Notes on Some Modal and Aspectual Morphemes in Aari

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0. Introduction.

In this paper we will discuss some negative markers and modal/aspectual markers of the Aari language[1], one of the Omotic languages spoken in Southwestern Ethiopia. The bulk of the grammatical description is still scanty since Hayward's pioneering work. We hope this small article would shed some new light on the grammar of Aari.

1. MAY

For the expression of the negative possibility ('cannot, impossible'), morpheme *may* is used in Aari[2]. As far as we know this morpheme has not been reported so far. See the following sentences.

(1) *daaki-n   kona   tučten   bul-mayee.*

    rope-Def.   this   is entangled   get loose- **MAYee**

    'Since the rope is entangled, it cannot get loose.'

(2) *barka-t   googi-na   bedmi   c'ac'aartan-ken   barka   sanna   jaʔ-mayee.*

    Barka-of   road-Def.   very   winding-because   Barka   well   reach- **MAYee**

  'Since the road to Barka (place name) is very winding, we cannot reach there soon.'

(3) *naami-hant   ena   esertit   haaqe.   taa   i-ra   ɓokš-mayee.*

    name- your   before   remember 1sg Pf.   Copula Past   now   me-on   remember- **MAYee**

    'I used to remember your name. Now I cannot remember it.'

It is clear that *may* is one of the negative morphemes like *ay* or *ki*. It is placed after the

verbal root, and the copula *-ee* follows it. In Aari the use of *-ee* is optional in many cases, but it seems obligatory after *may*. Although negative copula *dakki* inflects according to person and number (see Hayward, p.483), *may* appears only as *mayee*[3].

Sentence (1) has the verb *bul*, which is an intransitive verb and its subject is *daakin* 'the rope'. The structure of the sentence can be illustrated like this:

(1)′ [*daakin kona bul-*] *mayee*.

The sentence means that the realization of the situation or event in the parenthesis is impossible.

The verb *ja?* in sentence (2) means 'to arrive'. *barkat googina* means 'the road(s) of Barka' literally, but in this context the meaning of the phrase is 'the road which leads to Barka'. Certainly the subject that 'arrives at barka soon/easily' is not the road, but someone who travels to Barka, although it is not explicitly expressed.

Then what is the subject of the verb *boks-* 'to remember, memorize' in (3)? In comparison to (3), 'I don't remember your name.' would be translated as

(4)   *naami-hant   bokšaytee*.

    name-your   remember 1sg Impf. Neg.

As *bokšaytee* is the first person singular present form, it is clear that the subject of the sentence is the one who utters this sentence, that is 'I'. However, in (3) the subject (or semantically, the experiencer) is expressed as *i* ('me') in *ira*. So, the sentence structures of (3) and (2) can be expressed as,

(3)′ [for me to remember your name] is impossible

(2)′ [for someone to arrive at Barka soon] is impossible

It ca be said that (3) ′ is derived by inserting 'me' in the place of 'someone' as 'ira' (on

me) from the following structure.

(3) ″ [for someone to remember your name] is impossible

Similar construction can be seen in (5), where the verb of perception is used.

(5)   *sec'a-na*   *bedmi*   *ďumsoo,*   *fič'a-na*   *haaf-mayee.*

         day-Def.   much   be dark Con.   ground-Def.   find- MAYee

         'As it is very dark, we cannot see the ground.'

Semantically *fič'ana* 'the ground' is the object of *haaf-* 'to find, get'. When a noun

with the determiner *-na* functions as an object, it usually takes the accusative marker *-m*.

So if *fič'ana* were syntactically an object, it would appear as *fič'anam*. It is obvious

that the sentence was derived from structure (5)′ by deleting 'someone' and at the same

time putting 'the ground' to the sentence-initial position.

(5)′   [for someone to see the ground] is impossible

Although *fič'ana* is semantically the object of 'seeing', it formally appears as if it were

a subject.

How about the next sentence whose main verb is typically transitive?

(6)   *waa*   *zammi*   *gaʔ-mayee.*

         meat   hard   bite- MAYee

         'This meat is hard to chew.'

waa zammi is not overtly marked whether it is an object or not. However, since the verb

is not in the passive, there can be no problem to see it as the patient of *gaʔ-* semantically.

In this case the agent is not expressed at all. Syntactically the patient occupies the

subject position. It is clear that (6) is derived from (6)′ through the same process as (5).

(6)′   [for someone to chew hard meat] is impossible

This construction is suited to avoid mentioning the subject explicitly or as an impersonal expression.

(7) *amel-kit es-mayee.*

character-his   know- **MAYee**

'His character cannot be understood.'

From these instances we see that if the verb which appears with *may* is transitive, its object appears syntactically as the subject of the sentence. It might be argued that the noun phrase which occupies the usual subject position in such a construction is to be considered as the topic of the sentence.

2. ČAAL

To express the possibility Aari uses the verb *čaal-* which is a loan word from Amharic *čälä* 'be able'. Morphologically Aari *čaal-* is a regular verb and makes conjugation according to the person and number. Here are some examples of its forms and usages.

Positive: *haad-ken   čaalditee.*   'I can come'

come-for   be able 1sg Impf

haad-ken   čaaltitee.   'I could come'

come-for   be able 1sg Pf.

Negative: *haad-ken   čaalaytee.*   'I cannot come.'

come-for   be able 1sg Impf.Neg.

haad-ken   čaalkitee.   'I could not come.'

come-for   be able 1sg Pf. Neg.

There is a peculiar form *čaalmay* which can be analysed as *čaal+ may*. As we

discussed in the preceding section, *may* means 'it is impossible'. Then in this form we have two elements both of which express possibility. The first element *čaal* does not conjugate at all in this construction.

(9) *eya-n-kit-gir   č'ubsinti   čaal-may   haaqe.*

    house-Def.-his-in   smoke Inf. be able- MAY Copula Past.

    'It was impossible to smoke in his house.'

In this sentence 'what is impossible' is expressed by *č'ubsinti* which is the infinitive form of *č'ubs-* 'to smoke (tobacco)' As we discussed in the preceding section, the structure of the sentence seems to be derived from the following structure:

(9)′ [for someone to be able to smoke in his house] was impossible.

But actually 'what was impossible' is not 'the possibility of smoking', but 'the action of smoking itself'. So here *čaal-may* functions as one unit with the similar function as *-may*. The same meaning can be conveyed by (10)

(10) *eya-n-kit-gir   č'ubs-may   haaqe.*

    house-his-Def.-in smoke-MAY Copula Past

    'It was impossible to smoke in his house.'

Both (9) and (10) are the impersonal expressions without overt reference to the subject. Then what is the difference between <*čaalmay* > and <*may*>? We are not in a position to give a precise explanation on the functional difference between them. However, we can make a hypothesis concerning the historical circumstances of its origin. For the expression of the possibility, Aari did not have the special inflectional forms. On the other hand Aari had the morpheme *may* which is used only for the expression of the negative possibility. As the contact with Amhara people increased

since the late 19th century, Aari people came to borrow Amharic verb *čälä*, and it came

to be used widely both in the positive and negative forms. At the same time *čaalmayee*

came to be in use as a fixed expression, which corresponds to the often heard Amharic

expression *ayəččaləm* [4] 'it is impossible'.

3. ER

Hayward explains the 'affirmative future' in his description like this:

> The simple imperfect may be used to indicate an incomplete action either in the
>
> present or in the future. In addition, however, there is a special future tense, though
>
> it appears not to have its own negative. The formative of the future seems to be a
>
> –t with singular persons, and –st with plural persons; but there is also a curious –er
>
> element, which appears in most forms of the future paradigm instead of the unusual
>
> pronominal elements. (p.472)

The paradigm of this inflection is:

1 sg.	*baʔter*	1 pl.	*baʔsto(o)t*
2 sg.	*baʔtay*	2 pl.	*baʔster*
3 sg.	*baʔter*	3 pl.	*baʔstert*

In summary this 'affirmative future' has three characteristics:

a. It has no negative forms.

b. The future tense markers are –*t* in the singular and –*st* in the plural forms.

c. In most cases 'curious –*er*' appears after –*(s)t*.

Apparently the paradigm is peculiar in comparison with other verbal paradigms and

lacks uniformity. Especially the pattern of the appearance of –*er* is strange. In this

section we would like to investigate these problems.

The following examples contain –*er(e)* forms.

(11) *aksi-na-m   gi?kayoo,   wade   waade.   iim   ga?s-t-ere.*

      dog-Def.-Acc.   hit Imp.   please   please   me   bite -t-ERe

      'Please, please, hit the dog. It might bite me.'

(12) *googi-n   haa-šet-kis   gob-sink,   makina   haam   ic-t-ere.*

      road-the   you-see-without   pass-if   car   you(Acc.)   eat-t-ERe

      'If you pass the road without watching around, the car might hit you.'

(13) *waa   zammi   ga?-maee.   haa-ga?-sink   aci-hant   ay-t-ere.*

      meat   hard   bite-MA(Y)ee   you-bite-if   tooth-your   break-t-ERe

      'It is impossible to chew hard meat. If you chew it, your tooth might be broken.'

(14) *yinci   tokomi-na   afla-n-k   šufsoo   yetka.   koy-na   ye?kink*

      child   small-the   cloth-Def.-with   wrap Con.   take Imp.   this-Def.   take-if not

      č'aaqa   haa-rank   ic-t-ere.

      evil-eye   you-from   eat-t-ERe

      'Take your baby after wrapping him in a cloth.'   'If you do not do so, the evil

      eye might catch you.'

The subjects of the sentences are 'dog', 'I', 'your tooth' and 'evil eye (a person with evil-eye). As our data lack other person forms, we cannot check all of the Hayward's forms.

What is the proper function of –*er* as evidenced from these examples? In (11) the second sentence describes the reason of the content of the first utterance. The second sentence does not simply refer to the future event. Rather the speaker is afraid that if his

request would not be accomplished, he might be bit by the dog. His anxiety is expressed by the form *gaʔstere*.

The second sentences of the examples (12) to (14) contain the verbs with *–er* in the apodosis of the conditional sentences. The protases of (12) and (13) contain negative condition while in (14) it contains positive condition. Anyhow the apodoses of all the examples are not simply the description of the future events, but rather expressions of the speakers' attitude to the happenings of the events as the translations show them.

Through the examination of above examples we can conclude that the Hayward's 'affirmative future' is not a special tense form, but a modal form which concerns with the epistemic modality.[5] Then which one is the modal element, *–(s)t* or *–er*? Though Hayward treats *–(s)t* as a formatives of future, we would rather treat them as the same aspectual markers which appear in the verbal inflections and consider *–er* to be a modality marker. As to the inflection, the Hayward's paradigm seems to be a mixture of some different inflections. Although we lack sufficient and precise data, it might be the case that the form has the only one 'Verbal root + *t* +*er*' form and does not inflect at all.

Lastly there are some forms which attract our attention. The Aari expression of 'but' is *maacinkere* in Biyo dialect and *keezergainkere* in Galila dialect. These forms can be analyzed:

maacinkere = maat ('be')+ sink ('if') + er + e

keezergainkere = keez ('tell') + er(Passive marker)+ ga('say') + ink ('if')+ er + e

It is interesting that both forms contain *er* after the subordination morphemes. There is another form *minalbateree* in Galila dialect. Clearly it is an amalgamation of an Amharic loanword *minalbat* (*mənalbat* 'perhaps, maybe') and the native morpheme *er*.

These instances, especially the last one, can be strong evidence of our argument.

The function of –er does not seem to be limited only to the expression of epistemic modality. In the following example –ere seems to express the speaker's determination.[6]

(15) *Garayo   kina   gaba   kaitana   aani   guriee.   waade   haana   kiim*

    Garayo   today   market going-Def. hand free   please   you   him

    haaf-sink   birri   donq   kiin   imka.   ita   haan   maas-t-ere.

    find-if   Birr   five   him give Imp. I   you   return-t-ERe

    'Today Garayo(Person name) came to the market free hand. Please give him 5 Birr

    if you find him. I will return the money to you.'

Anyhow, though further investigation is needed, –er is not a future tense marker, but a modal element.

4. –A(A)RO

Aari has several derived verbal stems: causative with –s(is), passive with –ar/-er and reflexive with –im.[7] Here we report the existence of another stem with –a(a)ro which denotes an iterative action. As to the actual forms of this stem we have found only a converb-type form. This stem does not seem to appear in finite forms as the main verb of the sentence or in any type of the infinitive forms.[8]

(16)   *duuti-hant   aysoo   bilka.*[9]

      leg-your   break Con. bend Imp.

      'Bend and stretch your leg(s)!'

(17)   *duuti-hant   aysaaroo   bilka.*

      leg-your   break-AARO bend Imp.

'Bend and stretch your leg(s) several times!'

Both examples are imperative sentence denoting the bending and the stretching of the

leg. In (17) even though the imperative form is the same as that of (16), its only possible

interpretation is to stretch the leg several times in accordance with the bending. It is

evident that the difference of the forms of *ays-* produces the semantic difference of the

two sentences. In (17) the occurrence of the motion of 'bending' is once, but it occurs

several times in (18). Since both forms has *-o(o)* in common, the whole form *aysaaro*

can also be considered to be functioning as a converb and *-ar* to be an iterative marker.

(18)   *šooša   koom   teyka.   kayaro   icka.*

       parched grain   these   take Imp.   go-**AARO**   eat Imp.

'Take these parched grains. Eat it while walking.'

Here someone is ordered to eat *šooša* several times while continuing to walk. The

second sentence of this example is also an imperative sentence.

(19)   *yinci-na   noqa-n-gir   ardaaro   utaaro   leeqdeke.*

       children-Def.   water-Def.-in enter-**AARO**   come out-**AARO**   paly 3pl Impf.

'The children are playing while going into the water or coming out of it.'

This sentence illustrates the situation where children are playing in the river. Sometimes

they dive into the water and sometimes they come up. They continue this chain of action

repeatedly.

(20) *kit   indabsi-na   ena   zammi haaqe.   ta   seeqertan-ken   lanqaaro   kaee.*

       his   brother-Def.   before   strong   was   now   be in sick-for   be weak-**AARO** go3sg Impf.

'His brother was strong before. Now he is getting weak from suffering illness.'

This example is a little bit different from the preceding ones. The use of *-a(a)ro* does

not have to do with iterativity, but to describe the changing status of the health condition

with the passing of time. We have some more similar examples in (21) and (22).

(21) *addisaaba-t   eed   qut'uri   bon-ank   bon   guyyaaro   kayde.*

Addis Ababa-of   people   number   year-from   year   increase-**AARO**   go 3 sg Impf.

'The population of Addis Ababa has been increasing year by year.'

This usage is typically found with *kay-* as the verb of the main clause. Now consider the

next sentence.

(22) *alq-wont-gir   hay   artka.   wota   rey   laqamtabaab   alqaaro   doqtotee.*

talk-our-in   don't   enter Imp.   we   thing   what is good   alq-**AARO** exist 1 pl Pf.

'Don't meddle in our talk. We have been talking about a good thing.'

In the second sentence *doqtotee* denotes a certain duration of time, during which there

have been exchanges of talk. Formally, just like MAYee or ERee, the original 3 sg. form

-A(A)RO seems is used here as a general form.

5.   DAKKI

5.1. Verbal root –DA

Aari has a negative copula *dakki*.

ita   temari   dakkiee.   'I am not a student.'

I   student   Neg. copula 1 sg

The inflectional paradigm of *dakki* is as follows.

1 sg	*dakkit(ee)*	1 pl	*dakkot(ee)*
2 sg	*dakkay(ee)*	2 pl	*dakket(ee)*
3 sg	*dakki(ee)*	3 pl	*dakkek(ee)*

Bender (1991) treats *dak-* as an irregular negative verb and analyzes *dakkie* as *dakk-ʔi-ye*. Hayward (p.464) and Daniel (p.40) give no further explanation than to state that *da-k-* is a negative copula/existential verb. In the following discussion we will propose an alternative analysis that *dakki* is derived from the verbal root *da-* + *ki*.

No argument is needed to say that this *-k* is the same as the *k* which appears in the verbal inflection of the perfect forms as a negative morpheme. For example *estitee* 'I knew' is the positive form while the negative form is *eskitee* 'I didn't know'.

The whole paradigm is:

1 sg	*eskit(ee)*	1 pl	*eskot(ee)*
2 sg	*eskay(ee)*	2 pl	*esket(ee)*
3 sg	*eski(ee)*	3 pl	*eskek(ee)*

How about *da*? It seems that there is no independent morpheme *da* in Aari. However, we can find the existence of *da* as a bound morpheme in some forms.

First we can cite examples in which *da* appears with *–ink* 'if' as *daink*.

(23) *ita   saabi   da-ink   yeem   aggaz   haaqe.*

    I   God   **DA** -if   you (Acc.)   help   Copula Past

    'If I were God, I would help you.'

(24) *haana   kuur   dooq   da-ink   iim   dassi   gaada   haaqe.*

    you   here   exist   **DA** -if   me   be happy   saying   Copula Past.

    'If you had been here, I would have been very happy.'

The analysis of *daink* into *da+ink* is supported by the fact that the *-ink* is a common element with such forms as *–sink* or *– kink* found in the following examples.

(25) qaara-n   haad-ink   seyni   jakka.

   monkey(s)-Def. come-if   stone   throw Imp.

      'If the monkey comes, throw stones!'

(26) doobi-na   qan-sink   šenaak   haadaytee.

   rain-Def.   rain-if   tomorrow   go 1sg Impf.Neg.

      'If it rains I will not go.'

(27) doobi-na   qan-kink   šenaak   haadhaaditee.

   rain-Def.   rain-if not tomorrow go 1sg Impf.

      'If it doesn't rain, I will come.'

As can be seen from the examples above *–kink* has a negative meaning in contrast with

the positive *–ink* and *–sink*. Although the functional difference between *– ink* and *–sink*

is not clear to us, it is not relevant to our present argument. Since both *–kink* and *–sink*

are attached to the verbal root forms, we may extract *da-* as a verbal root with the

meaning 'to be, exist'.[10] However, it is exceptional in that its phonological structure is

CV. We will take up this point later.

   Secondly, there are other data where we have *daee* forms.[11]

(28) een-gir   tiila   meem   daee?

   house-in   pot   how many   DAee

      'How many pots are there in the house?'

(29) šenaak   qat'ar-ist   daee.

   tomorrow   appointment-my   DAee

      'Tomorrow I have an appointment.'

daee functions here as an existential verb. Since *ee* is a copula, *da* is the main part of the

form which means 'exists'. Its meaning is the same as that of *dooq-* which is used as an independent verb. As to the form *daee*, above examples show only the third person singular form. We don't have further data on other person forms, but we are inclined to think it as invariable like *maee* in the following chapter. Just as *may* always appears with *-ee* as *ma(y)ee*, *da* seems never to appear without the help of *– ee*. So this use of *daee* is a fixed existential construction like English 'There is ~'.

The phonological structure of the most Aari verbal roots is CV(V)C(C). It means that most of them do not end in a vowel. The only one example of the type CVV is *gaa-* 'say' as found in such forms as *gaa-titee* 'I said' or *gaaka* 'say (Imp.)' However, the infinitive is not **gaainti*, but *gayinti*. This is the same for the converb forms where we have *gayso* 'he saying', not *gaaso*, etc. So there is an alternation of *gaa~gay*. Also there is no verbal root with CV structure other than *da-*. Since there is such a severe restriction on the phonological structure of the verbal root, the combination of *da-* + *k* cannot appear as **dak*. We presume *k* is geminated to fill the slot after CV (= da) to form *dakk-* as if the verbal root were *dak-*.

We may also conclude that the imperfect marker *da* is also derived from the verb **da* through grammaticalization.

Lastly from the comparative point of view we may refer to the Hamar *da* 'exist' and Dime *deen* 'exist' as the cognates of Aari *da*.

(30) Hamar example: *inta da, ya daidu?* [12]

               I have-existed you existing-existing

               'I'm here, are you here?'

(31) Dime example: *t'erap'p'eza-se mac'aaf deen.*

desk-on   book   exist

'There is a book on the desk.'

5.2. Other forms with DAKKI or DA

Another form with *dakki* is *dakkind(a)* with the morpheme *inda* which Hayward calls as 'relative formative'.

(32) *koo-biš rey waaga dakkindee.*

     this-like thing price **DAKKInda+ee**

     'A thing like this is worthless.'

Also there is a *dakkidayk* form with a subordination marker *-dayk* 'because'.[13]

(33) *kina arf dakki-dayk peč'a-na dumee.*

     today moon **DAKKI-because** ground-Def. dark

     'Since there is no moon today, it is dark.'

Lastly the *dakka(a)b* forms are used to mean 'the one who is/has not ~' with a noun or adjective. Characteristic examples are those words with the meaning concerning the physical handicaps.

    afa dakkaab 'dumb' (*afa* 'mouth')

    qaami dakkab 'deaf' (*qaami* 'ear')

    aafi dakkaab 'blind' (*aafi* 'eye')

All these words show the construction 'name of the body parts + *dakkaab*'. *dakkab* is formed from *dakki* + *(a)ab*, which can be considered as an allomorph of *baab* 'father, owner'.[14] Other instances with *dakkaab* are:

    habtidakkaab 'one who is not wealthy' (*habti* 'wealth')

yincidakkaab   'one who does not have a child/children (*yinci* 'child')[15]

There are many forms with *daab*   (< *da* + *a(a)b*) attached to the verbal roots:

> *norti esdaab* 'one who knows intestines (=who tells fortune by reading the intestines)' (< *norti* 'intestines' and verbal root *es-* 'know')

> *waa tečdaab* 'one who cut (meat)=butcher'

> (< *waa* 'meat' and verbal root *teč-* 'cut')

Transcription system:

The transcription is largely phonemic. Only in the case of /p/ I have noted allophones [p] and [f](~[ɸ]). Please note the following transcriptions which differ from the IPA system: y[j], š [ʃ], c[ts], c'[ts'], č [tʃ], č'[tʃ'], h[ɦ] and q[k']~[q]~[ɢ]~[ʁ].

Abbreviations:

Acc.: Accusative

Con.: Converb

Def. : Definite marker

Imp.: Imperative

Impf. : Imperfect

Neg.: Negative

Pf.: Perfect

Notes:

1. The Aari informants for this study are Mr. Bellete Wuleta (Biyo dialect), Mr. Taffese Assefa (Biyo dialect), Mr. Demelash Gamash (Galila dialect) and Mr. Milkiyas (Wubhamer dialect). Dime informant is Mr. Makoro Gizachew. The data were gathered intermittently in 1990-1991, 1993, 2002 and 2003 in Jinka, South Omo and in Addis Ababa. We are grateful to them for their enduring and valuable cooperation.

2. In many cases *y* is dropped and we hear *maee* instead.

3. In the perfect it appears as ~ *may haaqe* as in the example (9) and (10) below.

4. This is the 3 sg. Imperfect negative form of *täčalä* 'be possible'.

5. See Palmer, p.24ff.

6. 'Willingness' is a subcategory of dynamic modality. See Palmer, p.76 ff.

7. Although in Tsuge (p.1) *–im* is explained as reflexive, - *im* also functions as passive.

8. Infinitives are formed by adding *–inti*, *-i* or *–mi* to the verbal roots.

9. The form *–aysoo* itself is actually the third person singular form of the converb. But in many parts of the Aari verb morphology, the third person singular form seems to be used as the general form. For example see Hayward p. 474.

10. According to Daniel, 'to be' is *day-* . But even in his analysis *dak* 'not to be' and *day* contain the common element *da*, which should be treated as a vowel root 'be'.

11. 'Verbal root + *ee*' foms are also found with *haad-* 'come', *kay-* 'go' or *tey-* 'take'. See Hayward p. 482.

12. See Lydall, p.434.

13. *dakkidayk* is also find in a proverbial expression *dakkidayk lostriee*. 'Even if he has nothing with him, he is proud of himself.'

14. In the preceding section we cite forms with *a(a)b*. We can find such forms as

alqayab or *šedayab* that have the common 'Verbal root + *ay + ab*' pattern in Wubhamer dialect. *Alqayab* appears in *afa alqayab* 'dumb' (*afa* 'mouth'), while *šedayab* appears in *aafi šedayab* 'blind' (*aafi* 'eye') These forms are consisted of *alq-*'to speak'/ *šed* '*to see*' , *ay* 'not' and *ab* 'having'. The second element is the same form that appears in the paradigm of the negative imperfect forms.

15. The antonyms of these words are *habtibaab* and *yincibaab* respectively.

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