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Metre and ‘extrametricality’ in the *geeraar*

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Abstract

This article presents an overview of the different ideas presented in the literature on the *geeraar* metre in Somali poetry. Following this a proposal is made which, it is suggested, provides a more accurate view of the behaviour of this metre and the way it displays the notion of ‘extrametricality’. This latter issue was, albeit in different words, first introduced in Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac ‘Gaarriye’ (1976a). An analysis of a famous *geeraar* poem will show how the ideas work in practice.

1 Introduction

I shall begin by considering the proposals in the literature on the metrical pattern of the *geeraar*. Most of them differ in some details from one another, and I shall summarize these views and then present a metrical pattern which hopefully brings us to a more precise understanding of how this metre behaves. I shall also concentrate on one aspect of this which was presented in the first published account (Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac ‘Gaarriye’, 1976a). This is the proposal that certain grammatical particles are considered not to count with respect to the metre. This is the only such suggestion that has been made with regard to any metrical pattern in Somali poetry and requires bringing to the fore of research in the field along with an assessment of its validity. I suggest that, at least in the *geeraar* poems I have examined, this holds and is an example of extrametricality in Somali. By extrametricality what is meant is that parts of a line labelled as such play no role in determining the metricality of the line.

At the end I present a poem by Faarax Nuur which illustrates these points in more detail and shows how, in this poem, the metre, syntax, extrametricality and line grouping interact and are patterned.

Following Fabb (2015), I consider the line as the basis of any form of verbal art in any language which we might call ‘poetry’ in English. As a unit, this is determined in different ways in different languages. In Somali it is determined by metre, by which is meant the structured patterning of prosodic phonological entities which determines whether any given line is perceived as metrical or not. In Somali, the entities which are patterned are, informally, long- and short-vowel syllables and short-vowel syllables which end in a consonant.¹ Note that the notion of the line assumed here does not depend on writing, though it may subsequently be rendered in written form which does no disservice to poetry in Somali, even that made without recourse to writing in the original (see Orwin (2005) for more on this issue).

I shall not consider here the interaction between musical performance and metre and the line. This is an important feature for a full understanding of the performance of poetry when music plays a role, but it is not necessary to understand the abstract metrical structure of the line itself which is assumed solely to be a linguistic matter.

2 The metre of the *geeraar*

In this section, I shall consider the metre of the *geeraar* beginning with an overview of what has been written on the pattern so far and concluding with what I consider to be a matrix which characterizes the metre. This is not to say that this will be a definitive matrix since it is possible that there are some variations in the practice of certain poets or in certain regions which differs in some way to what is presented here.

Before continuing it is important to mention that, as reported in a number of works, the *geeraar* was traditionally recited on horseback in the past. Gamuute, for example, says the following on this: ‘A distinct beat that resonates the rhythmic falling of the hooves of

¹The presentation here is atheoretical and so I shall not consider these in more abstract terms such as *morae*.

a cantering horse, distinguishes Geeraar. In fact, a warrior on a charger, reciting Geeraar, is the image that comes to mind from my childhood.’ (Farah Ahmed Ali ‘Gamuute’, in press: p.77).

2.1 J.W.C. Kirk

The first mention of the *geeraar* in the written literature on Somali is in Kirk (1905) in a chapter entitled ‘Songs’ (pp. 170-183). He writes of *geeraar*, *gabay* and *hees* that: ‘a distinctly poetical style is noticeable’ (p.170) and that ‘All three seem to have a somewhat similar rhythm...’ (p. 171). It is the mention of rhythm which is interesting here in that he seems to be picking up on what he perceives to be a rhythmic pattern shared by all forms, despite the observation that ‘The length of the whole line may vary considerably.’ (p.171). He doesn’t present distinct metrical patterns and it cannot be determined from his writing whether the rhythm he is picking up on is in the language itself or in the performance mode which, at the time of his writing, can be assumed to have been with the *luuq*, the musical mode of recitation, or chanting mode. Given our present knowledge, we know that *geeraar* and *gabay* are quite distinct metrically and also that there are various forms of *hees*.

2.2 Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac ‘Gaariye’

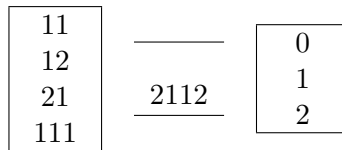
The first published account of the metrical patterning of the *geeraar* is in Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac ‘Gaariye’ (1976a). Although it has been referenced in work subsequent to it, not all the ideas presented have been taken up by other researchers; this is therefore the first discussion of these ideas since that original article.² Before considering what Gaariye wrote on the *geeraar* specifically, it must be mentioned that other metrical patterns had been discussed by him in articles published previously, and the ideas presented in those, although not directly referred to in his article on the *geeraar*, need to be kept in

²Gaariye’s article is republished, along with other of his work and poetry, in Cabdiraxmaan C. Faarax ‘Barwaaqo’ (2015). Cabdiraxmaan also developed software which checks metrical patterning, including the *geeraar* (see www.halgeri.com/laaxi.asp).

mind.³ In particular the constraints on syllable-final consonants in the *jiipto* metre (and implied in related metres) expressed as constraints on consonant clusters and geminate consonants in Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac ‘Gaariye’ (1976b) will be considered below.

The matrix presented in Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac ‘Gaariye’ (1976a) is given in Figure 1. In this the number 2 represents a long-vowel syllable and 1 a short-vowel syllable. The vertically arranged sets of these units represent alternatives which he says may appear in those metrical positions. The central linear sequence ‘2112’ indicates the invariable ‘core’ sequence of syllables: a long-vowel syllable followed by two short-vowel syllables followed by a long-vowel syllable.

Figure 1: Gaariye’s *geeraar* matrix



Two example lines which illustrate this are given in 1 taken from the poem by Faarax Nuur discussed in Section 3. The lines are given with Gaariye’s representation of the syllables in a manner which reflects the groupings in Figure 1.

- (1) a. Iska seexo idhaa: 11 2112 (1.5)
 b. Salaantaan badiyaa: 12 2112 (1.24)

Aside from the matrix, he also adds the following comment.

Waxaan haddaba kaaga sii digayaa inay erayo xagga dambe ka raaca baydka geeraarka ah oo naxwahaan ku xidha baydadka ka dambeeya. Hase ahaatee miisaan ahaan kuwaasi uma baahna baydku. Waxa ka mid ah ereyadaas, (oo, ee, eey, baa, buu, baan, bay) iyo qaar kale oo badan.

(Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac ‘Gaariye’ (1976a: p.3))

³The metrical patterns are *jiipto*, *haantii qaboy*, *naa laago laago*, *maqalay warlay* and *gabay*.

Still I caution you that there are words at the end of the *geeraar* line which are grammatically linked to the following line. However, with respect to metre the line doesn't need them. Some of these words are (oo, ee, eey, baa, buu, baan, bay) and many others.⁴

What he is talking about is something that we might term extrametricality as mentioned above. Furthermore, we shall see below that, at least for the poems considered here (and all the poems I have looked through) his assertion regarding these words stands. The list he gives includes conjunctions (oo and ee), what I assume to be the feminine vocative ending (-eey) and the focus marker baa with and without subject pronouns.

2.3 Cabdillaahi Diiriye Guuleed 'Carraale'

The work of Cabdillaahi Diiriye Guuleed 'Carraale' on the *geeraar* can be found in a number of publications all of which are very similar and present his ideas on metre in Somali poetry in the same way. Here we shall take his most recent work, Cabdillaahi Diiriye Guuleed (2016) as being representative. He states there are three types of *geeraar* line and one variant, what he terms *farcame*. As in all his work, he shows the metre by presenting the proportion of syllables to long vowels along with reference to the positions in which the long vowels can appear, though he doesn't present the latter with a matrical representation rather alludes to the syllable which has a long vowel (the 1st, 3rd etc.). So, of the lines he labels *lix-saddexle* 'with six-three', i.e. lines with six syllables of which three are long-vowel syllables, he gives the examples in 2 with long vowels underlined (p.92).

- (2) a. 6,3 = Waa bad-baa-do qab-naa (tasmada 1aad, 3aad, 6aad)
 b. 6,3 = Saa-xir-kii na-ga guur
 c. 6,3 = Sha-luu taa-gan a-haa (tasmada 2aad, 3aad, 6aad)

⁴All translations are by the present author.

d. 6,3 = Sa-laan-tuun ba-di-yaa

For his toddoba-labaale ‘with seven-two’ he has the forms in 3.

- (3) a. 7,2 = Rag-na guur-ka ma daa-yo (tasmada 3aad, 6aad)
 b. 7,2 = la-ba-daad wax ku eeg-to

He mentions a *siddeed-kowle* (8,1) as a base form (p.92) but gives no examples of this in the text or in the example poems.

The variant (*farcame*) line is a *lix-labaale* (6,2) which has as its base a *toddoba-labaale* (7,2) as in 4 (p.92).

- (4) a. 6,2 = Si-da daad u sab-bee
 7,2 = Si-da daad u sab-bee-ye
 b. 6,2 = Cu-li-maa a-jar roon
 7,2 = Cu-li-maa a-jar roon-e

With regard to the ‘extrametrical’ particles presented by Gaarriye, Carraale doesn’t mention these but he does seem to imply them in the example poems he gives in which he writes the conjunctions *iyo* and *oo* and the focus marker (with subject pronoun *-aan*) in parentheses in some examples. Although there is no comment on this, it seems to reflect the notion that these are not to be considered part of the metrical line. For example, the first line of the poem in Section 3 is written Rag *sabaan ka sabaan* (*baan*).

2.4 Cabdalla Cumar Mansuur

In 1977 Cabdalla Cumar Mansuur printed a revised and expanded copy of his dissertation which he had written in 1974-5 (Cabdalla Cumar Mansuur, 1977). One of the main parts which he added in his later work was detail of metrical patterning in light of the work of Gaarriye and Carraale which he had come to know.

He has a section on the *geeraar* in which he presents details which are interesting and include mention of the ‘extrametrical’ particles proposed by Gaarriye. He presents the *geeraar* as having a basic pattern of seven syllables but says that it can also have six or eight syllables subject to certain conditions.

1. Conditions on lines of six syllables.
 - (a) Lines of six syllables end in the long vowel *-aa*. He mentions that for the most part such lines are at the end of a *tix*, a verse. As examples of such lines he includes some from Faarax Nuur's poem presented in Section 3.
 - (b) The line can have six syllables when the line ends the verse but its ending is not *-aa*. These are very few.
2. Conditions on lines of eight syllables. A line may have eight syllables if:
 - (a) the line ends in *iyō*, whether attached to the final word or not;
 - (b) if at the end of the line there is one of the conjunctions *oo* or *-na* or the vocative ending *-ow* or *-yow*. He adds that if *oo* is present the line can be 7 or 8 syllables.

In addition to these conditions he states that: 'a line cannot begin with *iyō* or *oo* but that they can only occur at the end or in the middle of a line' (p.53). He gives the counter-example: '*Iyo guri xaajo xumaa*' which he says is wrong because the line ends in *-aa* and needs to be 6 syllables and *iyō* at the beginning makes it 8.

With regard to the patterning of long- and short-vowel syllables he says there must be at least two long vowels in the line and that they must always be in the third and sixth positions. He also states (p.54) the line cannot have a long vowel in the fourth and fifth positions; this expresses the invariable core mentioned and implied by all other scholars.

2.5 John Johnson

Johnson has also presented work on the *geeraar* metre. The most recent configuration he gives is in Johnson (1996) where he presents what he terms the 'semic configuration' of the *geeraar* along with some other metres. The pattern of this configuration is as in Figure 2 of which he says 'a micron symbolizes a short vowel, and a macron

symbolizes a long vowel; vertical lines separate semes and double vertical lines separate feet; the double spacing above the macron denotes closed-set disemes in which only long vowels may occur.’ (Johnson, 1996: p.75).

Figure 2: *Geeraar* metre matrix in Johnson (1996)

$$\parallel \cup \mid \cup \mid - \parallel \cup \mid \cup \mid - \parallel (\cup)$$

His definition of a ‘seme’ is given as follows: ‘The temporal duration of a short vowel, called a *mora* by *linguists*, occupies an amount of time called *seme* by students of prosody.’ (p.75, emphasis in original). His notion of ‘closed-set’ here indicates that the diseme must be realized as a long-vowel syllable and may not be realized as two short-vowel syllables, as is the case with similarly looking metrical positions in other patterns such as the *jiifta*. Given this, the *geeraar* belongs to the set of metres which display what he calls a ‘closed-set moro-syllabic’ relationship. He gives two example lines which are given in 5.

- (5) a. Nin habeenno casheeyay
 b. Cadar aan hadh lahayn

Interestingly an earlier work, Johnson (1979), presents a greater number of variants for the *geeraar* line. In this work, he presents the metre in a foot-based manner positing eight possible feet (labelled A-H) for all metrical lines in Somali. Of these he says the following are used in the *geeraar*: C ($\cup\cup\cup$), E ($\cup\cup\cup$), F ($\cup\cup\cup$), G ($\cup\cup\cup$) and H ($\cup\cup\cup$). He gives the following sequences of these feet for the *geeraar*: C – F, C – E, F – G, G – C, F – C, C – E, H – C. These are given in our system of representation in Table 1. He also mentions that anacrusis and truncation may also occur (Johnson, 1979: p.49) in this metre, though this is not pursued apart from pointing this out following the sequences of feet (see Table 1). There is no mention of Gaarriye’s suggestion regarding certain grammatical particles at the end of the line in any of Johnson’s writings.

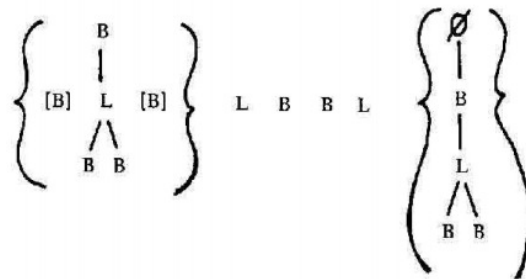
Table 1: *Geeraar* metre matrices posited by Johnson (1979)

| | | | |
|-------|------|------|------------------------------|
| C – F | υυ_υ | υ__ | |
| C – E | υυ_υ | υ_υυ | (with brachycatalexis) |
| F – G | υ__ | υυυ_ | (with anacrusis, “bad” line) |
| G – C | υυ_υ | υυ_υ | |
| F – C | υ__ | υυ_υ | |
| C – E | υυ_υ | υ_υυ | (with catalexis) |
| H – C | _υ_ | υυ_υ | |

2.6 Francesco Antinucci and Axmed Faarax Cali ‘Idaajaa’

Antinucci and Axmed Faarax Cali ‘Idaajaa’ (1986) give the metrical pattern as consisting of a nucleus of L B B L (where L stands for *lungo* ‘long’ and B for *breve* ‘short’) giving the following in our system: _υυ_. The variants they posit are represented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: *Geeraar* matrix in Antinucci and Axmed Faarax Cali ‘Idaajaa’ (1986: p.35)



The middle part is fixed, as expected, and the line can be completed with syllables before and following the central core. These though are constrained by a total length of 8-10 vowel units. There is no mention of the nature of the syllables which follow the core and there seems to be the possibility of their allowing a single short-vowel syllable at the beginning of the line, something which is not allowed

by any of the other proposals and doesn't seem to be a possibility in the metre. This will not be pursued further here.

2.7 Giorgio Banti and Francesco Giannattasio

Banti and Giannattasio (1996) present the most in-depth consideration of the *geeraar* metre to date and include analysis of performance with the *luuq*. With respect to the linguistic rather than the musical aspects of the metre, they present two sets of matrices, one based on the poems of Sayid Maxamed Cabdille Xasan and the other which takes into account variants from other poets they considered. Both sets are the same except for an additional optional long or short syllable at the beginning of the line of poets other than Sayyid Maxamed Cabdille Xasan as shown in Table 2.

Table 2: *Geeraar* metre matrices given in Banti and Giannattasio

| |
|---|
| <p>Matrices based on the <i>geeraars</i> of Sayid M. C. Xasan</p> <p>⊘ ⊘ _ ⊘ ⊘ _</p> <p>⊘ ⊘ _ ⊘ ⊘ _ ⊘</p> <p>⊘ ⊘ _ ⊘ ⊘ _ ⊘ ⊘</p> <hr/> <p>Matrices based on <i>geeraars</i> by other poets</p> <p>(⊘) ⊘ ⊘ _ ⊘ ⊘ _</p> <p>(⊘) ⊘ ⊘ _ ⊘ ⊘ _ ⊘</p> <p>(⊘) ⊘ ⊘ _ ⊘ ⊘ _ ⊘ ⊘</p> |
|---|

Orwin and Maxamed Cabdullaahi Riiraash (1997) follow the pattern of Banti and Giannattasio in their presentation of the metrical pattern, they don't comment in detail on the pattern other than to say that, from the perspective of the 'Djibouti approach' to metrical study, it 'incorporates a section which is of the *chain* type of metre (this is the central core) along with aspects which are similar to the beginning of the *shubaal* line.' (Orwin and Maxamed Cabdullaahi Riiraash, 1997: p.97).

2.8 Faarax Axmed Cali ‘Gamuute’

The final source of other work I shall consider is Farah Ahmed Ali ‘Gamuute’ (in press).⁵ In this he approaches Somali metre from a foot-based perspective to describe and account for the structure of metrical lines. The *geeraar* is presented as being of two types: *geeraar* I and *geeraar* II. The first group is described as an anapaestic dimeter with the possibility of substitution in the first foot: ‘The Anapest, Geeraar’s dominant foot, can be replaced by the following feet: Bacchius, Amphimacer (acceptable through the syllabic caesura), and Molossus’ (Farah Ahmed Ali ‘Gamuute’, in press: p.79). There is no substitution possible for the second foot. The second group accounts for variants of the line which have something following the final long-vowel syllable of the invariable part of the line. These are presented as trimetres with an initial foot comprising one of the following: anapaest, amphimacer, bacchius or molossus; the second foot an invariable dibrach and the final foot an invariable trochee. In a matrical representation of the type used here, this gives us the variants in Table 3.

Table 3: *Geeraar* patterns accounted for by Gamuute

| <i>geeraar</i> I matrices | <i>geeraar</i> II matrices |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| υυ_ υυ_ | υυ_ υυ _υ |
| _υ_ υυ_ | _υ_ υυ _υ |
| υ__ υυ_ | υ__ υυ _υ |
| ___ υυ_ | ___ υυ _υ |

What is interesting in this approach is the division between the two types of *geeraar* being expressed as presence of invariable feet at the end of each type of line. The lack of any substitution possibilities of these feet in conjunction with the fact that all the initial feet end in

⁵I am grateful to Gamuute for allowing me to present his work despite it not yet being published. He provides an interesting perspective on metre in Somali and it is hoped that his book, which is the product of extensive thought on the subject, will be published soon.

a long-vowel syllable expresses the invariable core of the *geeraar*. This might be interpreted such that anything that follows these patterns in a given line is considered not to be metrical. Gamuute may be leaving something unsaid that is apparent to him at some level, though of all the examples he gives, none have anything that goes beyond the line as he presents it. We might infer from this that, if, in any given poem or performance, something is present, it is regarded as extrametrical. This though is a mere suggestion here as there is nothing mentioned explicitly on this in Gamuute's section on the *geeraar*.

This concludes the overview of the *geeraar* metre as presented in the literature which gives specific patterns for it.

2.9 Syllable-final consonants in *geeraar*

The role of consonants in metre in Somali has been discussed with respect to the *jiifto* in Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac 'Gaariye' (1976b), Orwin (2001) and Orwin and Mohamed Hashi Dhama 'Gaariye' (2010). The constraint on syllable-final consonants has, however, not been considered in relation to the *geeraar* metre. Here we shall consider this issue given what is apparent in lines which the present author has considered and the constraint on the *jiifto* and related lines.

The constraint on syllable-final consonants for the *jiifto* metre can be expressed using an appropriate representation as in the matrix in Figure 4 (ignoring the optional short-vowel syllable at the beginning of the line which need not concern us here).

In this matrix there may be a consonant at the end of the first of the two short-vowel syllables in MP1 (metrical position 1) when that position is realized with two such syllables, hence the representation of this position as \varnothing . However, there cannot be a syllable-final consonant at the end of the first of the two short-vowel syllables in MP2, MP4 and MP5 when these are realized with two short-vowel syllables. A corollary of this relates to geminates and what have been termed virtual geminates (the consonants *t, k, f, s, sh, j, w* and some instances of *y*) which can only be present in positions in which a

Figure 4: Basic *jiipto* matrix

| | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------|--------------------|--------------------|
| MP1 | MP2 | MP3 | MP4 | MP5 |
| $\overline{\cup}$ | $\underline{\cup}$ | \cup | $\underline{\cup}$ | $\underline{\cup}$ |

syllable-final consonant may occur.⁶

Given what we know of the *geeraar*, we can see that there are no metrical positions of the type in which, in the *jiipto* metre, the constraint can be said to hold or not to hold; that is to say there are no positions of type $\overline{\cup}$ or type $\underline{\cup}$.

As an initial hypothesis based on scanning a large number of lines we see that syllable-final consonants are allowed at the end of any syllable (and hence geminates and virtual geminates can be present in any position). Examples of lines are evident in the poem presented in Section 3.

2.10 Summary

Having considered what has been presented in the literature on the metre of the *geeraar* we can see that there are certain things which all the proposals share. They all include the invariable pattern $-\cup\cup-$ which we shall label here the *core* of the line and they all include extra syllables before and after this.

Table 4 gives the line-initial variants (that is the sequences of syllables that can precede the core) from all the works mentioned above that provide specific patterns. The sequences which are present in more than one work are labelled A-F and those found only in Banti and Giannattasio (1996) are labelled BG1-BG7. Table 5 shows the patterns accounted for in the works considered. Although he doesn't give a matrix or other abstract patterning as such, Carraale is included in this table on the basis of the analysed lines he gives

⁶All geminate consonants in Somali are heterosyllabic being formed of the coda consonant of one syllable followed by the onset consonant of the next, that is they are syllabified as CVC.CV(C) (where the vowels may be long or short) and so are also restricted given this constraint.

but not including all the possibilities seen in the examples he gives which he doesn't analyse or comment on.

Table 4: Line-initial variants with labels

| Label | Pattern |
|-------|---------|
| A | ∪∪ |
| B | ∪— |
| C | —∪ |
| D | ∪∪∪ |
| E | — — |
| BG1 | — — — |
| BG2 | ∪ — — |
| BG3 | — ∪ — |
| BG4 | — — ∪ |
| BG5 | ∪ ∪ — |
| BG6 | — ∪ ∪ |
| BG7 | ∪ — ∪ |

We see from this that the all works following the initial proposal of Gaariye include the variants he presents at the beginning of the line apart from Gamuute and Carraale who don't account for D (∪∪∪).⁷ Only Gamuute and Banti and Giannattasio allow for two long-vowel syllables (E) at the beginning. Banti and Giannattasio also have a large number of possibilities at the beginning of the line with all the logical possibilities of three syllables for poets other than Sayid M. C. Xasan, but they do comment on this and we shall return to it below.

Turning to line-final variants, these are given in Table 6 with labels. The possibilities presented by each author are given in Table 7. Gaariye's matrix doesn't include patterns J and K (∪∪ and ∪— respectively), but when we take his patterning in conjunction with the comments on the 'words at the end of the *geeraar* line which are grammatically linked to the following line' (see Section 2.2), both of

⁷There is one example line from Timocadde among Carraale's lines which displays ∪∪∪: *Samada kii u ekaayee* (p.95).

Table 5: Line-initial variants accounted for

| Author(s) | Patterns accounted for |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| Gaariye | A, B, C, D |
| Carraale | A, B, C |
| Johnson | A, B, C, D |
| Antinucci & 'Idaajaa' | A, B, C, D |
| Banti & Giannattasio | A, B, C, D, E, BG1-7 |
| Gamuute | A, B, C, E |

Table 6: Line-final variants

| Label | Pattern |
|-------|---------|
| G | nothing |
| H | ∪ |
| I | — |
| J | ∪∪ |
| K | ∪— |

these are implied and are therefore added in parentheses.⁸ Carraale accounts for G and H in his analysis. However, he also has examples which display the other possibilities (some in parentheses and some not) and, as mentioned in section 2.3 this may be taken as implying these parts of the line as extrametrical. Taking Johnson (1979) and Johnson (1996) together, we see he has all possibilities apart from K, as do Antinucci and 'Idaajaa'. Gamuute has the most restricted set of possibilities with just G and H (this is discussed further below). Only Banti and Giannattasio include all the possibilities for line-final variants in their matrices.

⁸We might consider K also to be implied if a focus marker is present at the end of a line following a short vowel (accounted for in his matrix).

Table 7: Line-final variants accounted for

| Author(s) account for | Patterns author(s) |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| Gaarriye | G, H, I, (J, K) |
| Carraale | G, H |
| Johnson | G, H, I, J |
| Antinucci & 'Idaajaa' | G, H, I, J |
| Banti & Giannattasio | G, H, I, J, K |
| Gamuute | G, H |

2.11 A consolidated proposal for the *geeraar* metre

Taking into account what others have proposed for this metre, along with having read many lines, leads me to posit a matrix for the *geeraar* which is given in Figure 5 along with a condition on what can follow the vertical line in the matrix. Curly brackets indicate that one or the other of the two options must be present; parentheses indicate that what is between them may or may not be present.

Figure 5: Matrix suggested here for the metre of the *geeraar*

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{c} \cup \cup \cup \\ \sigma \sigma \end{array} \right\} - \cup \cup - (\cup) \mid \left(\bar{\cup} \right)$$

Condition: Any syllable following the vertical line must be or be part of a conjunction, a focus marker (with or without a subject verbal pronoun) or a vocative suffix.

We see in this the invariable core of the line which is preceded by the possibilities A, B, C, D and E of Table 4. Following the core, a single short-vowel syllable may be present (\cup) and after this is a vertical line followed by the possibility of either a long-vowel syllable or a short-vowel syllable. The vertical line here indicates the end what is considered to be the metrical line and what follows it is assumed to be extrametrical because of the condition. It is

not the phonological nature of what follows the vertical line, but the syntactic role it plays that determines whether it is perceived as correct or not and so this perception is, strictly speaking, not metrical perception based on phonology hence the characterization of these possible syllables as extrametrical.

To illustrate this let us look at the examples in 6 in which each of the line-final possibilities is present.⁹

- (6) a. Gugucdeeda arooryiyo
 b. Isku gaagixinteeda
 c. Away gooha wanaajaay
 d. Gurxankii Habilaad
 e. Hadduu saakimi waayona
 f. Gabadh suurad wanaagsan baan

6d has no line-final syllables beyond the ‘core’ and has the metrical pattern $\cup\cup_ \cup\cup_$. We might consider this to be the basic line of the *geeraar* and it fits Gamuute’s description of this line as essentially an anapaestic dimetre. Line 6b shows a line-final short-vowel syllable, thus the line scans as follows: $\cup\cup_ \cup\cup_ \cup$. We see that the final syllable is not a separate word or particle, but is the final part of the word *gaagixinteeda*, thus the optional final short-vowel syllable before the vertical line in the matrix is present. Line 6a has two short vowel syllables at the end, both of which comprise the single conjunction *iyō*. The ‘i-’ of which is the final optional short-vowel syllable before the vertical line and the ‘-yō’ of which is in the short-vowel syllable position following the vertical line. The condition is met given that this final syllable is part of a conjunction. Another explanation for this is to say that the whole conjunction is extrametrical and that we allow for the possibility of two short-vowel syllables after the vertical line (which must still meet the condition). This will

⁹Examples lines 6a–6d are the first four lines of a *geeraar* by Raage Ugaas Warfaa (Axmednuur Maxamed ‘Ustaad’, 2015: p.107) and example lines 6e and 6f are from the *geeraar* by Faarax Nuur discussed in Section 3.

be left to future research.¹⁰ Line 6c ends in a long vowel syllable but, in this case, it is a vocative ending and so meets the condition on the long-vowel syllable position following the vertical line.¹¹ Finally example line 6e is interesting in that it ends with two short vowel syllables but, although the word is written as one, they both belong to different constituents. The word *waayo* is the verb and its final vowel fills the short-vowel syllable position before the vertical line and *-na* is a phrase conjunction clitic and thus meets the condition on syllables following the vertical line.

Having presented examples that confirm the matrix assumed, we must also address the few examples given in Banti and Giannattasio (1996: p.100-1) which do not fit this matrix. Five lines in particular are interesting and are given in 7.¹²

- (7) a. Caanihii gaasir noqdeen
 b. Cambartii geela dhalaysiyo
 c. Waa walaala aad ah
 d. Saciira iyo naciima

They point out that the first three are from early poets: 7a and 7c from the nineteenth century, and 7b from the early twentieth century. If we consider 7a and 7b carefully we see one possible explanation is an extra short-vowel syllable in the first part of the line shown in

¹⁰Yet another possibility is that the *iyo* is pronounced as part of the previous word and being realized as *-yo* which is common in poetry. This will be left to future research also and is not considered to be an issue crucial to the main point being made here.

¹¹It might be argued by some that given the fact that this ending is an open syllable diphthong it can count as short as well as long and so need not be stipulated as a separate possibility, but can be accounted for simply by being counted as a short vowel syllable and occupying the short-vowel syllable position before the vertical line. I would argue, for reasons I shan't go into here, that the vocative might be considered to be long in the majority of cases in other metrical patterns and assume this to be the case here. Also, considering it to be extrametrical fits with Gaarriye's original presentation as well as Cabdalla Cumar Mansuur's observation on the vocative mentioned Section 2.4 above.

¹²The poets and translations they give are: 7a Raage Ugaas Warfaa 'Milk that got scarce', 7b Salaan Carrabay 'Camels bearing young and', 7c Gidhish 'They are true brothers' and 7d Timocadde 'Hell and paradise'.

parentheses in these scansions: $-(\cup)-$ (Caanihii) and $\cup(\cup)-$ (Cambartii) respectively. This may be said to be something similar to the extra short-vowel syllable which can be present in the first part of lines of the *jiifto* and related metrical patterns and so it might be added to the matrix in Figure 5. This may also be the explanation for the sequence of three short-vowel syllables at the beginning of the line, that is to say, one of them is an ‘extra’ short-vowel syllable and the other two are the two syllables (which can be long or short) at the beginning of the line in the matrix in Figure 5. Investigation on this point will be left to future work.

Gidhish (7c), they point out was from a different region to the other poets (Mudug and Galguduud) and this is the one which seems to have no other explanation than to be a variation, whether specific to the region at the time or to the poet. It’s the most striking line because the difference lies in the core rather than at a periphery. I have no explanation for this and leave it to future consideration.

Turning finally to 7d it is not unlikely that, in performance this might be rendered ‘Saciiraayo naciima’ where the *-a* of ‘Saciira’ and the *i-* if ‘iyo’ become a long diphthong as this conjunction is often assimilated in some way with the previous word in poetry. On the other hand it may be, as they point out, ‘a personal variant of Timocadde who, like many other major Somali poets, could freely introduce innovations into the received genres.’ (Banti and Giannattasio, 1996: p.101).

3 A sample *geeraar* poem

In this section I shall consider a particular *geeraar* poem in detail, namely the famous ‘Rag Sabaan ka Sabaan baan’ by Faarax Nuur which has also been used as an example in some of the works discussed above. I shall look in particular at how the line-final particles are used and offer some observations. The full text of the poem is given below. The text has been divided into verse paragraphs which are labelled VP1–9 and every fifth line is numbered for convenience. The text and translation are taken from Rashiid Sheekh Cabdillaahi Xaaaji Axmed and Ismaaciil Aw Aadan (2009: pp. 74-5). It has not been edited and

so some of the spelling is not as would be expected. This is due to the spelling reflecting not only general pronunciation but the way certain parts are pronounced given that this is a *geeraar* poem. For example line 2 is written **Salaantow badiyaa** when if this were written in a more standard way it would be **Salaanta u badiyaa**. We can see that this is because of the metrical patterning. In the standard way of writing there are two short vowels where a long-vowel syllable is required, however, the ending of the definite article suffix *-a* and the following preverbal prepositional particle *u* may be pronounced in such a way that they sound like a diphthong and as such can be pronounced and count as a long vowel with respect to the metre.

Rag Sabaan ka Sabaan baan

| | | | |
|-----|---|-----------|--|
| VP1 | Rag sabaan ka sabaan baan Salaantow badiyaa | | Gabadh suurad wanaagsan baan Surrad'owga dhisaa |
| VP2 | Hadduu saakimi waayona Sariir baan u goglaayoon Iska seexo idhaa | VP7 5 | Hadduu saakimi waayona Xoolo gooni u soofiyo Sadadaan ku ladhaa |
| VP3 | Hadduu saakimi waayona Caanahii hashaa Suub baan Saddex jeer u lisaayoo Ku sarriigo idhaa | VP8 | Hadduu saakimi waayona Seeddoow Mood iyo Mood iyo Salaantaan badiyaa |
| VP4 | Hadduu saakimi waayona Summalkii rugta joogiyo Sogobkaan u qalaa | VP9 10 | Hadduu saakimi waayona Salaaddaan lallabaayoo Maydal seedo madow iyo Saffkii aan ka dhashiyo Salligaan cuskadaayoo |
| VP5 | Hadduu saakimi waayona Sarreenkii Cadameed baan Sixinkowgu badshaa | 15 | Sulub eebo ku joogtaan Sarartaa ku dhufaaayoo Sanbabkaan ka baxshaayoo |
| VP6 | Hadduu saakimi waayona | | Markaasuu sallimaa |

(Faarax Nuur)

Time and Time Again

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Time and again to men I give many greetings If he fails to calm down I set out a sleeping mat for him And say ‘Just sleep’ 5 And if he fails to calm down I milk Suub, the camel For him three times And say ‘Drink from it’ And if he fails to calm down 10 The ram that is at the settlement And the castrated billy goat I slaughter for him And if he fails to calm down The wheat from Aden I will mix with ghee for him 15 And if he fails to calm down A girl of fine appearance And mats for the bridal hut I give to him And if he fails to calm down</p> | <p>I drive livestock to graze just for him 20 And add them to the share And if he fails to calm down Oh brother-in-law ‘Pass peacefully’ and ‘Wel- come’ I pile these greetings on him And if he fails to calm down 25 At the time of the prayers I announce the <i>reer</i> is leaving The grey horse with black tendons And the line I am born of And supporting myself on the <i>salli</i> With a spearhead of iron 30 I strike his sides And make his lungs come out And then he settles the account</p> |
|---|---|

(Translated by Martin Orwin.¹³)

¹³See (Rashiid Sheekh Cabdillaahi Xaaji Axmed and Ismaaciil Aw Aadan, 2009: pp. 194-5)

3.1 Line final particles

In this poem we find confirmation of both the matrix and the condition given in Figure 5.

The focus marker **baa** is found at the end of lines 1, 7, 14, 17 and 30, in each case with the 1st p.sg. subject verbal pronoun **-aan** giving **baan**. Note in line 30 *Sulub eebo ku joogtaan*, the **baan** assimilates with the verb form; the three parts of **joogtaan** are given in 8.

- (8) *joogto baa aan*
 verb focus marker 1 sg subject verbal pronoun

We see the conjunction **oo** in lines 4, 8, 26, 29, 31 and 32. In line 4 *Sariir baan u goglaayoon*, the **-oon** is formed of **oo** and **-aan** as shown in 9.

- (9) *goglaa oo aan*
 verb conjunction 1 sg subject verbal pronoun

The fact that it is written as part of the same word as the verb with the glide ‘y’ reflects the way such forms are pronounced when poetry is recited.

We also find the short-vowel conjunction **-na** at the end line 3 (and in the repeated instances of this line: 6, 10, 13, 16, 19, 22 and 25). The bisyllabic noun phrase conjunction **iyo** is also present in lines 11, 20, 23, 27 and 28.

All the instances of the extrametrical syllables here are either conjunctions or focus markers. Given the syntactic nature of these particles, it follows that extrametrical syllables are always found at the end of a line which is not at the end of a verse paragraph, that is where there is the expectation that that section of the poem will continue, where a subsequent line is necessary. It also follows from this that no line at the end of a verse paragraph or at the end of a poem can have such an extra-metrical syllable. This observation reflects Cabdalla Cumar Mansuur’s comment on six-syllable lines ending in **-aa** (see Section 2.4) and also the comment in Banti and Giannattasio:

The distribution of types (20i–iii) in the *geeraars* composed by the Sayid is partly restricted, in so far as 6-syllable lines usually occur at the end of a stanza. Instead, 7- and 8-syllable lines alternate freely in other positions. It would appear that the Sayid established this typology for his *geeraars* by discarding some kinds of lines that were possible for the poets that preceded him.

(Banti and Giannattasio (1996: p. 100))

The matter of vocative endings is a little different, though it may be argued that a nominal ending in a vocative leads to an expectation of something being said to or of the nominal to which the vocative is added.

3.2 Practical stylistic analysis

It is one thing to demonstrate how the words used in any particular line are analysed as being metrical or not, but poets make use of the metrical and syntactic possibilities in structuring their poems and we see this clearly in the poem by Faarax Nuur.

We have seen that the lines can be grouped into verse paragraphs, as indicated in the text with VP1–9.¹⁴ Each of the verse paragraphs, aside from the first one, begins with the repeated line: *Hadduu saakimi waayona*, which, as mentioned above, ends in the conjunction *-na*. Grammatically speaking this links the main clause in which it is found to the previous main clause. So the *-na* in line 3 links the main clause comprising lines 3–5 with the main clause comprising lines 1–2. When we look further at the lines we see that all except those that conclude a verse paragraph have at the end either a conjunction, a conjunction coalesced with subject verbal pronoun

¹⁴I choose to call these ‘verse paragraphs’ rather than stanzas since that term, for readers more familiar with European forms of poetry, can imply that the line groupings are of equal length which is not the case here. Having said that however, 6 out of the nine verse paragraphs are three lines in length. Where there is consistency in length of verse paragraph, this may be referred to in Somali: a poem with consistent verse paragraphs of three lines, for example, may be referred to as *saddaxley* ‘one of three’, such as many of the *gabay* poems of Sayyid Maxamed Cabdille Xasan.

(as in *goglaayoon*), or a focus marker (in all cases with the 1. sg. subject verbal pronoun). All the lines that conclude the verse paragraphs end in main verbs with the long-vowel present tense ending *-aa* in the final part of the core metrical pattern (—○○—). We see this parallelism across all the verse paragraphs apart from the final one VP9.

Looking just at verse paragraphs 1–8, we see they all have the same basic syntactic structure with one or more main verbs in the 1st. p. sg. (joined by the conjunction *oo* where there is more than one main verb) and a focus marker. These are reproduced again in 10 with the main verbs, the conjunctions joining the main verbs and the focus markers all indicated. Some of the focus markers are not separate words, but are coalesced with the noun they are focussing (l. 12: *sogobkaan*, l. 21: *sadadaan*, l. 24: *salaantaan*).

- (10) VP1 Rag sabaan ka sabaan [baan]_{focus}
Salaantow badiyaa
- VP2 Hadduu saakimi waayona
Sariir [baan]_{focus} u [goglaa]_{main v.y[oo]conj.n}
Iska seexo [idhaa]_{main v.}
- VP3 Hadduu saakimi waayona
Caanahii hashaa Suub [baan]_{focus}
Saddex jeer u [lisaa]_{main v.y[oo]conj.}
Ku sarriigo [idhaa]_{main v.}
- VP4 Hadduu saakimi waayona
Summalkii rugta joogiyo
Sogobk[-aan]_{focus} u [qalaa]_{main v.}
- VP5 Hadduu saakimi waayona
Sarreenkii Cadameed [baan]_{focus}
Sixinkowgu [badshaa]_{main v.}
- VP6 Hadduu saakimi waayona
Gabadh suurad wanaagsan [baan]_{focus}
Surrad'owga [dhisaa]_{main v.}
- VP7 Hadduu saakimi waayona
Xoolo gooni u soofiyo

Sadad[*aan*]_{focus} ku [*ladhaa*]_{main v.}

VP8 Hadduu saakimi waayona
 Seeddoow Mood iyo Mood iyo
 Salaant[*aan*]_{focus} [*badiyaa*]_{main v.}

Turning to VP9 we see that the syntactic structure is similar to the previous verse paragraphs, but there is a subtle difference. The verse paragraph is repeated in 11 with the same grammatical entities indicated as in 10.

(11) VP9 Hadduu saakimi waayona
 Salaadd[*aan*]_{focus} [*lallabaa*]_{main v.}Y[*oo*]_{conj.}
 Maydal seedo madow iyo
 Safkii aan ka dhashiyo
 Sallig[*aan*]_{focus} [*cuskaadaa*]_{main v.}Y[*oo*]_{conj.}
 Sulub eebo ku joogt[*aan*]_{focus}
 Sarartaa ku [*dhuftaa*]_{main v.}Y[*oo*]_{conj.}
 Sanbalk[*aan*]_{focus} ka [*baxshaa*]_{main v.}Y[*oo*]_{conj.}
 Markaas[*uu*]_{focus} [*sallimaa*]_{main v.}

Two things stand out from this final verse paragraph. Firstly, there is a greater number of main verb clauses within the verse paragraph introduced by the repeated line *Hadduu saakimi waayona*. This, in my opinion, reflects the line's greater sense of urgency and the change in tone. The verse paragraphs preceding give a sense of patience in that each one presents a positive aspect of hospitality to the person who 'fails to calm down' each of these being presented following the repeated introductory line. No matter how often the other person irritates, the poet will offer excellent hospitality.¹⁵ When the final verse paragraph begins with the same repeated line, the expectation is that more will follow, the poet will continue to be hospitable, however, this is not the case. Here the patience has run dry and we have a series references and statements to the poet's resolve in retaliating against his opponent finishing with the gruesome lines *Sarartaa ku dhuftaayoo / Sanbabkaan ka baxshaayoo*. The final line then

¹⁵I leave aside here discussion of voice and subjectivity in the poem. As oral literature, the poet is in a real sense the voice in the poem when it was first recited, but there is more to say on this subject with respect to Somali poetry.

turns things around dramatically. Prior to this line, the subject has always been first person, but in this line suddenly the subject is third person, the poet's adversary. This abrupt change given what has become a strong expectation of a first person subject reinforces the fact that the adversary, who was not satisfied with any of the hospitality offered, finally reaps the rewards of his intransigence.

The syntactic structure can be seen to interact with the metrical structure and the wider structuring of lines into verse paragraphs. Part of this structuring of the lines is evident in the use of the conjunctions and focus markers which are regarded as extrametrical. Use of these extrametrical syntactic particles and the concomitant lack of them in the final lines of verse paragraphs contributes to the flow of language in this poem.

4 Conclusion

In this paper a proposal for the metrical pattern of the *geeraar* has been presented which acknowledges previous work. There is more work to be done to fully understand the beginning of the line but, as it stands, the matrix in Figure 5 accounts for the vast majority of lines I have come across. The discussion on some lines given by Banti and Giannattasio shows us where further work is needed and also points to the possibility of regional and individual variation in how the metre is used. The other major point made in this paper was to show the way extrametricality plays a role in the *geeraar*. This discussion is based on the original insight presented in Maxamed Xaashi Dhamac 'Gaariye' (1976a). Other scholars seem to hint in some way or another at this characteristic but until now it has not been considered in more detail or presented as a formal feature of metrical patterning. Examples have been given of how this works in practice. It seems, as far as we know at present, that this feature is restricted to the *geeraar*. Why this should be, and indeed whether that is really the case, will be left to future research.

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