

The multifunctionality of similative markers in Libido

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Libido is a Highland East Cushitic language spoken in south central Ethiopia some 120 km south of Addis Ababa. It is closely related to Hadiyya, other closely related languages being the languages of the Kambaata group, Sidaama, Gedeo and Burji. Libido has two similative markers, namely *'iso* and *k'aa'la*, both being basically nouns. Whereas the exact meaning of the first is less clear, the latter is also used synchronically as a noun with the meaning 'likeness, circumstance, manner, kind'. Due to their status as nouns, the phrasal complements of *'iso* and *k'aa'la* are modifiers and the clausal complements are relative clauses. Both markers are used interchangeably in most cases. An exception is the formation of glossonyms which are formed exclusively with *'iso*, e.g. *libido* 'Libido (people)' > *libitt'iso* 'Libido (language)', and *'amaara* 'Amhara (people)' > *'amaa'niso* 'Amharic'. The two similative markers have a number of functions. First, they mark similative phrases with different types of complements (nouns, personal pronouns, demonstratives, adverbs) and similative clauses.

<i>'itt'u-m</i> 3S.M.NOM-EMP	<i>naccu</i> touch.PRIV.REL.3S.M	<i>lasaganní</i> after.GLI	<i>buuranní</i> butter.GLI
<i>K'aa'la</i> kind.ACC	<i>bukkamuko.</i> melt.PRIV.3S.M		

'After he had touched [her mouth with his mouth], he melted like butter.'

Second, the similative markers adverbialise the adjectives *'era* 'good' and *joora* 'bad'.

<i>'illago</i> first.ACC	<i>'esanní</i> 1S.ACC	<i>joor</i> bad.RED	<i>k'aa'la</i> kind.ACC	<i>hoffiisseeitto.</i> reduce.CNV1.PST.2S
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'First you humiliated me badly.'

Third, they mark accord phrases and accord clauses.

<i>t'arakicco</i> python.S.ACC	<i>wengereelícci</i> fox.S.NOM	<i>yu</i> say.PRIV.REL.3S.M	<i>'iso</i> like.ACC
<i>'issi</i> do.CNV1.3S.M	<i>'app'isi</i> beat.CNV1.3S.M	<i>šuko.</i> kill.PRIV.3S.M	

'He did as the fox had said and killed the python with the club.'

Fourth, both *'iso* and *k'aa'la* function as markers of complement clauses (including complements of the verbum dicendi *kur-* 'tell') and adverbial clauses (immediate anteriority, purpose).

<i>hobbícci-m</i> lion.S.NOM-EMP	<i>móori</i> bull.NOM	<i>k'araa</i> bear.IPV.REL.3S.M	<i>k'aa'la</i> kind.ACC
<i>lak'aa</i> know.IPV.REL.3S.M	<i>lob</i> big.RED	<i>manna</i> people.ACC	<i>t'ekk'ammon^a</i> count.MED.CSV.HRT.1P

yuko.
say.PRIV.3S.M
The lion said, "Let us call the elders who know that a bull gives birth!"

According to my actual knowledge, the similative markers are never used in quotative constructions, which are marked using the verb *y-* 'say'. Several of the functions are also attested in Hadiyya but – as far as I am aware – only with the cognate similative marker *'isa* (e.g. Sim 1989: 316, 382, Perrett 2000: 60).

The paper describes the different functions of the two similative markers and attempts to propose a connection between the different functions.

References

- Perrett, Denise Lesley. 2000. The dynamics of tense construal in Hadiyya. London: SOAS.
- Sim, Ronald. 1989. Predicate conjoining in Hadiyya: a head-driven PS grammar. Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh.