

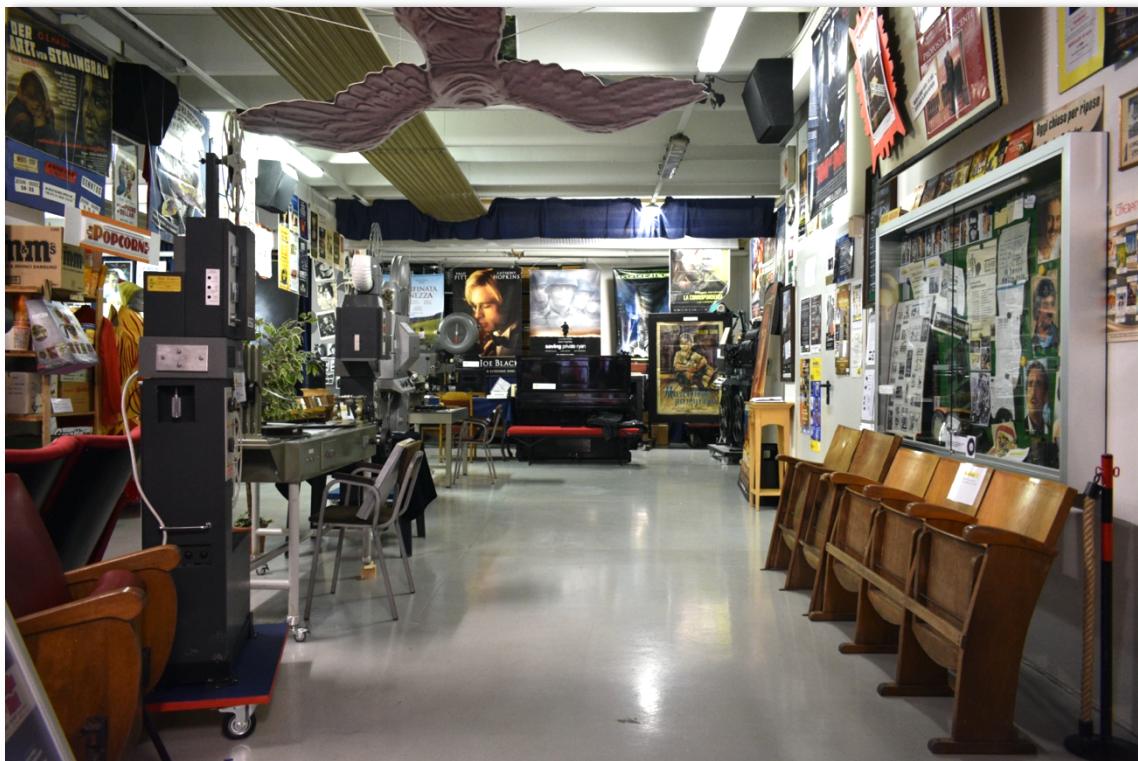


foto 2 (SG)



foto 3 (SG)



foto 4 (MV)



foto 5 (SG)



foto 6 (MV)
Bicicletta del proprietario
dei cinema Eden, Roma e
Capitol di Bolzano.
Dagli anni '40 fino agli '70
serviva al trasporto dei film
dalla stazione ferroviaria
alla sede del cinema e da
cinema a cinema.

foto 7 (SG)
Lanterna mod.
Microtecnica a carbone.





foto 8 (MV)

Proiettore Zeiss, fine anni '30,
con unico obiettivo panoramico,
utilizzato al Cinema Marconi di
Merano (BZ).

Dopo la chiusura del Cinema
venne depositato a Bolzano e
successivamente restaurato nel
2014 per il film di Anita B.

foto 9 (SG)

Proiettore Prevost, 35/70 mm,
degli anni '60, con lanterna
modificata per lampada Xenon.
Provenienza: Cinema Ariston,
Merano (BZ).



foto 10 (SG)



foto 11 (SG)



foto 12 (MV)



foto 13 (SG)
Proiettore Cinemeccanica, del
Cinema di Ortisei (BZ).



foto 14 (SG)



foto 15 (SG)

Proiettore Prevost, Mod. P93/A,
completo di tutto, con bobina
tempo unico – 3000 mt. –
automatico con ritorno, con
testata DTS, digitale e
fotocellula solare, in uso al
Cinema Concordia di Bolzano,
dagli anni '90 fino al 2003.

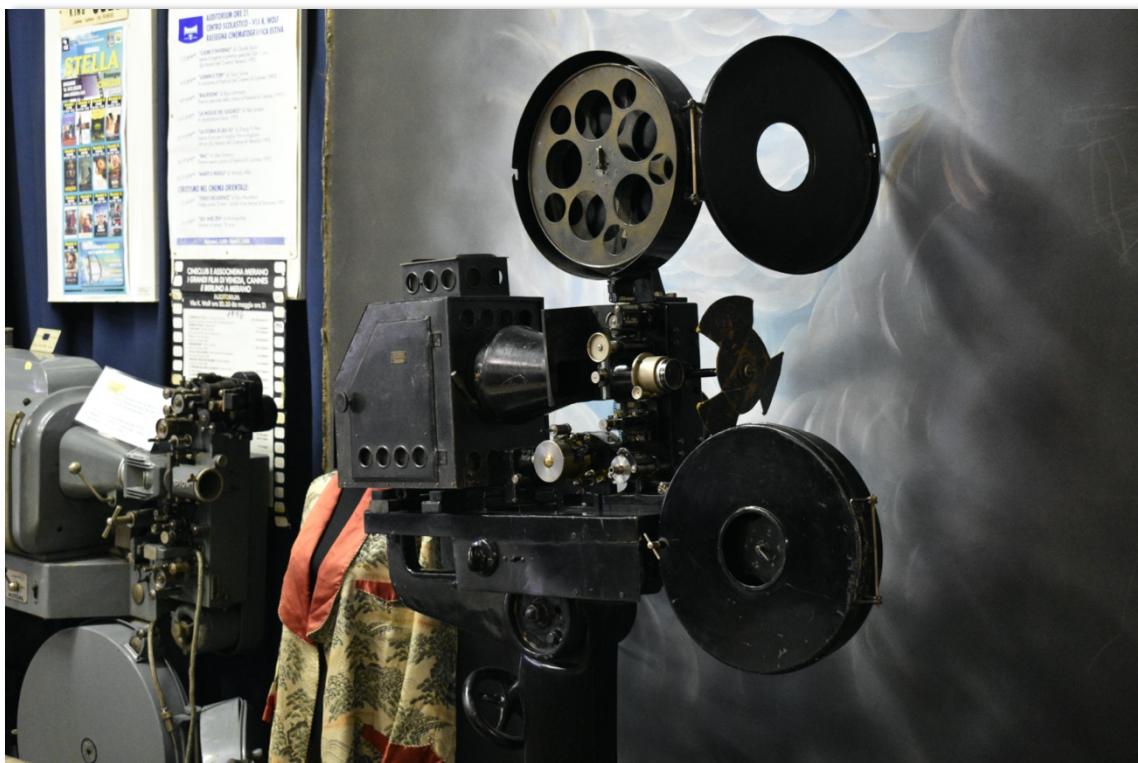


foto 16 (SG) - Proiettore 35 mm, anno 1928.

È il più antico proiettore, in uso nel cinema in via Firenze a Bolzano. Il proiettore è stato modificato dalla ditta Cinemeccanica da muto a sonoro nel 1930.

IN ALTRE LINGUE

A fox, a crow, and a weaver An animal folktale in Afar

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ISO 639-3 code: aar
DOI: 10.23814/ethn.18.22.osm

Wakriiy, kuraanu kee candoola² ³



Wakri: garboh alluwak tiya. Wakri Cafar hayyeyyoonittet mangih ayti-gedhdho le ala. Dheflih Cafar ayyuntih hayyeyyoonittet wakri gala bedde dhaggiime waam dagoh. Cafar ayyuntih addal Wakri wale kee egelil yamidhdhige. Kalah kadhdha hangi kee kibaal le iyyan. Tuk teena toofek annak anni yayse iyyaanamal yamidhdhige iyyan. Tuk teena fadhek kaadu annah abeyyo, hinnay xaylah nabam gaba kaat haytek yaabat badisak elle yayse inna gibbatam decsita. Cafar baadho dheflih saxra akkek kafin ardi.

Wakri kaadu too ardi belu kee xeelo.

Kalah Cafar caadah ayti-gedhdho le garboh alluwak ummaan ali kedo le. Xeelalloh wakri Dammo Hoytah yaabuke iyyan. Toh sabbatah bagille migaacah sahdayti migac leeh, Xasana iyyan wakrik Cafar.



Kuraani: kuraani haadaytu. Cafar baadhoh kuraani namma belu le. Toh kaadu dhagar inkiih akak data kuraanu kee gersi dhagar inkiih dataah, takkay ikkah labkah amook dagaak ooba cidi le kuraanu. Cafar addal kuraani haadak kadhdha egel le haadaytu decsita. Migaacah Data Cali kaak iyyan.

Kuraani dheflih horta gedha. Tiyak teeni kaak biyakitek amol akak gaboowa. Sahda kaa biyaktek too kaa biyaake num edde yan carik amok gaaboowak kaak kaak iyya wak gersi kuranwa inkiih tokkel gaabowtaah, dariifak baalil tuk teena kaak abtek carik awci koo mahaa. Dariifak baali kuraani fatanlil yaadhigen. Toh kaadu budhak teenak duyye ukkucca haah gersi budhah addal cideh xaba. Elle cide budha usug baahe duyyleh wanna wayteeh edde toffoofeeh, gedhinnaanim gedhak teneek wannonti geytek lukuk suge mari garcaleela decsitan. Tonnal kuraani cideh xabem xuggaane hitta essertaah, “tah sin im maay kinnihi?” iyyan.

¹ The author was Head of the Afar Panel at the Curriculum Department of the Eritrean Ministry of Education (1991-2012). He is the author of several books in the Afar language and a researcher of Afar culture and language.

² A previous version of this traditional story was published by the author in 2001 in the booklet *Dumah tenem leh iyyen. Dumah tenem baye waytay* [‘It was said in the past. What was in the past do not vanish’]. Asmara: Ministry of Education, pp. 7-14.

³ The Afar [Cafar] text is written following the official Eritrean Afar orthography. Notice in particular that *c* = [χ], *dh* = [d], and *x* = [h].



Candoola: candooli Cafar rasul tan barri haadak tiyak teena. Candooli sahdal kaadu baaham maliiy, usug salaamah tan alluwwak tiyak teena. Candooli dhaylo ramma inta xadhak dheflih ecebih amot dhala. Candooli ardi nunuyak yaloole. Cafar elle intannal candooli dhuune kaadu yakmeh iyyan. Candooli elle waara wahanih belu le. Candooli galwa le wakaay takk Kadhdham mahaada.

Hayyeyyoona cimbisan wak cimbisan num hayyeyyoona warisa Cafar caadah “Dumah tenem leh iyyen” iyyeh cimbisa.

Gersi maray kaa ankaxisa “dumah tenem baye waytay” adhxuk guuma kaah yabbidhen. “Dumah tenem leh iyyen” iyyaanam dumah dher muddatak afal teneemiy away ane wayta yaanama. Warisa num tu warisaamak afat ta madhxo baaheh, away caku leemiy away ane wayta daalisam fadha kinnim yaabbe mari yaadhigeh.

“Dumah tenem baye waytay” yaanam dumah luk nen abuk-racti baye waytay iyyaanama. Tah yaanam kaadu xubbusa haynek luk sugnem dumi sugeet baye waay yaanama. Kalah Cafar xeelalloh duca abta wak “able waynem able waynay, abbe waynem abbe waynay” inta.

Dumah yen dabab inki candooli inki xadhy dheerih, garaarinah amot cari luk iyyen. Too carih addat kaadu cundha dhayloy tufruke luk yen.

Tah tah iyyan saaku wakri ullutulluyak yemeete iyyen. Ta candooli edde yan xadhak gubah gubal dagoom oftoy beeta gidih solla iyye wacdi wali suuc suruy lem kaat suruyte iyyen. Kalah xadha gubal kimbir daaxo xeltam yuble iyyen. Tah xubbuse wakri budhudhuh ardih ramacca iyyeh, “ta xadhah amot tuk teena tan” iyyeh gubaak xadha wagite.



Tokkel wakri xadha too xadhak a bagu gaxxa woo bagu xagga adhxuk mermeeritek wadiril tah xadhah amot tanim candoolay dhaylo le kinnim yismiteh iyyen. Tohoh lakal wakri “kee yinah candoola tah manna, dacbih nummah mece arax litoh tanik, a gaba kol naxe gidih yol oo obey” yedhxe iyyen.

Candooli kaadu elle waara manol wakri tuk teena edde yaadhigeemikkal annaak gaba maxuy gorrisse waam xedeh iyyan. Tonnal wakri gaxseemih candooli “yinah xansanow cafu yoh ab dhaylo dubuk xabeh kol oobam matakka” yedhxeeyen.

Wakri “candoolaw obtek meceeh, bale intek, amakkek iba kol gaxisu

waa wacdi kol obtu waytam abletto” iyyeh gedhe iyyen.

Takkay ikkah candooli wakri too xadha kaa kee dhaylol feere waam yismiteemih sabbatah, “kee gedh abtu waytam mantuk” kaak iyye.

Wakri amannaak kaa maxaba iyyeh, gersi saaku subxi dhaaxat is kee kalla godmay fillal leh “yacam candoowlaw maaxisse” yedhxe iyyen. Candooli kaadu “mece maaxa gey” iyyeh kaal gaxise.

Wakri “yacammow koh warsaamah, alco ta atu is kee dhaylo amot akak tan xadhak daabal heeh, koo kee ken inkih inki wacdit ardin sin cideh akmeemik, inki badha yoh taxeeh, sin xabam tayse? Wonna hinnamay hittat inki wak sin bakoo?” iyye yen.

Candooli wakrik gabat godma yubleemih sabbatah cundhuteeh “kee yi wakri inki wak nee macidinay aykak tiya bet” iyyeh dhaylok tiya kaah yexe iyyen.

Candooli “yi rabbow wakri yol andabbe waay” adhxuk yalla dhaacitak raace wakaay takkay, Xasan gersi saaku cagitar “candoowlaw nummah ku badhih xado gabul luk teneeh, tamu yot temcek badha yot cagis, ee bale intek kaadu wadhaixin godmah xadhak daabal heeyyom idhig” yedhxe iyyen gadgadimak.

Candooli “yallak obtem kee cari namma gabah oggolaanah yedhxe iyyeenih, yalli yoh yimmire kaana” adhxuk dhaylok tiya kaah yexe iyyen. Gedhinnaanim gedhak teneek dhaylok inkitti kaah raace saaku kuraani ken yuble iyyen.

Tonnal ayrok teena kuraani wakri candoola lekke gedham cambaalak suggu iyyeh candoola xiggiile iyyen.

“Salaam caleykum candoowlaw! Yallak maaxisinnaan saaku yacam Xasan badha kok beetah ablek dhaylo kaah akah taxem maxaay” yedhxe kuraani.

Tokkel Candooli “kee yi badhaw ah koh taabbem hinnak isih daffey” yedhxe iyyen.

Kuraani “woh tu hinnak yoh warisey” yedhxe iyyen.

Too wacdi candooli “Xasan yallak maaxisinnaan saaku amot akak tan xadhak daabal godmah heeh koo kee dhaylo inkih bakam fadhe waytek inki badha yoh xuy adhxuk, tama akah tablennah gidiidin dhaleemik inki badhi yoh raace yan” yedhxe iyyen.

Kuraanuy toh yoobbe “kee xakkumoow” iyyeh ardit gomboh gaxak fayuh “kol inkih yaxem diraabak mameysitin, kallak abeh yan godaamat koo edde meysiisam” kaak iyye. Candooli “nummah inta, a yoo edde meysiisam kalla godma, mechek kok obbeh wallah” iyyeh abu waamat xubbusak raace.

Taadhige wakri dumih innah tullutulluyak amma iyyeh, “yacam candoowlaw badha bahtah inna? Hinnay xadhak daabal heeh hittat sin oobisoo?” adhxuk kalla godma gabat wadh wadh hee iyyen.

Candooli kaadu dumih inna hinnay niya mucuk “kee yi Xasan (wakri) tahak sah yok abtem koo dhiice waytek, ta raace yan tiya lih yoo edde bey” kaak iyye.

Wakri “kee maabitin, manol waartam fadhdhek, badha yoh xuy” iyyeh fallamitak candoola bura le intit wagite.

Candooli “Xasan ta saaku yalli abinnaanim nel oobolekkal dumih innah gaba geyih ta badhay saaboh raace badha mageytak kot xeltam abit” iyye.

Wakri “kee maabitin yacam candoola” iyyeh geera wadh wadh heeh taadhige kalla godmah xadhak daabal hee wak, kallayti burura yekke.

Cagiteh “cambal yabbah godma racgeh taniih baahu waa” iyyeh gersi kalla godma baaheeh xadhak daabal hee wak kaadu butukka inte.

Tut maxabinnay “kadhdha yabbah godma fadhdhah tan” iyyeh gersitto baaheh, elle xaseh immay burura tekke.

Wakri “anu yaado badhi! woo kadhdha yabbah abbah godma baahu waa” iyyeh gersi kadhdha kalla godma baaheh elle heeh immay yeffereeh, gersi mala malsamat yemeete.

Wakri tonna luk iyyemih “woh hinna yacam candoowlaw! akke yok sa iyyi koo xiggiileh?” iyyeh kaa essere.

Candooli “num yoo maxiggiilinna” iyyeh kaal gaxise. Takkay ikkah wakri namma aytik tiyaay midu kareerissi haak xubbussu hee wak kuraani kaa lekke xiggiilam kassiteh. Tonnal kuraani goran kee kaa abu waamat ugute. Fiiruk boodoy namma afa leh tani dageeh, geerak kay goranah elle gedhe ikkel kaa geeh.

Wakri “kuraanow nagasse?” iyyeh, kuraani kaadu “mece assima gey” iyyeh kaal gaxise.

Cagisak wakri iyyeemih “woh hinna kee kuraanu! anu abu waam abetto?” iyyeh kaa essere.

Kuraani kaadu “yeey abeyyo” iyyeh yemeete.

Too wacdi iyyeemih, “anu ta boodok ta afaak xulla, too gersi afaak bukka adheyyok atu tannah abtu duudetto?” iyye.

Kuraani kaadu “yeeyik afaak atu abey” iyyeh wakri kaadu toh abeh.

Kuraani kaadu too wakri akah abennah abeeh, wakri cagisak “inki afa aliffa heeh, too akak xule afak awcu duudeyyo, atu maxa takkale?” iyyeh essere.

Kuraani “atu abba haytam inkii abeyyok abey” iyye wak wakri xulla bukka iyye.

Kuraani toh gibbata gidih xule wak, wakri too racteh sugte affa aliffa kaat heeh, isih gedheeh, kuraani boodoh addat kaak raace.

Wakri ayyamissa hee wak amma iyyeh kuraanu fakeeh, “mannaay kee kuraanu?” iyye wak kuraanuk dhagar inkii mugeh yaniih, dhagarat dhaariya kaak dhalteh sugte. Afak cangara korisu maduudaay, haadam hinna immay, gali fayya haam maduudinna.

Wakri tu dhiice waah, haade waam kaak yuble wak mecenah raba gidih “tawak anke koo beyuuuh?” iyyeh kaal essere.

Kuraani tawak kaadu isi kabuk egel abaamat ugute. Tonnal kuraani “fadhekke yoo beytaamah daaro xado akattal haysitta budha kee gaali dabcih gari yoo maben rabeyyok” iyye.

Wakri “fandham toh hinna” iyyeh, too usuk elle yoo mahana iyye ikkel kaa heeh, kuraani toh geek sah lih ure. Takkay ikkah wakri kaa yable wak biyaakitam xeelak yen. Urra haadda, isih fadhakke maadda haa fanah, too budhaadhil akattal heenih yanin daaro xabbabbat kee gaali dabac yaffiileeh, yattakamme gibyi xabbabbat edde ureeh, “kaak kaak” adhxuk haadam cimbiseeh, haadeh isih gedhe.

Wakri kuraanu elle xabekkel wee wak “kaa cidem ekkelemmay, kaa wadeh an” iyyeh xisabbootak raace.

Takkay ikkah kuraani xane gaxsitih isi bagul dhiiba xuleh yen. Wakri edde cidu waa gitaa kaah gedhise.

Kuraani uddur suggu iyyeh, wakril yemeeteeh, “kee yacam wakri anu atu yok abteemik cafu koh adhxeeh, calla kollih haysita”.

“Anu badak woo kabil ardin koh mecem uble. Toh kaadu wadaraay, illi kee laa dubuk elle talooleeh, num sinnih tan baadho ubleh emeeteh an”.

Xasanay toh yoobbe asalah af receecissa heeh, “kee Data Cali talco mece dhaagu bahtah tanik, taham fanah maxah yok toocoreh sugte” iyye.

Kuraani “yi Xasanow ucura hinnay atu woo gaba gey yoh maay texe, awayay kataysis nekkekkah!” kaak iyye.

Wakri “toh nummak tekkeemih cafu ab. Bas Data Caliyow anu inni ibah tullu tulluyam akke waytek giiru maadhigak mannah tabeyyo too gaddi elle yan boorul” iyye.

Kuraani “ta gayyak anu koo tabisaah, tokkel atu is kee yooh ayrooy tiya neh akak cidettooh, dubuk elle waare lino” iyye.

Wakri toh yoobbe “woh yol xabay, bas atu gayyak mannal yoo tabisetto?” iyye.

Kuraani “anu galiik galil tabisak koo beeyyo. Galik teeni yok xabala wak kaak kaak adhxeyyok atu kacca inteh, galiik galil yok tabetto” iyye.

Wakri “kee Data Cali ku Xasan tah edde abe waamak kinniyo num yoo taadhigek, nee beytam idhig” iyyeh cambadhdhaageh, wokkel yakmu waa xadoh afal lee kaak gedhdhe. Kuraani “wallah tohut boola mantum yot xeltak, hayya hay gendheh” iyyeh caadat kaa korissa heeh dacaarimeenih.

Wakri caraanak baguk baaxat yuble wak “subxaanallah akke waytam matan talco ardk haada elle abluk nen caran ferreeh gayyak amo tabnah nan” iyye abu waamih hirfit agdhita.

Baaxatak gude guffa heen wak “kaak kaak” iyyeeh, wakri hittah xulen dhagnal galik galil taba jidih kacite wak, woo elle kacita galih kabu kuraani ceegissa kaak heeh, caran baguuk ankeleelebuk gayyat cideh isih budha fanah yendebbe.

Tonnal kuraani mayso luk orbam hinnay rabat kaak ase iyyen.

Yallih im nummaay, yim diraaba.

Ta hayyeeyoonak umam elle bahte num cafu koh iyyaamah inkii yoh habbaaleh inteh kaa maamanin. Kalah gersi num annaak koh aba xatok xubbi abittam tayse. Toh lakat tuk teena taallu duddah. Xatotta ummaan wacdi fadhe waynay.

Free translation

Fox: The fox is one of the animals of the forest. It is the main character in Afar folktales. There is hardly an Afar legend that does not mention the fox.

The fox is known for its wisdom and cunning. Thanks to its wisdom, the fox offers ideas to other animals in times of trouble and achieves its goals through deception or evasion. The Afar live in an arid land where the fox is commonly found.

Traditionally each of the famous animals is associates with one of the Afar tribes.

For example, the fox is associated with the Afar tribe called Dammohoyta. As a result, it is named after a human being in society and is called Hasan.

Crow: The crow is a bird. There is a wide variety of crow species, but in Afar areas two types are distinguished. One is the black crow, the other is the black crow with white spots around the shoulder. In Afar society, the crow is considered one of the wisest birds. It is also given a human name and is called Black Ali (Data Cali).

Crows move mostly in flocks. If one of them gets sick, they gather around the sick individual. If humans harm a crow, it caws continuously over the attackers' house and others come circling around it cawing for a while and then fly away. On some occasions they do not allow the attackers to leave their house. In some places people call the crow a troublemaker because he drops what he has taken from a certain house inside the fence of others, thus triggering a dispute between them, as one accuses the other of theft as a result of this act. To avoid this accusation and subsequent dispute, people usually ask each other “what is this?”, when they come across something dropped by the crow in their immediate vicinity.

Bustard Kori: This is a type of bird commonly seen in rural Afar areas. It is a peaceful bird that does not cause any harm to humans. It lays its eggs at the top of various trees such as acacia, jujube, etc. This bird feeds on anything on the ground that is convenient for it, such as insects.

When the narrator tells a story in Afar society, he traditionally begins with “It was said in the old days there was...” And listeners respond loudly “what was in the past does not vanish”. The listeners infer that the narrator is about to tell a thing that rarely exists or happens today. To say “what was in the past does not vanish” on the part of the listeners means that they want the old traditions and customs of society to remain alive. Once there lived a kori bird at the top of a tall tree. At the lowest point of the tree it had a nest, where the newly hatched young lived.

One day, the fox came upon this tree. When the fox stopped to rest under the tree, he smelled a scent that filled the air around the tree. The fox also saw bird droppings everywhere under the tree. “Birds must live here,” said the fox as he looked toward the top of the tree.

The fox observed the tree from all sides, circling it several times. Eventually he realized that the weaver bird lived there together with its newly hatched young. Then the fox said, “How are you, dear bird? Indeed, you have a nice place to live here. Can you come down and say hello?”

Realizing that the fox was not sincere in what he said, the Kori bird refrained from coming down lest it become food for him. He replied, “Dear fox, I'm sorry I can't come down. I am taking care of my little birds.”

“It is alright if you come down, otherwise you will meet your fate when I return,” said the fox and immediately left.

Since the Kori bird was sure that the fox was unable to climb the tree and therefore posed no danger to her and her young, he said, “Go away, you can't do anything.”

“I will not leave these birds,” thought the fox and set out. The following day the fox arrived early in the morning holding a clay axe and said, “Good morning.” The Kori bird, for its part, replied, “Good morning, sir.”

“Should I cut down the tree and eat you and your young together or will you save yourself by dropping one of your young?” asked the fox giving the Kori bird the chance. The Kori bird was frightened when it saw a blade in the fox's hand and dropped a baby bird to save its life and that of the other baby birds.

Although the Kori bird wished he would never see it again, the next day the fox came and said, “Tender, delicious and fresh. Give me one more of your babies. Otherwise I will cut down the tree and eat you all.”

The Kori bird, poor and desperate, had no choice but to drop another baby to the fox, and dropped it. The scene was repeated day after day, until the Kori bird was left with only one baby. One day the crow observed the weaver bird dropping its young to the fox. When the fox left, the crow came and said, “Good morning, my dear.” “Good morning, sir,” replied the Kori bird, sad at the loss of her young. “Why do you leave your young to the fox?” asked the crow. “Leave me, my dear crow. You would be of no help to me. This is not an easy matter to deal with,” replied the weaver bird. “Tell me, please, so that we can seek a remedy,” said the crow.

“Every day the fox comes early in the morning with an axe in his hand and threatens to cut down the tree and eat us all if I don't drop one for him. If I often drop one for him, look I am now left with only one little one,” complained the Kori bird.

Hearing this, the crow bowed its head in amazement and told the Kori bird about the deception by which the fox had taken its young. “Everything he says is false,” said the crow, “Don't be afraid, he has a blade of clay.” Added the crow, “Is that true? What he is holding is a stick of clay?!?” exclaimed the weaver bird. “Okay! I heard you,” said the Kori bird, thinking about what to do when the fox should return.

“Hey, drop your baby, otherwise I will cut down the tree and eat you all,” said the fox waving the clay axe to scare the Kori bird as usual.

But at that moment the Kori bird was confident that the clay axe could not cut down the tree and said, “If you are still not satisfied, I cannot drop my only remaining child, kill us if you want to do that.”

“You'd better give me the child if you want to stay alive,” stressed the fox.

“We will face what has been preordained for us. Do not expect anything else from me. Do whatever you want,” replied the Kori bird angrily.

Swirling his tail, the fox said, “Be careful,” and then struck the tree with a clay axe, which immediately shattered.

He said, “Wait, my father's axe is more effective,” and brought another clay axe. It too shattered after hitting the tree. Then he said, “My grandfather's axe will better serve the purpose,” and brought the last clay axe, which also shattered after hitting the tree.

Even now the fox did not give up and said, “It will take my great-grandfather's axe,” and brought a large clay axe, which also disintegrated. But now the fox changed his mind and tried something else. Then he immediately said, “Has anyone come here in my absence?” “No one came,” replied the Kori bird. However, pricking up his ears, the fox thought for a while and suspected that the crow had come and advised the weaver bird to thwart his attempts to feed on the Kori bird and its only remaining young. The fox then began to search for the crow and a way to take revenge. First the fox prepared a den with two openings. Then he found the crow and went looking for it. When they met, the fox said, “Good afternoon, my dear.” “Good afternoon, sir,” replied the crow. Then the fox said, “My dear brother, will you behave as I behave here?” The crow replied, “Yes, I will,” and approached the fox. The fox said, “I will go into this den this way and come out that way. Can you do that?”

The crow replied, “I can do that. But you try it first.” Then the fox did what the crow asked him to do, while the crow did the same with the fox. Then, closing an opening, the fox asked the crow, “Now I can go out through the same opening I entered the den through. Can you do that?”

“I can do anything you do,” replied the crow. So the fox went into the den and came out through the same opening.

When the crow tried to do so, the fox locked him in the den by closing the remaining opening and went away, leaving the crow in the den. After a week the fox came to open the closed den and said, “How are you, sir?” But he saw that the crow's shiny black feathers had been removed and its body was full of worms. The crow was unable to utter a word. It was not only unable to fly, but also unable to lift its wings. When the fox saw that the crow had become too weak, wanting it to become too weak to survive, he asked the crow, “Where do I take you now.” The crow thought and said shrewdly, “You can take me wherever you want, but don't take me near the house where the meat is put in a rope or near the camel encampment.”

The fox said, “I was looking for him,” and immediately took the crow to these places. Here the crow soon recovered, but he pretended to be sick whenever he saw the fox. In order to regain his health and the ability to fly and get where he wanted, he ate meat placed on ropes near the houses and pecked ticks in the camel encampment. Eventually he became healthy and flew away croaking.

When the fox arrived, he did not find the crow where he had left him and said angrily, “I thought he was dead, but alas he has revived.”

The crow then vowed to take vengeance on the fox. And he looked for ways to get rid of him. After a while, the crow went to the place where he met the fox. After exchanging greetings with him, the crow told the fox that he had forgiven all the wrongs he had suffered and asked to establish a new relationship. The two agreed on this, and then the crow asked the fox to take him to a distant land across the sea, where he had falsely suggested that he had seen a lot of goats, sheep and cattle without herders. The fox, hearing this, became excited and said, "Oh! Good news, Black Ali, why have you kept them hidden until now?"

"You gave me no respite to tell you before. And now this marks the beginning of a new era in our relationship," replied the crow.

The fox said, "I apologize for what happened earlier. And I appreciate your good will to establish a new relationship between us. But my dear crow, I am not able to swim. The only thing I can do is walk on dry land. How can I reach it?"

The crow said, "I will take you there. You will hunt animals for us. And we will live there by feeding on them."

"Okay! Leave it to me. But how will you take me there?" asked the fox.

"I will take you with my wings. When one wing gets tired, I will croak to get you to the other," replied the crow.

Showing great eagerness to get the bounty he had heard about as soon as possible, he said, "Dear crow, take me soon. You will see my skill as a hunter."

"I know well how skillful you are at hunting. Let's go," said the crow. And immediately he flew, taking the fox with him.

When the fox saw the ocean below him, he said in amazement, "Oh my God! I am in the space where only birds fly and I see the ocean shining below me." He wondered what he would do across the ocean, where he had heard about many animals.

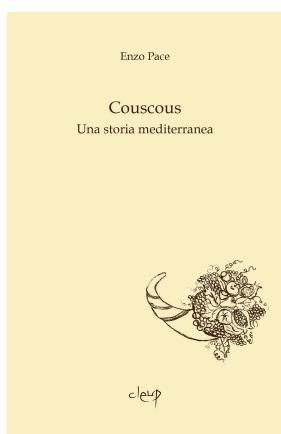
When he got to the point where the ocean was too deep, the crow cawed, and as the fox tried to move to the next wing, the crow bent it and let the fox fall into the deep ocean. And it returned home.

In this way, the crow not only triumphed over the fox, but got rid of it forever.

God tells the truth, mine is a legend.

Moral: From this story we learn that even if someone you have hurt forgives you, don't think they have forgotten everything. Or we need to be aware of anything provided for free, because there may be a secret behind it. We mustn't wait for free things.

RECENSIONI



ENZO PACE (2022), *Couscous. Una storia mediterranea*, collana Homo Edens. Alimentarsi tra cultura, paesi e regioni, Padova: Cleup, pp. 197, ISBN 978 88 3495 420 5

Enzo Pace, storico delle religioni, ci offre una sintetica ed efficace ricostruzione storica del couscous, come alimento e prodotto culturale. Si tratta di un profilo comprensivo di quello che può definirsi *piatto viaggiante* e insieme domestico, colto nelle sue variazioni nel tempo e nello spazio sia come cibo della quotidianità che della straordinarietà.

La polemica nei confronti di una stretta associazione con l'Islam avanzata strumentalmente nelle rappresentazioni politiche etnocentriche della destra italiana, lo spinge a documentare l'interazione tra l'origine berbera nelle regioni del Maghreb e i flussi arabi che arrivarono sulle coste dell'Africa mediterranea, plasmando, soprattutto con la seconda ondata demograficamente più consistente, un nuovo spazio sociale, dando allo stesso couscous una nuova configurazione e centralità senza che questo porti a una intimità con le prescrizioni islamiche (riferimento importante è qui Benkheira *Islam et interdits alimentaires*, Paris, PVF 2000)

Questo cibo era ben iscritto in una storia riconoscibile che poggia sulla produzione cerealicola che caratterizzava l'ampia regione già nel periodo romano.

Per cenni essenziali si passa così attraverso il fondamentale lavoro sociologico di Maxime Rodinson, per testi fondanti come *Kitab al wusla*, le cronache di Ibn Battuta, testimonianze medioevali europee, inseguendone le contaminazioni, le rielaborazioni, ad opera di agenti diversi e concorrenti. Insomma, il couscous “nasce nomade”.

Affascina sempre - e sembra anche inevitabile nel lavoro immaginativo collettivo - la domanda su un couscous originario. L’idea che una tradizione unica pre-esista alla variazione ha appunto a che fare con il gioco ben serio dell’etnicità e del confronto/scontro etnico: Brugnatelli (1999) cita il lessico berbero di Al-Hilali (1665 c.) comprendente un repertorio lessicale di cibi e bevande nel quale spiccano alcune clamorose assenze tra cui il couscous, assenza che però non corrisponderebbe “a una effettiva assenza di questo cibo dalle mense marocchine del Seicento”, ma confermerebbe “il carattere tipicamente berbero dell’alimento”. Il lessico era destinato ai Berberi per trovare una corrispondenza linguistica berbera a termini arabi presenti nella letteratura: “è evidente che non esisteva alcun piatto arabo paragonabile al cucus”. Aggiunge Brugnatelli che “una conferma del carattere berbero del cucus mi sembra il fatto che in Egitto esso non rappresenta un cibo tradizionale, ad eccezione di Siwa, l’unica località ancora berberofona”. Altri come Farouk Mardam-Bey nel suo divertente e competente *La cucina di Ziryab* (1998) notano però una presenza del couscous, nel Mashrek, in Siria, testimoniata da un ricettario, e seguita da una sua successiva scomparsa.

Le diverse configurazioni realizzate sono spesso determinate da una variazione di dettaglio, si iscrivono nelle differenze complementari dello spazio mediterraneo, rimandano ai “rumori profondi del Mediterraneo, come scriveva Braudel, “uno spazio

dialogico dove le identità degli uni e degli altri si definiscono in un gioco di specchi”, diventando uno spazio elettivo dello scambio sociale. Anche il piatto couscous entra a far parte dei “rumori profondi del mondo mediterraneo” categoria pur sempre in discussione; (qui Pace cita e usa una vasta bibliografia da Montanari, a Flandrin a Aubaile, a Hubert,s a Tillian, a Tapper).

Anche se il couscous può diventare piatto icona e iscriversi nella alimentazione prescritta nei riti di passaggio e in genere in situazioni straordinarie, va ribadito che non siamo dinanzi a una riduzione alla sola comunicazione simbolica, alla “segnicità”. Prima di tutto abbiamo a che fare con materia plasmabile, e dunque con la “fabrilità”, per usare la terminologia ordinatrice dell’antropologo Alberto Cirese. Nella sua materialità consiste in piccoli e regolari granelli di semola di grano duro, lavorati, come richiama la sua etimologia più accreditata, e cioè è l’esito dell’atto trasformativo del frantumare, ridurre in piccoli frammenti (ks).

Si pone un problema di logica delle categorie che vive sia nell’analisi sia nella operatività quotidiana: esiste un cucus medio concettuale, il prototipo dal quale pensare le varietà e stabilire i confini? Ci si può chiedere quali sono gli elementi irrinunciabili della categoria couscous che si aggiungono all’elemento primario della sua materia elettiva e del primo atto trasformativo, appunto la frantumazione/manipolazione, la forma in grani (minimo/massimo della grana)? Quali sono gli elementi essenziali considerati decisivi e dove si depositano? nella manipolazione per areare e tener separati i grani, nel livello degli ingredienti (qualità, presenza/assenza), nelle tecniche di cottura, nelle combinazioni, nelle spezie?

Il metodo elettivo di cottura a vapore opposto al bollito che invece lo renderebbe altro dal couscous?

Insomma, qual è l’essenza minima senza cui non è più couscous o è cucus degli altri (e cioè rinvia a varietà e etnicità regionali). Quali elementi sono condivisi e quali possono variare o essere assenti? Tutto questo può emergere dal gioco immaginativo e etnicizzante.

Se il couscous si rende domestico, diventa “di casa nostra”, entra in una cucina familiare, diventa riconoscibile negli stili alimentari del Mediterraneo (a partire dalla Francia), è in primo luogo perché è materia condivisa, come semola di grano duro. L’aria di famiglia diventa riconoscibile, ricorda Pace, smentendo la sua estraneità, sostenuta dai polemisti etnocentrici, nei couscous interni, come il cascà di Carloforte, anche cibo di asporto, il cucus di Trapani, la fregola sarda (ma in questo caso la fondamentale differenza nel metodo di cottura, l’umido, pone almeno un problema di classificazione politetica e può portare degli attori sociali a rifiutare la iscrivibilità).

Il cucus come categoria di analisi si inserisce, dunque, nella riflessione critica sugli studi regionali del mediterraneo, categoria quest’ultima che ha già una sua problematicità. Con quale legittimità e produttività? Studiarlo nelle sue trans-migrazioni, con i portatori migranti, nelle rielaborazioni e ricomposizioni, nel suo misurarsi ai confini con corrispondenti demarcatori forti (la pasta), o verso il Mashreq fronteggiando il burghul e il riso, significa essere consapevoli della storicità di questi confini). Nello scoprire omologhi, il couscous viaggia con i migranti e costituisce un campo dello scambio sociale.

Manca forse nel lavoro di Pace una parte sulle dinamiche attuali, insieme divertenti e indicatrici di una dinamica sempre in fieri. Sono rivelatori, ad esempio, i giochi nelle coppie miste, le sostituzioni ritenute ammissibili. “Buono il couscous con gli scampi “, dice il marito tunisino nella coppia mista insediata in Veneto, “ma non è couscous!”.

“La fregola sarda non è couscous!”, sostiene decisamente un sardo: che cosa secondo lui lo fa uscire dalla categoria? Un ragionamento sugli elementi costitutivi come la cottura in umido vs il vapore o l’esclusivismo regionale?

Quale influenza hanno nella cucina contemporanea le nostre incorporazioni? Occasioni quotidiane e occasioni festive, una offerta gastronomica esotica (ad oggi meno esotica) ad amici. Si può escludere il couscous precotto (ma c’è differenza tra due precotti) in nome di una fedeltà filologica come valore, fedeltà clamorosamente tradita se attori non islamici ammettessero la carne di maiale, che lo farebbe escludere dai couscous anche se tutti gli altri elementi fossero fedeli. L’impossibilità del cucus è il non pensabile con la carne di maiale (pur permanendo tutti gli altri elementi).

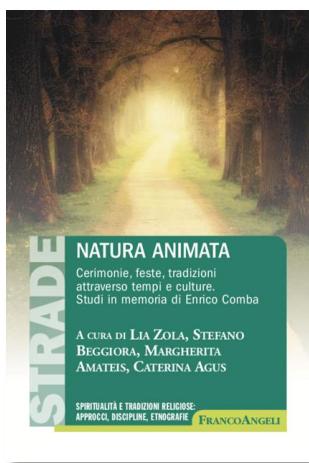
Anche nel “gastro esotismo” c’è spazio per la richiesta di una fedeltà informata.

Una attenzione potrebbe essere rivolta anche alla estetica del piatto: arte effimera, che vive di dettagli di forme, di colori, di disposizioni (tra piatto unico e individuale), di equilibrio di masse. Una estetica che include investimenti locali, preferenze riconoscibili.

Il libro accenna anche alle variazioni nell’arricchimento come asse di possibili variazioni regionali (Marocco versus Algeria e Tunisia; non come differenze culturali essenzializzate ma socio-economiche). Couscous dolce, o più leggero o più pesante, perché stufato, più speziato o meno speziato. Le variazioni possono collocarsi in corrispondenza di confini socio-territoriali interni: esiste, ad esempio, un couscous del rif ? il couscous di pesce di Tangier e anche Safi è conosciuto e riconosciuto da tutti? Una migrante del Beni Mellal del Marocco, a Bologna, non lo ha mai sperimentato e lo assegna come distintivo alla Tunisia.

In conclusione, senza arrivare ad ulteriori dettagli, Enzo Pace ci offre una piacevole lettura e ricostruzione informata che sarà senz’altro utile.

Gianni Dore (Università di Venezia Ca’ Foscari)



STEFANO BEGGIORA, MARGHERITA AMATEIS, CATERINA AGUS (a cura di), 2022, *Natura Animata. Cerimonie, feste, tradizioni attraverso tempi e culture. Studi in memoria di Enrico Comba*, S.T.R.A.D.E.: Spiritualità e Tradizioni Religiose: Approcci, Discipline, Etnografie, pp. 304, Milano: Franco Angeli, ISBN: 978-88-351-3651-4.

I saggi che compongono *Natura animata* sono accomunati dall’interesse per le forme variegate che può assumere il rapporto che gli umani intrattengono con l’ambiente che abitano. I capitoli propongono delle analisi di diverse tradizioni, simbologie, immaginari folklorici e sistemi di saperi in contesti estremamente variegati. La raccolta

riprende il titolo di un convegno organizzato dal Professor Enrico Comba nel 2019 a Torino, pochi mesi prima della sua prematura scomparsa. Il Professor Comba aveva introdotto nell’Università degli Studi di Torino l’insegnamento di Antropologia della Natura, sulle orme di Philippe Descola, che aveva presentato l’omonimo insegnamento al Collège de France. «L’idea veicolata da Enrico» afferma Lia Zola «è che quando

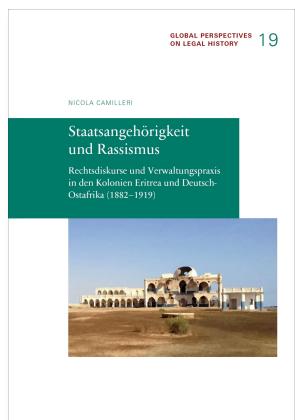
parliamo di natura parliamo in realtà di un universo estremamente più ampio fatto di relazioni prevalentemente tra soggetti umani e non umani». La natura, dunque, è animata proprio perché vivificata attraverso queste relazioni e questi incontri, dei quali possiamo osservare le articolazioni. I saggi presentati suggeriscono che gli incontri tra umani ed entità non umane avvengono anche sul piano immateriale. Per questo tipo di indagini, il contributo della svolta ontologica è essenziale: l'apporto teorico di autori tra i quali proprio Philippe Descola ed Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, che a loro volta hanno attinto alla tradizione antropologica di Irving Hallowell ed Eveline Lot Falck fra gli altri, ha permesso di realizzare che non esistono soltanto diverse visioni del mondo, ma esistono diversi mondi. Tenere a mente questa premessa teorica è utile alla lettura e alla comprensione dei vari capitoli di *Natura Animata*.

In apertura della raccolta, il saggio di Laura Bonato descrive la grandezza del lascito culturale della civiltà dei Celti, “fondatori della prima Europa”, e degli insegnamenti druidici sulla natura, ancor oggi influenti e popolari; i revival celtici nell’Italia settentrionale, tra i quali “Celtica” in Valle d’Aosta, la festa di Beltane in provincia di Biella, la “Beltane e la festa di calendimaggio” in provincia di Cuneo e la Axa Briga in provincia di Torino, sono festival etnici atipici poiché sono basati su una civiltà ormai scomparsa, ma sono stimabili per la loro missione di tramandare un patrimonio di saperi e valori legati al contatto diretto con la natura. Christiane Dunoyer analizza le pratiche di combattimento tra bovine funzionali all’organizzazione gerarchica delle mandrie che si svolgono nell’area alpina che comprende l’Alta Savoia francese, il cantone svizzero del Vallese romanzo e la Valle d’Aosta; le bovine, pur restando animali relativamente domesticati, in questa tradizione assumono un valore simbolico di selvaticezza, che è ricercata dagli umani promotori di tali attività. La zoologia fantastica della tradizione corsa è al centro del saggio di Tony Fogacci e Vannina Lari, che analizza diverse simbologie animali tratte da materiale folklorico e linguistico locale e prende in esame il passaggio dall’oralità alla trascrizione di questo patrimonio culturale. Caterina Agus approfondisce diverse usanze, caratteristiche del passaggio da inverno a primavera, presenti nella Valle di Susa e soggette a variazioni legate a diverse frazioni della Valle; tra queste, la danza delle spade, le tradizioni legate alla figura dell’orso, gli usi di diverse maschere carnevalesche talvolta zoomorfe, e il rito propiziatorio dell’aratura della neve. Il saggio di Igor Baglioni propone una riflessione critica su otto punti problematici individuati dall’autore sul tema delle divinità della natura nelle tradizioni religiose dell’antichità classica, tra i quali l’individuazione delle stesse, la proiezione di una nozione di “natura” estranea al contesto preso in esame, e le interpretazioni talvolta semplicistiche delle caratteristiche del ruolo di tali divinità. Diverse credenze e narrazioni mitologiche di prossimità tra donne e figure non umane sono al centro del saggio di Margherita Amateis; queste associazioni, che risalgono fino al Paleolitico, rispecchiano funzioni e valori simbolici attribuiti al femminile, tra le quali la fecondità e la capacità di mediare tra gli umani e l’aldilà. Luca Taglianetti espone i misteri dei rapporti tra umani e spiriti ed altri esseri come elfi e troll nei territori del Nord; questi sono oggetto di racconti tramandati sia come avvenimenti reali, sia come leggende eziologiche, e sono caratterizzati da misteriose presenze oscure. Il mondo descritto da Roberto Arduini è quello letterario de *Il Signore degli Anelli* di J.R.R. Tolkien; la natura è onnipresente nel racconto, presentandosi di volta in volta come addomesticata, selvaggia, devastata, e specialmente animata quando le ambientazioni sono boschi, selve o foreste, in accordo con diverse mitologie germaniche e religioni precristiane secondo le quali l’origine umana è associata agli

alberi. Proprio gli alberi, sono al centro del saggio di Anna Perdibon, che esplora, attingendo a diverse fonti tra le quali il mito di Gilgamesh, non solo la loro simbologia e la loro funzione nella cosmologia dell'antica Mesopotamia, ma anche i loro culti ed usi rituali. L'analisi di Fabio Armand concerne gli spazi di confine, di liminalità, tra umani e non umani, tra domesticazione e selvaticezza, nelle terre alte dell'Himalaya nepalese, tracciando una “topologia del sovrannaturale” che rende conto delle entità spirituali che abitano tali aree; per fare ciò, l'autore si serve di comparazioni con fonti variegate ed elementi propri di altre culture montane, tra le quali quelle delle Alpi francofone. La Natura Animata presentata da Stefano Beggiora è quella del gruppo indigeno dei Kondh, annoverati tra i Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups indiani, che intrattengono – specialmente gli sciamani – complesse relazioni con le entità non umane animali e spirituali con le quali instaurano dinamiche di caccia e predazione; l'autore non manca di sottolineare come gli attuali cambiamenti del territorio influiscano su queste relazioni. Lia Zola esplora le relazioni degli sciamani e dei cacciatori della Siberia orientale con i loro spiriti elettori ed ausiliari, ai quali sono attribuite intenzionalità ed agentività tanto benevole quanto maligne; la loro presenza condiziona ogni ambito della vita e traspare ad ogni livello della società presso varie comunità della Sacha-Jacuzia. Marianna Zanetta riflette sulle montagne giapponesi come oggetti di culto, adorazione e timore, siano esse vulcani come il celeberrimo Monte Fuji, oppure picchi innevati, o ancora i luoghi simbolici designati alle anime dei morti; lo spazio impervio e selvaggio dei cacciatori-raccoglitori montani si contrappone all'ordine delle risaie. Infine, si resta tra terre alte col saggio di Emanuela Borgnino, che è incentrato sulla montagna più alta del Pacifico, il Mauna a Wākea sull'isola di Hawai'i, luogo sacro dei Kanaka Maoli, che difendono strenuamente il monte e il territorio circostante dalle minacce esterne di tipo coloniale, militare, turistico, o tecnologico.

Come si è osservato, *Natura Animata* offre uno sguardo su sistemi di vita molto diversi tra loro ed esorta il lettore a riflettere, sulla linea di autori quali Latour, Fuentes ed Haraway, sui rischi che si possono correre nel dimenticarsi che le nozioni di “natura” e “società” sono già frutto di negoziazioni culturali complesse. I contributi dei numerosi autori della raccolta si rivolgono ad un pubblico vasto, non soltanto specializzato, e trasportano i lettori in contesti lontani tra loro non solo sul piano spaziale ma anche su quello temporale. In conclusione, l'interesse dell'opera esorta ad una comprensione profonda dei diversi mondi descritti e omaggia le relazioni che, in svariati modi, animano la natura.

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NICOLA CAMILLERI (2021), *Staatsangehörigkeit und Rassismus. Rechtsdiskurse und Verwaltungspraxis in den Kolonien Eritrea und Deutsch-Ostafrika (1882-1919)*, Global Perspectives on Legal History, Frankfurt am Main: Max Planck Institute for Legal History and Legal Theory. XIV, 302 S. Printausgabe ISBN 978-3-944773-36-0; eISBN 978-3-944773-37-7

Mit dem vorliegenden Buch liefert der Historiker Nicola Camilleri eine sorgfältig recherchierte, quellenbasierte und in der Argumentation nachvollziehbare Studie ab, die sowohl hinsichtlich der Methodik als auch Themenwahl als Pflichtlektüre im Rahmen aktueller Kolonialismusforschung

angesehen werden sollte.

Als Fallbeispiele werden die von 1890-1936 unter italienischer Herrschaft stehende *Colonia Eritrea* und das von 1885-1918 als Schutzgebiet dem Deutschen Kaiserreich unterstellte *Deutsch-Ostafrika* ausgewählt, deren „Mutterländer“ sich durch die Übernahme außereuropäischer Gebiete im europäischen kolonialen Wettstreit profilieren wollten (S. 6). Auch wenn die koloniale Geschichte beider Länder bereits und besonders durch den *postcolonial turn* seit den 1990er Jahren wissenschaftlich bearbeitet wurde (S.9, Bibliographie), so unterscheidet sich diese Studie durch die Methode eines global- und mikrohistorischen Ansatzes und den vergleichenden rechtshistorischen Forschungsgegenstand, der auf Staatsangehörigkeitsverhältnisse als Ausgangspunkt der Untersuchung fokussiert.

In fünf Kapiteln widmet sich der Autor den unterschiedlichen rechtlichen Aspekten der Entstehung der beiden Kolonien und deren imperiale Inbesitznahme, dem Aufbau der kolonialen Gesetzgebung und den rechtlichen Facetten, die im Zusammenhang mit dem Rechtsstatus „Staatsbürgerschaft“ erörtert werden. Nach jedem Kapitel werden „Zwischenresümees“ gezogen, die die zuvor faktenreich dargelegten Rechtsverhältnisse und deren Spielarten auf den Punkt bringen. Inhaltlich folgt auf eine fundiert dargelegte methodische Einleitung und Darstellung der Struktur der Arbeit, die Einführung in die historischen Hintergründe zur Gründung der italienischen *Colonia Eritrea* (Kapitel I., S. 19-48) und der deutschen Kolonie *Deutsch-Ostafrika* (Kapitel II., S. 55-77).

Anhand von Gesetzestexten und politischen Debatten entfaltet der Autor mittels einer mikrohistorischen Methode den Blick auf politische Diskursräume. Er analysiert Aktenmaterial mit ideologisch geprägten, aber multiple Lager abbildenden Debatten und beleuchtet menschliches Handeln, mithin geprägt durch emotional, moralisch und psychologisch bedingte „Anschauung“ (S. 84). Dies verdeutlicht schon zu Beginn der Arbeit wie verflochten und kontrovers sich die Wege hin zu einer nationalen Kolonialpolitik gestalteten. Sowohl das sich gerade gegründete Italienische Königreich (S. 134ff) als auch Akteure im Deutschen Kaiserreich unter Wilhelm II. standen der kolonialen Expansion, ausgehandelten Vertragsabschlüssen sowie Konzepten konkreter Inbesitznahme anfangs eher skeptisch gegenüber (S. 76). Mit der Feststellung „Kolonialismus war ein zentrales Element der Weltordnung“ (S. 13) wird ferner der grundsätzliche Argumentationsrahmen gesteckt, der in multifokalen Analyseschritten die Prozesshaftigkeit von Entscheidungsfindungen aufzeigt, die im globalen Gesamtgeschehen anderen Parametern ausgesetzt sind. Wer im globalen Feld

mitspielen wollte, musste sich als Kolonialherrschaft profilieren, um wahrgenommen zu werden. Darüber hinaus gab es konkrete nationale Interessen, die ausschlaggebend für einen bestimmten innenpolitisch verhandelten strategischen Weg waren. Italien verfolgte die Zielsetzung, sich als Nation zu festigen und mit einem Sendungsbewusstsein eine nationale Identität mit „Außenstandort“ Eritrea zu gründen. Das deutsche Kaiserreich fokussierte auf den Handel und wirtschaftliche nationale Bedürfnisse.

Im dritten Kapitel werden „Die Gesetzgebung zur Staatsangehörigkeit zwischen Kolonien und Metropolen“ mit den jeweiligen rechtlichen Kategorisierungen in den beiden Kolonien nebst der Gesetzesentwürfe und parteipolitischen Auseinandersetzungen dargelegt (S. 91-157). Im Vordergrund steht dabei die Erkenntnis, dass die zuvor beschriebenen nationalen Grundideen bei der Verfolgung dieses „Kolonialen Projekts“, sich auch auf die rechtliche Stellung der einheimischen Bewohnerinnen und Bewohner auswirkten: während Italien zunächst liberalere Gesetzgebungen bzgl. seiner „neuen“ Staatsbürger vorsah, zeigte Deutschland kein Interesse daran, die einheimische Bevölkerung mit der deutschen gleichzustellen. Beide Kolonialmächte vereinte jedoch auf der Makroebene, dass sie ihre Missionen als zivilisatorisches Projekt (S. 87) verstanden und somit nicht nur einen Standes- sondern einen Rassenunterschied herstellten, der sich als solcher auch in der Rechtsstellung manifestieren sollte.

Dennoch verdeutlichen die Debatten auf der Mikroebene, wie schwierig das Aufeinandertreffen der verschiedenen europäischen und außereuropäischen Akteure gewesen sein muss: das Jonglieren mit rechtsverbindlichen Begrifflichkeiten, die die lokale Bevölkerung verwaltungstechnisch erfassen und deren Rechte und Pflichten klären sollte, blieb bis zum Ende der Kolonialzeit schwierig, bisweilen wurden Gesetze verfasst, die jedoch vom lokalen Gouverneur nicht umgesetzt werden mussten. Konkret galt es zu klären, welchen Rechtsstatus die Kolonien zum „Mutterland“ hatten (Ausland oder Inland?) und ob die Kolonie einer anderen Gesetzgebung unterliegen würde. Die Erfahrung zeigte, dass, wenn das Rechtsverhältnis zwischen der europäischen Nation und der Kolonie uneindeutig war, dies auch extreme Auswirkungen auf die Rechtsprechung in der Kolonie hatte. Nach einem anfänglichen Ausschluss aus der Rechtssphäre der Kolonialmächte und einer Anerkennung des lokalen Gewohnheitsrechts, folgte für beide einheimische Bevölkerungen eine Einordnung als „Untertanen des kolonialen Reichs“, was nicht gleichzeitig als Staatsbürgerschaft missverstanden werden durfte (S. 86). Die weiteren Differenzierungen, ob die Einwohner der Staatsbürger (*cittadini*), Untertanen (*sudditi*) oder Assimilierte (*assimilati*) waren, ob sie im deutschen Schutzgebietsgesetz als „Eingeborene“ oder „Nicht-Eingeborene“ und somit nur als „Landesangehörige“ oder „Reichsangehörige“ rechtlich eingestuft wurden, beschäftigten die Kolonialverwaltungen umfanglich. Problematisiert wurde von beiden Kolonialmächten, ob die lokale Bevölkerung für ein „europäisches Rechtsverständnis zivilisiert genug sei“ und ob sie „einen, mit dem europäischen vergleichbaren Grad an Zivilisation verfügten“ (S. 109). Eher willkürlich formulierte rechtssoziologische „Normen“ innerhalb der kolonialen Herrschaft und die Festlegung von Herrschaftsinstrumenten, zu denen die Anerkennung oder Verweigerung der „Staatsangehörigkeit“ (S. 91) gehörte, manifestierte eine Gesellschaftsordnung nach Rassenkriterien, die die Kolonialmächte nutzten, um eine neue koloniale Ordnungsstruktur zu etablieren.

Wie sich dies aus der mikrohistorischen Perspektive anhand von weiteren rechtlichen Parametern auffächern lässt, beschreibt der Autor in Kapitel IV „Einbürgern und Ausschließen in den Kolonien Eritrea und Deutsch-Ostafrika“ (S. 159-196) sowie in Kapitel V „Staatsangehörigkeit und Familienverhältnisse“ (S. 207-253). Am Ende bleibt die Erkenntnis, dass die anfängliche (ideologische) Begründung – die Überbringung zivilisatorischer Gedanken und Entwicklungen (S. 91) –, sich als Chimäre herausstellt, da die gesamte komplexe verwaltungsrechtliche Praxis keine Gesetze verabschiedete, bei der die lokale Bevölkerung sich hin in einen Zustand der „Gleichberechtigung“ mit den kolonialen Akteuren hätte „entwickeln“ oder „hocharbeiten“ können. Die Gesetzgebung stand den ursprünglichen Leitgedanken sogar diametral gegenüber und manifestierte ein, dem kolonialen Projekt ohnehin zugrundeliegenden Herrschaftsgebahren, da ein dauerhafter Mangel an einem europäischen zivilisatorischen Grundverständnis auch die Berechtigung einer kolonialen Präsenz rechtfertigte.

Das Buch schließt mit einem Fazit und Ausblick (S. 257-264). Die umfangreiche Bibliographie listet die besuchten Archive in Deutschland (Bundesarchiv Berlin), Eritrea (Research & Documentation Center; Archives of the Municipality in Asmara), Italien (Archivo Storico Diplomatico del Ministero degli Affari Esteri e della Cooperazione Internazionale, Rom) und Tansania (Tanzania National Archives, Dar es Salaam) und verwendeten Dokumente (u.a. Gesetzestexte) auf, die nochmals die transnationale und sprachliche Herausforderung bei der Erschließung der Quellen sichtbar werden lässt.

Obwohl durch die Wahl des Buchtitels „Staatsangehörigkeit und Rassismus“ derzeitige postkoloniale Diskurse bedient zu werden scheinen, die eine Aufarbeitung „schuldhaften“ Handelns zweier ehemaliger Kolonialmächte vermuten lässt, die als Kontinuitäten heutige rassistische Haltungen begründen könnten, ist der Text frei von solchen ohnehin zweifelhaften und zu kurz gedachten kausalen Erklärungsmustern. Es ist ein großes Verdienst des Autors, dass er durch seinen stringent beibehaltenen Fokus auf den Forschungsgegenstand sowie einer historiographischen, epistemischen Herangehensweise, ein sachliches wissenschaftliches Grundlagenwerk schafft. Die anhand der aussagekräftigen Dokumente akribisch verwobene Argumentation des Autors, ergeben ein dichtes, sensibel austariertes Faktengeflecht, das Lesern die Möglichkeit einräumt, selbst ein Urteil fällen zu können.

Auch wenn im Einleitungskapitel bereits konstatiert wurde, dass die kolonialen Quellen, nur eine einseitige Darstellung ermöglichen (S. 15-17), wäre es dennoch wünschenswert gewesen, Literatur zu konsultieren, die sich mit den jeweiligen lokalen Lebensweisen, den Wirtschaftssystemen, Traditionen und vor allem, den einheimischen Rechtssystemen befassen, auf die in der Auseinandersetzung eingegangen wurde. Zur „kolonialen Dekonstruktion“ gehört auch, dass eine Bevölkerung, die durch die kolonialen Augen als homogene Gruppe suggeriert wurde, ihre individuellen biografischen Präsenzen zurückerhält. Welche unterschiedlichen Menschen verbargen sich hinter der Worthülse „Untertanen“? Wie viele lokale Herrschaftssysteme wurden unten den sieben Millionen Einwohnern Deutsch-Ostafrikas oder den gut 280.000 Bewohnern der *Colonia Eritrea* subsumiert? Welche lokalen „kolonialen Macht-)Systeme“ gab es schon vor der Etablierung der deutschen Schutzgebiete zwischen Swahili und Inlandsbevölkerung des heutigen Tansanias bzw. zwischen der christlichen Hochlandbevölkerung und der nomadischen muslimischen Tieflandbevölkerung im heutigen Eritrea? Die Kenntnis darüber würde bezüglich der

propagandistischen Festlegung des europäischen „Zivilisatorischen Projekts“ den Blick weiten auf andere Kolonialitäten innerhalb afrikanischer lokaler Gesellschaften.

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