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► **To cite this version:**

Yvonne Treis. Polysemous agent nominals in Kambaata (Cushitic). STUF, 2011, 64 (4), pp.369-381. <halshs-00717269>

HAL Id: halshs-00717269

<https://shs.hal.science/halshs-00717269v1>

Submitted on 12 Jul 2012

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Polysemous Agent Nominals in Kambaata (Cushitic)*

Kambaata has a morpheme *-aan* with which agent nominals can be derived from verbs and nouns. The present article discusses, firstly, the morphological and syntactic characteristics of *-aan* nominals and the specific problem of which word class they should be assigned to. Secondly, it is shown that the *-aan* morpheme is multifunctional. Apart from agent nominals, it is used to derive instrument, place and patient nominals.

1. Introduction

Kambaata belongs to the Cushitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic language phylum, more precisely to the Highland East Cushitic (HEC) language group. The hitherto little documented language is spoken by more than 600,000 speakers in an area approximately 300 km south-west of the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. The language has a robust noun-verb distinction and a (sub-)word class of adjectives.¹ Kambaata is strictly suffixing and has a rich verbal and nominal morphology. One of its derivational morphemes, the agentive morpheme *-aan*, productively generates agent nominals on the basis of verbs. In the present article, the formal features (section 2) as well as the meaning and use of *-aan* nominals (section 3) are discussed. In a language without a documented history, agent nominals can only be analysed in a synchronic perspective.² The present work is intended to supplement the vast literature on agentive derivations that is predominantly concerned with Indo-European languages. This study is based on a corpus of spontaneously produced recorded data, elicited data and data from written sources. In addition, published works are consulted. First examples for derived agent nominals in Kambaata are given in LESLAU (1952, 1956), HUDSON (1976) and SHELEME (1989). Though sketchy, these previous works already point to some of the important features of

* Research for this paper was supported in part by grants from the *Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft* (DFG) and by a La Trobe Post-doctoral Research Fellowship; this support is gratefully acknowledged. I am indebted to my consultants Tessema Handiso and Deginet Wotango. Thanks are also due to Abeba Matewos, Getahun Hellebo, Berhanu Erango, Getahun Jorga, Ermias Hirigo and Mulugeta Eyoel for replying to my questionnaire. I am grateful to Gerrit J. Dimmendaal and an anonymous reviewer for valuable comments on an earlier version of this paper.

¹ As argued in TREIS (2008: 81-97), Kambaata has four open word classes: nouns, verbs, attributes (with the sub-word classes adjectives, numerals and demonstratives) and ideophones/interjections.

² The earliest lexical account of Xambaaro, a Kambaata dialect, is BORELLI (1890). The very first grammatical information on Kambaata is provided in CERULLI (1925) and MORENO (1939).

the *-aan* morpheme and its derivatives. All HEC languages share a cognate “agentive suffix” (HUDSON 1976: 273f).

2. Form

The Kambaata agent nominal has the following morphological structure:

STEM-*-aan*-NUMBER-CASE(-GENDER)

Though deverbal agent nominals are much more common (1), it was noted as early as in LESLAU (1952: 351) that *-aan* is also attached to nominal bases (2).³

- (1) *kiil-aan-ch-ú* ‘magician’ (L52: 351)⁴ < *kiil-* ‘do magic’
kaas-aan-ch-ú ‘planter’ (K8: 8) < *kaas-* ‘plant’
amma’nn-aan-ch-ú ‘believer’ < *amma’nn-* ‘believe’
raga’-aan-ch-ú ‘heir’ < *raga’-* ‘inherit’
zaakkoot-aan-ch-ú-ta ‘alcohol trader (F)’ < *zaakkoot-* ‘trade alcohol’
- (2) *lokk-aan-ch-ú* ‘pedestrian’ (L52: 351) < *lokk-á-ta* ‘foot’
qomaax-aan-n-ú ‘lepers’ (K8: 47) < *qomaax-á* ‘leprosy’⁵
maz-aan-ch-ú ‘wounded person’ (K5: 9) < *maz-á-ta* ‘wound’

Verbal bases of agent nominals may be bare roots (3) or extended verbs, i.e. causative (4-5), middle (6), passive (7) or reciprocal stems (8). In rare cases, agent nominals are derivatives of compound stems (9). Complex nominal stems are not attested as the input of the agentive derivation.

- (3) *ros-aan-ch-ú* ‘student’ < *ros-* ‘learn’
- (4) *ros-is-aan-ch-ú* ‘teacher’ < *ros-is-* ‘cause to learn’
- (5) *il-siis-aan-ch-ú-ta* ‘midwife’ (F) < *il-siis-* ‘cause to give birth’
- (6) *uucc-aqq-aan-ch-ú* ‘beggar’ < *uucc-aqq-* ‘beg for one’s benefit’
- (7) *xa’mm-am-aan-ch-ú* ‘person questioned’ < *xa’mm-am-* ‘be asked’ (K8: 55)
- (8) *beeqq-am-aan-ch-ú* ‘participant’ < *beeqq-am-* ‘participate’ (K8: 28)
- (9) *giir-qas-aan-ch-ú* ‘bonfire’ < *giir-á-ta* ‘fire’ + *qas-* ‘pierce’

³ The morpheme *-aan* is only rarely attested on adjectival stems (Treis 2008: 268, 282). Kambaata thus confirms DRESSLER’s cline of the preferred bases of agent noun formation: verb > noun > adjective (DRESSLER 1986: 524). Due to the lack of reliable data, however, de-adjectival derivatives are excluded from the present analysis.

⁴ Kambaata examples cited from earlier works (LESLAU 1952, 1956; SHELEME 1989; HUDSON 1976, 1989; BERHANU 1986) are adjusted to the official Kambaata orthography (MAATEWOOS 1992; TREIS 2008: 73-79) to enable easier comparison of the examples. In addition to this, stress is marked and, if necessary, the transcription of these data is corrected.

⁵ The base noun is an Amharic loan. Interestingly, Amharic ቁመጣ *qwāmat’ā* designates the patient (‘leper’), while the disease is referred to by the derived noun ቁመጣ *qwəmt’anna* ‘leprosy’ (KANE 1990: 708f).

The agentive morpheme is obligatorily followed by at least two morphemes, the first one being a number morpheme. The singulative morpheme *-ch* marks singular reference. The form with a doubled stem-final consonant is used for plural reference (10).⁶ Number morphemes precede case suffixes, e.g. the morpheme *-ú*, which marks the accusative on masculine agent nominals.⁷ When the agent nominal has a feminine referent, the gender marker *-ta* is added in the accusative; see (5).

(10) *mogga'-aan-ch-ú(-ta)* M.SG (F.SG) 'thief' / *mogga'-aan-n-ú* PL 'thieves'

Agent nominals share morphological and syntactic features with nouns, verbs and adjectives. As phrasal heads, agent nominals inflect like nouns and distinguish as many case forms as the latter do: accusative, nominative, genitive, dative, ablative, instrumental-comitative-perlative, locative and oblique (TREIS 2008: 103). In (11), the first agent nominal is ablative-marked as the head of the standard NP, the second agent nominal is nominative-marked as the head of the subject NP. Like nouns, agent nominals can be modified by genitive nouns (12) and adjectives (13).

(11) *xah-í dimb-aan-n-úichch seel-í dimb-áan-ch-u woyy-áno*
word-M.GEN be:drunk-AAN-PL-M.ABL beer-M.GEN be:drunk-AAN-SG-M.NOM be:better-3M.IPV
A beer drunkard is better than word drunkards. [Proverb]

(12) *mixaad-í* (M.GEN) *shiinsh-aan-ch-ú* 'griddle wiper' < *shiinsh-* 'wipe'
haraqé (F.GEN) *ag-aan-n-ú* 'spirits drinkers' < *ag-* 'drink'
maganzeeb-ó (F.GEN) *moos-aan-n-ú* 'patients of the rainbow [disease]' <
moos- 'be(come) sick'

(13) *woyy-á lallab-aan-ch-ú* 'better orator' < *lallab-* 'speak in public'
hoolam-á zazzal-aan-n-ú 'many traders' < *zazzal-* 'trade'

Although they are to a certain extent noun-like, deverbal agent nominals reflect ("inherit") the argument structure of their verbal bases. Like verbs, they are able to govern objects (14). Though commonly modified by adjectives (13), they may also be modified by adverbs (15).

(14) *maal-á* (ACC) *it-áan-ch-o* (K4: 33) '[you] meat eater'
oddishsh-á-ta (ACC) *gob-aan-ch-ú* (H89: 148) 'tailor' [lit. "clothes sewer"]
jeechch-ú-ta (ACC) *abbis-aan-ch-ú* (K4: 18) 'punctual person' [lit. "time re-
specter"]

(15) [...] *danáam-o-ga xawaaqq-aan-ch-ú ass-í dand-áno*
good-M.OBL-ADV speak-AAN-SG-M.ACC do-M.DAT be:able-3M.IPV
[A sound rhetorical education] can produce a good [lit. "well"] speaker.

Deverbal agent nominals are even capable of governing more or less elaborate subordinate clauses; see the converb clauses preceding the agent nominals in (16-18).⁸

⁶ K'abeena and Alaaba, Kambaata's closest relatives, have slightly different plural forms: *-aan-ú* in K'abeena (CRASS 2005: 73) and *-aan-ú-ta* in Alaaba (SCHNEIDER-BLUM 2007: 147).

⁷ The accusative case form is also the citation form.

⁸ Consult SCHNEIDER-BLUM (2007: 147, ex. 411) for an Alaaba example in which an agent nominal is modified by a converb.

Rather than just taking verbal stems as its basis, the *-aan* morpheme can be considered as being attached to a complete (more or less complex) verb phrase (cf. DRESSLER 1986: 522), including objects and adverbial constituents such as converb clauses, as indicated by the square brackets in the first lines of (16)-(18).

- (16) [*maqées-s* *it*]-*áan-ch-o* (K4: 33)
do:with:force-2SG.PCO eat-AAN-SG-M.OBL
[you] forceful eater [lit. “forcefully eater”]
- (17) [*gamball-á it-t* *wojj-ú* *cin*]-*áan-ch-o* (K4: 33)
black-M.ACC eat-2SG.PCO white-M.ACC shit-AAN-SG-M.OBL
[you] black eat[er] [and] white shitter
- (18) [*ga''-aqq-án-t* *beeqq-án-t* *it*]-*áan-ch-o* (K4: 33)
call-MID-PASS-2SG.PCO divide.MID-PASS-2SG.PCO eat-AAN-SG-M.OBL
[you] assemble[r], share[r] [and] eater⁹

It is not yet clear what makes speakers prefer a [Complement V-]*aan-ch-ú* (as, e.g., in (14)) to a [Genitive] [V-]*aan-ch-ú* construction (as, e.g., in (12)). Whereas for certain agent nominals, all speakers interviewed unanimously voted for a genitive modifier (e.g. in the case of *qabal-é* (F.GEN) *gashsh-aan-ch-ú* ‘qābāle ruler’, lit. “ruler of a qābāle”)¹⁰ or an accusative complement (e.g. in the case of *heess-á* (M.ACC) *kul-aan-ch-ú* ‘story teller’), in many other cases, some informants preferred the complement construction, some the genitive construction, and others even considered both to be equally possible (e.g. in the case of *oddishsh-á-ta* (F.ACC) / *oddishsh-á* (F.GEN) *gob-aan-ch-ú* ‘tailor’, lit. “clothes sewer / sewer of clothes”).¹¹

Note, however, that agent nominals derived from nouns (2) are unable to govern complements; they may only occur with a genitive modifier, as the *-aan* derivate of the noun *zeem-á-ta* ‘herding, tending’ given below in (19) is intended to show.

- (19) *lal-í* *zeem-aan-ch-ú* / **lal-ú* *zeem-aan-ch-ú*
cattle-M.GEN herding-AAN-SG-M.ACC cattle-M.ACC herding-AAN-SG-M.ACC
cowherd [lit. “herdsman of cattle”]

Up to this point, agent nominals seem to be *nouns* that have inherited part of the argument structure of their verbal bases. In contrast to this first impression, I will argue in the following that agent nominals are probably best considered to belong to the (sub-)word class ADJECTIVE – in spite of their nominal inflectional behaviour and in spite of their partially verbal (internal) syntax.

When carefully reading through the translations of agent nominals in earlier publications, first hints at the adjectival features of agent nominals can be detected: some of them are translated as adjectives. See, for instance, *qit-aan-ch-ú* ‘jealous’ (LESLAU 1956: 988) < *qit-* ‘be(come) jealous’ and *dimb-aan-ch-ú* ‘drunk’ (HUDSON 1989: 314) < *dimb-* ‘be(come) drunk’. The evidence that agent nominals indeed

⁹ The vivid examples in (16)-(18) are verses from a eulogy for a deceased hyena.

¹⁰ Smallest administrative unit in Ethiopia: Amharic ቀበሌ *qābāle*, Kambaata *qabal-í-ta*.

¹¹ The verbal bases of the agent nominals given above, *gashsh-* ‘rule’, *kul-* ‘tell’ and *gob-* ‘sew’, do not differ with respect to their argument structure; they all govern accusative complements.

share formal features (and not only the translation in the meta-language) with members of the word class ADJECTIVE is provided in (20), in which *-aan* derivatives are not used as phrasal heads but as modifiers. Unlike nouns, but in the same way as members of the word-class ADJECTIVE, agent nominals display gender and case agreement with their head noun. This type of agreement is one of the defining features of the word class ADJECTIVE (TREIS 2008: 88-93). Like underived adjectives, agent nominals differentiate three cases (accusative, nominative and oblique: (20)) and two genders (masculine (20) and feminine (21)) when used attributively.¹²

- (20) *xumm-aan-ch-ú* (M.ACC) *agg-á* (M.ACC) ‘soft drink’
ros-áan-ch-u (M.NOM) *jáal-u* (M.NOM) ‘school friend’ (K8: 21)
qaaxx-áan-ch-o (M.OBL) *sa’-íi* (M.DAT) ‘for the greedy cow’¹³

- (21) *moos-aan-ch-úta wees-íta úl-tee od-áan*
 become:sick-AAN-SG-E.ACC enset:plant-E.ACC touch-3F.PVE.REL tool-F.ICP
 with a tool that has been in contact with sick enset plants (K8: 31)

Unlike adjectives, modifying *nouns* invariably occur in the genitive case, irrespective of the case of the head noun; they don’t agree in gender either (22).

- (22) *az-ó* (F.GEN) *sa’-á* (M.ACC) ‘dairy cow’ [lit. “cow of milk”]
az-ó (F.GEN) *sá’-u* (M.NOM)

The case morphology of modifying agent nominals is identical to that of other modifying adjectives (TREIS 2008: 256). Apart from this, agent nominals also share a syntactic peculiarity with adjectives: the syntactic and semantic head noun of an adjective (*mann-á* in (23)-i) can be removed from its usual position and instead be added as a genitive modifier; the adjective thus becomes the syntactic head of the NP as in (23)-ii. The dependency relation is reversed (cf. Malchukov 2000) in order to foreground the adjective. Modifiers other than adjectives and agent nominals cannot be foregrounded in this way. Example (24) illustrates the use of agent nominals in such a reversed construction.

- (23) (i) *hoolam-á mann-á* → (ii) *mann-í hoolam-á*
 many-M.ACC people-M.ACC people-M.GEN many-M.ACC
 many people many people [lit. “many of people”]

- (24) *iz-eechch-ó mogga’-aan-ch-úta nubaachch-í qophphan-aan-ch-ú*
 bride-SG-F.GEN steal-AAN-SG-F.ACC old:person.SG-M.GEN lie-AAN-SG-M.ACC
 [Beware of] a bride that steals and an old man that lies [lit. “a thief of a bride and a liar of an old man”]. (Proverb) (BERHANU 1986: 14)

¹² The OBL case form of an adjective modifies nouns that are neither ACC nor NOM but, for instance, DAT. (Note that it is impossible, as suggested by a reader, to analyse the agent nominals in (20) as being in apposition to their head nouns. If they were in apposition, they would *follow* the (semantic) heads and have exactly the same case range as nouns. As modifiers, however, they *precede* the head nouns and inflect like adjectives.)

¹³ The agent nominals in (20) are based on *xumm-á* ‘peace’, *ros-* ‘learn’ and *qaaxx-* ‘be greedy’.

Consequently, it would be misleading to speak about agent *nouns* but much more appropriate to speak about agent *adjectives* in Kambaata.¹⁴ Agent derivatives and non-derived adjectives have identical inflection potential. As attributes, they agree obligatorily in case and gender with their head noun. Furthermore, they can be used as phrasal heads without being subjected to further morphological operations (25). As phrasal heads, they distinguish all the eight case forms for which nouns inflect.

- (25) *aakiim-iichch* (N) / *hoga'-aan-ch-iichch* (AAN) / *hiil-iichch* (A) *aaqq-éemm*
 doctor-M.ABL farm-AAN-SG-M.ABL bad-M.ABL receive-1SG.PVE
 I received it from the doctor / from the farmer / from the bad one.

With respect to their syntactic behaviour two types of agent nominals must be distinguished: deverbal and denominal *-aan* derivatives. Deverbal derivatives are able (i) to govern complements and be adverbially modified (like their bases) or (ii) to be modified by genitive nouns and adjectives. For members of the denominal group only option (ii) is possible.

3. Meaning and Use

3.1. Agents

So far, I have been speaking about *agent* nominals, but, admittedly, this term is not appropriate if the polysemy of *-aan* derivatives is taken into account. SHELEME (1989: 33) is the first to state that the Kambaata *-aan* morpheme is multifunctional and a derivational device for both agents and instruments. Three of his four illustrative *-aan* examples are instruments, e.g. *saqal-aan-ch-ú* ‘hook’ < *saqal-* ‘hang’. Though it is not pointed out explicitly by HUDSON, two *-aan* derivatives that do not refer to agents can also be found in his publications. They refer to an instrument (*gamax-aan-ch-ú* ‘rasp, file’ < *gamax-* ‘whet, sharpen’ (1989: 317)), and a patient (*usur-aan-ch-ú* ‘prisoner’ < *usur-* ‘tie’ (1976: 273)). Therefore, a closer look at the meaning of the so-called *agent* nominals is necessary.

Most of the *-aan* nominals indeed designate the agent of an action. Often the referent is to be interpreted as a habitual or professional agent (26).

- (26) *bolx-aan-ch-ú* ‘show-off’ < *bolx-* ‘be(come) proud; boast’
gaaz-aan-ch-ú ‘warrior, soldier’ < *gaaz-* ‘wage war’
hoga'-aan-ch-ú ‘farmer’ < *hoga'-* ‘plough’
tukk-aan-ch-ú ‘guard, watchman’ < *tukk-* ‘guard’
tum-aan-ch-ú ‘smith’ < *tum-* ‘pound’

¹⁴ In this article, the term “agent noun” is consistently avoided. Instead, the more general term “agent nominal” is used. The term “nominal” is meant to refer to a kind of “super” word class encompassing all case-inflecting words (nouns, pronouns, adjectives, numerals, demonstratives). While there is no indication in the grammars of K’abeena (CRASS 2005) and Alaaba (SCHNEIDERBLUM 2007) that the derivatives in these languages have adjectival characteristics, KAWACHI also faces a categorisation problem for *-aan* derivatives in Sidaama, which are shown to “have characteristics of both nouns and adjectives” (2007: 318).

However, in contrast to what SCHNEIDER-BLUM states with respect to *-aan* derivatives in Alaaba, viz. that they do not refer to agents of “specific” actions but only to those of “habitual” actions (2007: 148), agent nominals in Kambaata are attested to designate habitual / professional agents and occasional / temporary / one-time agents. Depending on the context, a *xa'mm-aan-ch-ú* (< *xa'mm-* ‘ask’) may be a person asking at a certain point in time or a professional interviewer. And although *dimb-aan-ch-ú* (< *dimb-* ‘be(come) drunk’) often designates a habitual drunkard, it may also be used to refer to a temporarily drunk person. Temporary readers may be denoted by *anabbab-aan-n-ú* (< *anabbab-* ‘read’) and temporary swimmers by *waachch-aan-n-ú* (< *waachch-* ‘swim’). People who happen to encounter an argument and who intervene and mediate spontaneously are referred to as *araars-aan-n-ú* ‘interveners’ (< *araars-* ‘intervene’). This means that *-aan* derivatives may be used deictically (RYDER 1999: 282f): in a certain speech situation, nameless persons can be picked out of a group of possible referents by alluding to their present activity (e.g. *araars-* ‘intervene’) which is in contrast to the activities (e.g. quarrelling, not intervening) of other participants of the speech situation.

The examples in (27) illustrate that the notion of agent is problematic when describing the semantics of *-aan* derivatives. Apart from prototypical (intentional) agents, experiencers are also referred to by *-aan* derivatives. Most of the experiencer nominals are based on inchoative-stative verbs.

- (27) *maccar-aan-ch-ú* ‘crazy person’ < *maccar-* ‘be(come) crazy’
guruur-aan-ch-ú ‘miser, skinflint’ < *guruur-* ‘be(come) stingy, miserly’
moos-aan-ch-ú ‘patient, sick person’ < *moos-* ‘be(come) sick’
saal-aan-ch-ú ‘shy person’ < *saal-* ‘be(come) shy’

The referents of agent nominals are overwhelmingly human, though non-human agents are also attested. An example of the latter is *zaaz-aan-ch-ú-ta* (< *zaaz-* ‘flow’), a term denoting a plant species. The creeping (“flowing”) growth gave the spice plant its name.

3.2. Instruments and Containers

The Kambaata agentive derivation generates instrument-designating terms.

- (28) *gamax-aan-ch-ú* ‘rasp, file’ [lit. “sharpener”] < *gamax-* ‘whet, sharpen’
saqal-aan-ch-ú ‘hook’ [lit. “hanger”] (S89: 33) < *saqal-* ‘hang’
shiinsh-aan-ch-ú ‘wiper’ < *shiinsh-* ‘wipe’
xaaf-aan-ch-ú ‘pen’ [lit. “writer”] < *xaaf-* ‘write’

Agent-instrument polysemy probably also characterizes the *-aan* derivation in other HEC languages; it is at least attested in Sidaama, Alaaba and Burji. Besides many derived agents (e.g. *uucc'-akk'-aan-c-ú* ‘beggar’), one Alaaba instrument derived with *-aan*, namely *laakk'-aan-c-ú* ‘mirror’ (< *laakk'-* MID ‘see oneself’), is listed in SCHNEIDER-BLUM (2007: 148). ANBESSA’s description of nominal derivation in Sidaama shows that the morpheme *-aan* is used to derive agents as well as instruments; see *hat'ar-aančo* ‘butcher’ (< *hat'ar-* ‘butcher’) and *fey-aančo*

‘broom’ (< *fey-* ‘sweep’) (2000: 67).¹⁵ ROBA DAME & WEDEKIND’s Burji dictionary contains the following derived instrument: *k’un-aancoo* ‘small stone for pounding’ (< *k’un-* ‘pound’) (2008: 54).

Containers (dishes, pots, etc.), plates and boards are conceptually located in the transitional area between instruments and places (DRESSLER 1980: 112f). Products are produced or kept *with* / *by* them as well as *in* or *on* them. Container (29) is derived from a causative verb, (30) is denominal, and (31) based on a noun-verb compound.

(29) *qeess-is-aan-ch-ú-ta* ‘dish with / in which cheese (*qeess-á*) is produced’ < *qeess-is-* ‘produce cheese’

(30) *mooc-in-aan-ch-ú-ta* ‘dish with / in which the acidic juice (*mooc-á*) that one squeezes out of enset pulp is collected’¹⁶

(31) *ang-a’ll-aan-ch-ú* ‘vessel used to warm water for washing’ < *ang-á-ta* ‘hand’ plus *aa’ll-* ‘wash (MID)’

The bases of some container nouns do not (or no longer) exist in Kambaata (32).

(32) *koor-aan-ch-ú* ‘pot with / in which butter is melted’ (< **koor-*)
wonshir-aan-ch-ú-ta ‘large jar in which, e.g., beer is stored’ (< **wonshir-*)

Agent-instrument/place polysemy is possibly also a feature of the *-aan* derivation in K’abeena (HEC), as one example from CRASS (2005: 74) leads one to assume: the nominal *k’amb-aan-č-u* ‘device [board, mat, leaf?] put underneath enset pulp when it is being kneaded’¹⁷ is based on the verb *k’amb-* ‘knead’. Sidaama *ofol-aan-č-o* ‘seat’ (< *ofol-* ‘sit’) is another example for a place noun generated by the *-aan* derivation (KAWACHI 2007: 318).

3.3. Patients

Besides agents and instruments, the *-aan* derivation generates patient nominals. Two types of patient nominals should be distinguished: (i) derivates based on passive verbs and (ii) derivates based on non-passive verbs. The first pattern is quite productive and also attested in K’abeena (CRASS 2005: 74). The input of the derivational pattern in (33) is a verbal stem extended with the morpheme *-am*. The derivate refers to what the subject of the verb would refer to.

(33) *ga”-am-aan-ch-ú-ta* ‘consonant’ [lit. “one that is called”] (KXS: 4) < *ga”-am-* PASS ‘be called’ < *ga”-* ‘call’
xa’mm-am-aan-ch-ú ‘person questioned’ (K8: 55) < *xa’mm-am-* PASS ‘be asked’ < *xa’mm-* ‘ask’

The passive-based derivates in (33) may lead one to take a syntactic approach into account. Instead of linking the *-aan* nominals to the *semantic* roles (agent, experi-

¹⁵ As in Kambaata, the Sidaama formative *-aančo* consists of the derivational morpheme *-aan*, the singulative marker *-č* (Kambaata: *-ch*) and a case marker *-o*.

¹⁶ The function of the additional morpheme *-in* is not known.

¹⁷ German translation in the original: ‘Unterlage zum Kneten von Ensetemark’ (CRASS 2005: 74).

encer, instrument, patient) that their referents play if expressed as arguments of their related verbs, one could consider correlating them with the *syntactic* functions which their referents occupy if expressed as arguments of their verbal bases. Most nominals discussed so far can occur, in principle, as subjects of their base verbs: agents, experiencers, instruments (with restrictions)¹⁸ and (if the verb is passive) patients. Thus one could call the *-aan* derivatives “subject nominals”. This syntactic generalization is, however, weakened by a considerable number of *-aan* nominals which never serve as subjects of their base verbs. Among these examples which are “disruptive” for the syntactic account are the containers in section 3.2 above and the type (ii) patient nouns. Though based on active verbal stems, some Kambaata *-aan* derivatives designate the patient of the action encoded by the verb, or, speaking in syntactic terms, they refer to what the direct object of the verb would refer to.

- (34) *nugguss-aan-ch-ú(-ta)* ‘circumcised boy (girl)’ (*‘circumciser’) < *nugguss-* ‘circumcise’
tuph-aan-ch-ú(-ta) ‘bung, stopper (of water pot)’ < *tuph-* ‘plug into, stick into’
haankur-aan-ch-ú(-ta) ‘product which is steamed on the griddle’ < *haankur-* ‘steam’

Type (ii) patient nominals are encountered in texts but rarely found in elicited data. In Kambaata, they seem to be the least productive type of *-aan* nominals, at least in the common language.¹⁹ Type (ii) patient nominals are absent from the descriptions of other HEC languages, with the possible exception of one entry in the Burji dictionary: *nakk-aancoo* ‘a handful’ (< *nakk-* ‘grasp’) (ROBA DAME & WEDEKIND 2008: 66).

The interpretation of *-aan* derivatives as referring to events can probably be excluded for Kambaata. The only example pointing to such an interpretation, *shameell-aan-ch-ú* ‘cry of encouragement’ (HUDSON 1989: 337), was unknown to my informants. The basis of the assumed Kambaata word could not be determined.

3.4. Ambiguities and Competing Mechanisms

A look at the corpus reveals that the majority of *-aan* derivatives are attested in any one of the interpretations (agent, instrument, place, or patient) but rarely in more than one. The possible interpretations are almost “complementarily distributed”²⁰: some derivatives always or usually occur as agents, others as instruments. Despite this, speakers (and listeners) have a certain interpretational freedom, and ambiguities might arise, as informants confirm. First evidence for competing interpretations is found in the literature: whereas SHELEME (1989: 33) translates *usur-aan-ch-ú* < *usur-* ‘tie’ as an instrument nominal ‘rope used to tie something’, HUDSON (1976: 273) views it as a patient nominal ‘prisoner’ (i.e. someone who is tied).

¹⁸ Instruments usually function as oblique objects (encoded in the ICP case). Less frequently, they occur as subjects of activity verbs, for instance: *káltunku weesesí xaphá murrodáa* [...] ‘and if the hatchet (SUBJECT) cuts the roots of the enset plant [...]’ (K8: 31).

¹⁹ See type (ii) patient nominals in the women’s avoidance vocabulary (3.5.).

²⁰ This term is adopted from PANAGL (1978: 455).

Informants questioned about the semantics of various *-aan* derivatives often allow an agentive interpretation in addition to an established instrumental or locative interpretation. Note, for instance, *gamax-aan-ch-ú* < *gamax-* ‘sharpen’ (i) ‘instrument used to sharpen’ and (ii) ‘person who sharpens’; *shiinsh-aan-ch-ú* < *shiinsh-* ‘wipe’ (i) ‘piece of cloth used to wipe’ and (ii) ‘person who wipes’; *xaaf-aan-ch-ú* < *xaaf-* ‘write’ (i) ‘instrument used to write’ and (ii) ‘person who writes’. A place nominal such as *afuushsh-aan-ch-ú* < *afuushsh-* ‘put, place’, which is attested as a spontaneously coined translation of ‘shelf’ (place on which, e.g., books are put) and of ‘saucer’ (device on which a cup is put), is also considered appropriate to refer to a “putter”, i.e. a person who puts something somewhere, if a suitable context is provided (working in a warehouse, the “putter” is responsible for putting goods at their proper places).

Certain interpretations are ruled out by synonym restrictions (DRESSLER 1980: 113). This means that the existence of an established agent, instrument, patient, or place nominal makes one logically possible interpretation of a deverbal *-aan* derivative highly unlikely, though not necessarily ungrammatical. In the case of *nugguss-aan-ch-ú* PATIENT ‘circumcised’ (< *nugguss-* ‘circumcise’), for instance, agent-patient ambiguities are excluded, because the circumciser (the agent) is called *falm-aan-ch-ú(-ta)*.²¹ The derivative *kit-aan-ch-ú* < *kit-* ‘filter’ is preferably (though not exclusively) interpreted as agent nominal (‘person who filters’), probably due to the existence of the established underived noun *wonsh-ú-ta* ‘filter’ for the filtering instrument.

Interestingly, *-aan* derivatives based on non-extended verb stems (i.e. verb stems without the passive morpheme *-am*) are not easily accessible to a patient interpretation. Supplementing the database with elicited patient nominal examples turned out to be an almost impossible task. Informants rejected, for instance, the interpretation of *kit-aan-ch-ú* < *kit-* ‘filter’ as referring to ‘something which is (to be) filtered’ or *xaaf-aan-ch-ú* < *xaaf-* ‘write’ as referring to ‘something which is (to be) written’.²²

Though Kambaata has various mechanisms which create deverbal agents, instruments, places and patients, only one of them can be considered a “rival” of the *-aan* derivation. Patient nouns²³ are formed by the *-an-ch-á* derivation (see *aass-an-ch-á* ‘gift’ < *aass-* ‘give’, *qoocc-an-ch-á* ‘creature; creation’ < *qoocc-* ‘create’). The high productivity of the *-an-ch-á* pattern might be one reason for the restricted application of the morpheme *-aan* for the derivation of patient nominals.

The derivation of instruments, agents, patients, and places from verb stems by other patterns (e.g. *-im-á* for instruments) is not productive and instead highly lexicalized. The semantic widening of the *-aan* derivation might have been facilitated by the unproductivity of other derivational morphemes.

²¹ The base of this derivative is unknown to me.

²² PANTHER & THORNBURG (2003: 286) and RYDER (1999: 284-90) discuss possible conceptual reasons why patient interpretations are less productive than agentive and instrumental ones.

²³ The *-an-ch-á* derivation also generates action nouns (Treis 2008: 158f).

3.5. Neologisms and Avoidance Terms

The productivity of the deverbal *-aan* derivation is reflected in the avoidance vocabulary of Kambaata women (TREIS 2005). In order to show respect towards their in-laws, married women of the old days had to avoid all words starting with the same syllable as the names of their father and mother-in-law. They substituted tabooed words with lexical doublets (*ballishsha* terms), synonyms, periphrases, antonyms etc. Another spontaneously applicable strategy was the production of substitutes with the help of the *-aan* derivation (35). The *-aan* derivatives of the avoidance vocabulary refer to agents, instruments, patients and places.

- (35) *harruuchchú* ‘donkey’ → *iyi-aan-ch-ú* AGENT < *iyi-* ‘carry’²⁴
handarchúta ‘dove’ → *kuukees-aan-ch-ú-ta* AGENT < *kuukees-* ‘coo’
abbaasimá ‘broom’ → *sháaqq a’-aan-ch-ú* INSTR < *sháaqq a’-* ‘sweep (a small place) clean’
koorú ‘saddle’ → *saa’ll-aan-ch-ú* INSTR < *saa’ll-* ‘ride’
gaayyáta ‘water pipe’ → *ag-aan-ch-ú-ta* PATIENT < *ag-* ‘drink; smoke’
bahá ‘artificial calf’²⁵ → *laax-aan-ch-ú* PATIENT < *laax-* ‘lick’
meetá ‘scraping board’ → *zuug-aan-ch-ú* PLACE < *zuug-* ‘scrape’
wogqáa ‘road’ → *maram-aan-ch-ú* PLACE < *maram-* ‘walk’

The *-aan* derivation is also applied to create neologisms in the common language, e.g. *ga’-isiis-aan-ch-ú-ta* ‘vowel’ [lit. “one that causes to call”] (KXS: 1), *ga’-am-aan-ch-ú-ta* ‘consonant’ [lit. “one that is called”] (KXS: 4) and *aphph-an-siis-aanchú* ‘conjunction’ [lit. “one that causes to join each other”]. It is spontaneously used to name devices which have no Kambaata translations: an informant describing a picture with a coat hook, for instance, termed this uncommon instrument *sa’nniis-aan-ch-ú* lit. “one that causes to hang”.

3.6. Denominal Derivates

All attested denominal examples, apart from *mooc-in-aan-ch-ú-ta* (30), refer to human referents. They can be paraphrased as ‘someone who is habitually occupied with N’ (36), ‘someone who makes use of N’ (37), ‘someone who has N’ (38).²⁶

- (36) *zeem-aan-ch-ú* ‘shepherd’ < *zeem-á-ta* ‘herding’²⁷
(37) *lokk-aan-ch-ú* ‘pedestrian’ (L52: 351) < *lokk-á-ta* ‘foot’
(38) *sal-aan-ch-ú-ta* ‘pregnant woman’ < *sal-áa* ‘foetus’
shishir-aan-ch-ú ‘leper (final stage)’ < *shishir-á* ‘leprosy (final stage)’

²⁴ The arrow → is to be read as “is substituted by”.

²⁵ An artificial calf stimulates the milk production of a cow whose calf has died and who is given instead a *bahá* to lick.

²⁶ There are also some possible denominal *-aan* derivatives in the Burji dictionary, e.g. *bokk-aancoo* ‘mad person’ (< *bokk-ee* ‘madness’) and *labb-aancoo* ‘liar’ (< *labb-ee* ‘lie (n)’) (ROBA DAME & WEDEKIND 2008: 9, 55). Burji even seems to have a de-ideophonic *-aan* derivative *lukk-aancoo* ‘hen, chicken’ (< *lukku* ‘go away! (addressed to fowl)’) (ROBA DAME & WEDEKIND 2008: 57).

²⁷ Unlike in Alaaba (SCHNEIDER-BLUM 2007: 147), a verb *zeem-* ‘herd’ does not exist in Kambaata; there is, however, a verb *ze’-* ‘herd’.

The restricted productivity of denominal *-aan* derivatives can be attributed to the high productivity of a competing derivational pattern. On the basis of nouns, the *-aam* [!] derivation creates nominals with the meaning '(one) that has N, is full of N, is characterized by N'. A comparison of the *-aan* derivatives in (38) and selected *-aam* derivatives in (39) shows that there is a considerable functional overlap for these derivational patterns.

- (39) *hoofichch-aam-ú* '(one) that has a goitre' < *hoofichch-ú* 'goitre'
hangaar-aam-ú '(one) that has a skin disease' < *hangaar-ú* 'skin disease'
xoobb-e'-aam-ú '(one) that suffers from elephantiasis' < *xoobb-ita* 'elephantiasis'

4. Conclusion

The HEC languages share a cognate morpheme *-aan* which derives agent nouns (or adjectives) from verbs. In some HEC languages (Gedeo and Hadiyya), the *-aan* derivatives do not seem to designate anything other than agents and experiencers (HUDSON 1976: 273). However, agent-experiencer-instrument-place polysemy is a feature of the *-aan* derivation in Alaaba, K'abeena and Sidaama. In Kambaata, the *-aan* derivation also generates patient nominals (3.3) in addition to agent, experiencer (3.1), instrument and place nominals (3.2).²⁸ The impression that the polysemy of *-aan* derivatives is most pronounced in Kambaata, but less elaborate in other HEC languages, is very likely attributable to the unequal state of documentation and the little data that we have on this derivational mechanism in other HEC languages. While the agent/experiencer and instrument nominals derived by *-aan* are widespread in all types of language data in Kambaata, a significant amount of place nominals and patient nominals can only be found in a corpus of procedural texts. It is, therefore, quite possible that a more elaborate polysemy of the agentive derivation will be detected in future works on still insufficiently documented HEC languages.

Abbreviations

1 / 2 / 3	1 st / 2 nd / 3 rd person
A	adjective
AAN	agentive derivation
ABL	ablative
ACC	accusative
ADV	adverbializer
DAT	dative
F	feminine
GEN	genitive
H89	HUDSON (1989)

²⁸ The same is possibly true for Burji, as far as one can tell from some entries ending in *-aan-coo* in the Burji dictionary (ROBA DAME & WEDEKIND 2008).

HEC	Highland East Cushitic (Hadiyya, Libido, Kambaata, Alaaba, K'abeena, Sidaama, Gedeo and Burji)
ICP	instrumental-comitative-perlative
IPV	imperfective
KXS	MAATEWOOS (1992)
K1-K8	KAMBAATISSATA (1989)
L52	LESLAU (1952)
M	masculine
MID	middle
N	noun
NOM	nominative
OBL	oblique
PASS	passive
PCO	perfective converb
PL	plural, plurative
PVE	perfective with -e
REL	relative
S89	SHELEME (1989)
SG	singular, singulative
V	verb

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