

Chapter 7

Notes on the morphology of Marka (Af-Ashraaf)

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This paper provides an overview of selected aspects of the nominal, pronominal, and verbal morphology of the Marka (Merca) dialect of Af-Ashraaf, a Cushitic language variety spoken primarily in the city of Merca in southern Somalia, as well as by several diaspora communities around the world, and in particular, in the United States. Marka is interesting to us for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is the general dearth of descriptive work on the language in comparison to two of its closest relatives, Somali and Maay. While many details of the structure of Somali are fairly well established (e.g., Bell 1953; Saeed 1999), and those of Maay are the subject of several recent works (e.g., Paster 2010; 2018), the various ways in which Marka relates to and/or differs from these languages, are yet poorly understood. Our goal in this paper is to begin to remedy this situation, beginning with a comparison of selected morphological characteristics across the three languages.

1 Introduction

This paper describes aspects of the morphology of Marka, a variety of Af-Ashraaf spoken in and around the city of Merca in Southern Somalia, as well as by diaspora communities in the United States and elsewhere. The data that we present are from our own fieldwork with our main consultant, a mother tongue speaker of Marka, conducted in three locations across the United States over a span of several years. The data were collected by the first author in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in October 2014 and in Phoenix, Arizona, in October 2015. Data were



also collected by the second author in Minneapolis in 2009 and 2010. These cities, among a few others in the United States, are home to sizable diaspora populations of Marka speakers.

Marka is one of two varieties of Af-Ashraaf, the other being Shingani, which is spoken primarily in and around the Somali capital, Mogadishu; Shingani is also sometimes called Xamar, which is the name locals attribute to Mogadishu itself. To our knowledge, there is one published theoretical article on Shingani which pertains to so-called “theme constructions” (Ajello 1984). There is also a self-published book of pedagogical materials for the dialect (Abo 2007) and a short grammatical sketch (Moreno 1953). There is less available for Marka; this includes an unpublished grammatical sketch [in German] (Lamberti 1980), and one article on aspects of its verbal inflection (Ajello 1988). In addition, both Ashraaf varieties are briefly mentioned in several classificatory works (as cited below) and in Banti (2011). Compared even to other African languages, the varieties of Af-Ashraaf are under-described and certainly under-documented.

In this paper, we present data highlighting certain morphological characteristics of Marka. Our immediate goal in this paper is to begin to establish (and in some instances reaffirm) characteristics of contemporary Marka. In order to better situate this language variety alongside two of its closest and better-described cousins, namely Somali and Maay, we provide comparable examples from these languages wherever possible. We believe that this is an important component of our ongoing work on Marka. While we have not yet explored it empirically, and despite all classifications of Ashraaf treating it as a dialect of Somali, our Marka speakers have intimated to us that both Marka/Somali and Marka/Maay intelligibility presents a challenge, though they deem Somali to be somewhat more intelligible to them than Maay. Our hope that by directly comparing these three languages throughout our ongoing research wherever possible, it will permit further discussion concerning the classificatory and structural relationships between them.

As we mention above, the Marka data that we present are our own. Comparative lexical and morphological data for Somali are drawn primarily from Green et al. (forthcoming), and the data therein are in line with other published sources on the language (e.g., Bell 1953; Saeed 1999). These data are from Northern Somali; hereafter, any reference to Somali refers to Northern Somali unless otherwise indicated. Corresponding Maay data are drawn from a recent grammatical sketch of the Lower Jubba variety of the language Paster & Ranero (2015), which itself is in line with other published materials on the language (e.g., Paster 2007; 2010; 2018). The comparative data that we present allow us to begin to draw some

generalizations, though preliminary, about morphological similarities and differences between Marka, Somali, and Maay. We highlight two unique characteristics of Marka that stand out in comparison to Somali and Maay; these include the morphological encoding of pluralization and grammatical gender.

The Marka data presented below are transcribed using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Somali data are given in the standard Somali orthography (Andrzejewski 1978); in this orthography, certain written symbols differ markedly from their IPA counterparts. These and their phonetic equivalents are as follows: c [ʃ], dh [d], kh [χ], x [h], j [tʃ], and sh [ʃ]. Although Maay does not have an official or standard orthography, we follow the conventions used in Paster & Ranero (2015) in presenting Maay data below. Like in the case of Somali, some Maay written symbols differ from their IPA counterparts. For Maay, these letters and their phonetic equivalents are as follows: j [tʃ], sh [ʃ], ny [ɲ], d' [d], y' [ʃ], and g' [g]. Data for all three languages include morpheme breaks which are indicated by a hyphen; finer-grained distinctions such as clitic boundaries are not indicated.

Arriving at a better understanding of Marka's place alongside Somali and Maay has broader implications, as its place (and of Af-Ashraaf, more broadly) in classifications of Lowland East Cushitic languages is not entirely clear. As we mention above, despite the fact that some classifications treat Ashraaf as a dialect of Somali, Marka and Somali appear not to have a high degree of mutual intelligibility, begging the question as to whether the former is properly classified as a dialect of the latter. Although it is not our intent to engage in a lengthy discussion of classification, we believe that it is nonetheless important to ground our paper in a short description of the state of the science concerning the internal classification of languages believed to be most closely related to Marka.

Generally speaking, there are several competing classifications concerning the composition of the so-called 'Somali' branch of the Lowland East Cushitic languages in the larger Afro-Asiatic language family (e.g., Abdhullahi 2000; Ehret & Ali 1984; Heine 1978; Lamberti 1984; Moreno 1955). Lamberti (1984) and Ehret & Ali (1984) are of importance to our interests, as they specifically refer to Ashraaf varieties in their classifications. Note that 'Somali' is the name of both the sub-group as a whole and of a language within the sub-group designated ISO:som in Lewis et al. (2016). Lamberti (1984) defines five dialect groups of 'Somali' wherein Ashraaf is considered a separate dialect group from both the better-described Northern and Benaadir Somali dialects. He further divides Ashraaf into Shingani and Lower Shabelle varieties, of which the latter is the Marka variety discussed elsewhere. Examples provided compare only the "peculiarities" (to use

Lamberti's term) of the Shingani variety to Af-Maxaad Tidhi (i.e., a group composed of Northern and Benaadir Somali), but no differentiation is provided pertaining to the Marka variety of Ashraaf, which is the focus of the current paper. Ehret & Ali (1984), on the other hand, group Xamar and Marka (i.e., Ashraaf) varieties with Benaadir Somali and little detail about their properties relative to one another or to other varieties/dialects is given. We certainly do not mean to imply that we are the first to look at Af-Ashraaf, nor is it our intent to engage in a classification debate in this paper, but we believe that there is much more to learn about the properties of this language group (i.e., Af-Ashraaf's two constituent varieties, Shingani and Marka) and its relationship to its closest relatives. In order to begin to do so, we turn our attention first in this paper to properties of Marka morphology.

2 Nominal morphology

Singular nouns in Marka are unmarked, and their plural counterparts are all formed by the addition of the suffix *-(r)ajjo* wherein an epenthetic rhotic appears after vowel-final stems. We illustrate in Table 1 that Marka adopts a single strategy to pluralize nearly every noun. The exception to this is a few high frequency nouns that are used in proverbs whose plurals are identical to those found in Somali (e.g., *ilig* 'tooth' vs. *ilko* 'teeth'). Corresponding Somali plurals are provided for comparison, wherever possible. The fact that outside of these few outliers, Marka adopts a single pluralization strategy distinguishes it from both Somali and Maay. This is because Somali adopts at least five different pluralization strategies (e.g., suffixation of *-o* or *-yaal*, partial suffixing reduplication, tonal accent shift, and both broken and sound pluralization in some Arabic borrowings), while Maay adopts two or three, depending on the particular noun (Paster 2010), all of which involve suffixation.

Like Somali and Maay, Marka encodes two grammatical genders in its nominal system: masculine and feminine. Nouns have inherent gender, however, there is no overt segmental indication of gender on nouns themselves. Rather, a given noun's grammatical gender is recoverable from the patterns of agreement that it requires on its modifiers. This can be seen, for example, in definite determiners, wherein the initial consonant of the determiner (except in one context discussed below) reveals the noun's gender. These consonants, however, often alternate following particular stem-final segments. The masculine definite determiner is *-e* after liquids and pharyngeals and *-ke* in most other contexts. The feminine definite determiner is *-de* after [d] and pharyngeals and *-te* in most other instances.

Table 1: Pluralization

Marka Singular		Marka Plural		Somali plural
dabaal	fool	dabaal-ajno	fools	dabbaal-o
af	language	af-ajno	languages	af-af
karfin	tomb	karfim-ajno	tombs	
khoor	necks	khoor-ajno	necks	qoor-ar
mind	knife	mind-rajno	knives	mind-yo
maro	head	mara-rajno	heads	madáx
guddoomije	chairman	guddoomija-rajno	chairmen	guddoomiya-yaal

Following vowel-final stems, the definite determiner is always *-re*, even in association with those nouns that are biologically masculine or feminine. This points towards a neutralization of the morphological encoding of gender in such contexts. Thus, both masculine and feminine nouns whose stem ends in a vowel take the definite determiner *-re*. In addition, and as one might expect, certain nouns are free to change their gender in accord with the biological gender of their referent, as in *saaxibke* ‘the (male) friend’ vs. *saaxibte* ‘the (female) friend.’ Examples of Marka masculine and feminine singular nouns in their indefinite and definite forms are in Table 2.

Table 2: Grammatical gender and definite determiners (Marka)

	Indefinite		Definite	
Masculine:	nin	‘man’	nin-ke	‘the man’
	saŋ	‘nose’	saŋ-ke	‘the nose’
	abti	‘maternal uncle’	abti-re	‘the maternal uncle’
	dabaal	‘fool’	dabaal-e	‘the fool’
	gasaŋ	‘can’	geseŋ-e	‘the can’
Feminine:	maaliŋ	‘day’	maalin-te	‘the day’
	kab	‘shoe’	kab-te	‘the shoe’
	irbad	‘needle’	irbad-de	‘the needle’
	saddeχ	‘three’	saddeχ-de	‘the three’
	iŋgo	‘mother’	iŋga-re	‘the mother’

Although there is no overt gender marking on Marka nouns, it appears at least preliminarily that the accentual gender distinction found in Somali is maintained in Marka. As discussed in detail in Hyman (1981) and Green & Morrison (2016), Somali nouns exhibit a tonal accent on either their final or penultimate mora; the mora is the tone and accent bearing unit in the language. It is typically the case that non-derived masculine singular nouns have a tonal accent on their penultimate mora while non-derived feminine singular nouns have a tonal accent on their final mora. Like Somali, Marka appears to exhibit this same phenomena, as seen for example in a comparison of masculine *kárfín-ke* ‘the tomb’ and feminine *mindí-re* ‘the knife.’ This accentual distinction is helpful in determining the grammatical gender of nouns with vowel-final stems. Compare, for example, the masculine noun *sánno* ‘year’ to the feminine noun *mindí* ‘knife,’ both of which take the same definite determiner *-re*. Their corresponding definite forms are *sánna-re* ‘the year’ and *mindí-re* ‘the knife.’

While Marka maintains a fairly clear distinction between masculine and feminine grammatical gender in singular nouns, whether segmental, accentual, or both, this distinction is lost upon pluralization. That is, all plural nouns require feminine gender agreement. This characteristic distinguishes Marka from both Somali and Maay. Somali has a complex grammatical gender system; following the noun classification adopted in Green et al. (forthcoming), nouns in Classes 1c and 2 maintain the same gender in both the singular and plural, while nouns in Classes 1a, 1b, 3, 4, and 5 exhibit so-called *gender polarity* (Meinhof 1912) where a noun’s gender changes from masculine to feminine (or vice versa) upon pluralization. Maay, on the other hand, also collapses its grammatical gender distinction in nouns upon pluralization, but unlike Marka which levels gender to feminine, all Maay plural nouns are masculine. A summarized comparison of these three systems is in Table 3.

In addition to the definite determiners described above, Marka has four additional determiner which can modify nouns. The initial consonant of each determiner alternates under the same conditions described above for definite determiners. There are two demonstrative determiners: *koy/toj* ‘this’ and *kaas/taas* ‘that.’ These have direct correspondents in both Somali and Maay, although Somali has an additional distal demonstrative to point out ‘that yonder.’ The Marka interrogative determiner is *kee/tee* ‘which?’, which, once again, has direct correspondents in both Somali and Maay. Like Somali, Marka exhibits so-called *remote* or *anaphoric* definite determiners, namely *kii/tii*. In Somali, these are described as being associated with past tense referents (Lecarme 2008; Tosco 1994). They appear to instead have a disambiguating function in Marka, which we gloss as ‘the/that (one) X.’ In addition, Marka has a determiner, *koo/too*, that speakers use

Table 3: Grammatical gender – singular vs. plural

Marka	Somali	Maay	Gloss
igaar	inan	dinaŋ	‘boy’
igaare (m)	inanka (m)	dinaŋki (m)	‘the boy’
igaarajno	inammo	dinamo/dinanyyal/dinamoyal	‘boys’
igaarajte (f)	inammada (f)	dinamoŋi/dinanyyalki/ dinanmoyalki (m)	‘the boys’
naag	naag	bilanŋ	‘woman’
naagte (f)	naagta (f)	bilanti (f)	‘the woman’
naagajno	naago	bilamo/bilanyyal/bilamoyal	‘women’
naagajte (f)	naagaha (m)	bilamoŋi/bilanyyalki/ bilamoyalki (m)	‘the women’

Table 4: Possessive determiners

	Marka	Somali	Maay
1SG	kee/tee	kay/tay	key/tey
2SG	kaa/taa	kaa/taa	ka/ta
3SG.M	kiis/tiis	kiis/tiis	y’e/tis
3SG.F	kiife/tiife	keed/teed	y’e/tie
1PL	kaŋ/taŋ	kayo/tayo (exc.) keen/teen (inc.)	kaynu/taynu
2PL	kiin/tiin	kiin/tiin	kiŋ/tiŋ
3PL	kiifon/tiifon	kood/tood	y’o/tio

to point out an item that the speaker knows about but the hearer does not. There is a great deal of similarity in the determiners discussed thus far when comparing Marka to both Somali and Maay; however, the possessive determiners in each are more divergent. Possessive determiners in the three varieties are shown in Table 4; they are presented in masculine/feminine pairs in their default forms. Note that Marka and Maay lack the exclusive vs. inclusive distinction encoded in Somali for first person plural. Also, third person masculine possessive determiners in both the singular and plural in Maay differ greatly from those found in both Somali and Marka.

Concerning the derivational morphology that can be added to nouns, there are several parallels between Marka and Somali; the following list should not be taken as exhaustive. Thus far, we find that there are two Marka suffixes, *-nimo* and *-ija*, that derive abstract nouns. Examples include: *ħurnimo* ‘freedom’ (cf. *ħur* ‘free’) and *insaanija* ‘humanity’ (cf. *insaan* ‘human’). These correspond to *-nimo* and *-iyad* in Somali. The Somali suffix *-tooyo*, which derives stative abstract nouns is absent in Marka, and we have not yet been able to find another morpheme that accomplishes this function. The Marka suffix *-dari* derives antonyms, as in *naħariisdari* ‘merciless’ (cf. *naħaris* ‘mercy’); this corresponds to *-darro* in Somali, which accomplishes the same function. The Marka suffix *-lo* corresponds to Somali *-le* and is used to derive agentive nouns, as in *dukaanlo* ‘store owner’ (cf. *dukaan* ‘store’). Finally, we have found that inchoative and experiencer verbs can be derived from nouns in Marka via the suffixes *-wow* and *-fow*, respectively, as in *duqowow* ‘to become old’ (cf. *duq* ‘elder’) and *rijořow* ‘to have a dream’ (cf. *rijo* ‘dream’).

3 Pronouns

Marka has a single series of subject pronouns which are inflected for person, number, and for biological gender with human referents; Marka does not encode an exclusive vs. inclusive distinction in its first person plural subject pronouns. Marka subject pronouns may be used independently whereupon they take on characteristics similar to other nouns. In addition, they may also cliticize to complementizers and negative markers under some conditions. A comparison between subject pronouns in Marka, Somali, and Maay is in Table 5. In addition to these subject pronouns, Marka (like Somali) has a non-specific subject pronoun, *la*.

Table 5 reveals that there are many similarities across the three language varieties under consideration regarding their subject pronouns. A comparison of their object pronouns in Table 6, however, shows far fewer similarities in this particular category. To begin, Somali has so-called *first series* (OP1) and *second series* (OP2) object pronouns, the latter of which appear only in those instances where two non-third person pronominal objects are required. Somali maintains an exclusive vs. inclusive distinction in both series of its object pronouns; neither Marka nor Maay encode such a distinction, and both have only a single series of object pronouns. Both series of Somali object pronouns have third person gaps in both the singular and plural. Marka and Maay differ in that each has third person object pronouns. While Marka’s third person object pronouns appear innovative

Table 5: Subject pronouns

	Marka	Somali	Maay
1SG	aan	aan	ani
2SG	at	aad	ađi
3SG.M	uus	uu	usu
3SG.F	ishe	ay	ii
1PL	annuŋ	aannu (exc.) aynu (inc.)	unu
2PL	asiin	aydin	isiŋ
3PL	ishoon	ay	iyo

in all instances, the situation with Maay is somewhat different. A comparison of Maay subject vs. object pronouns in Tables 5 and 6 shows that they are in many instances identical. The exception of the first and second person singular, and the second person plural to some degree. In addition to its other object pronouns, Marka has the reflexive/reciprocal pronoun *is*, similar to that found in Somali.

Table 6: Object pronouns

	Marka	Somali (OP1)	Somali (OP2)	Maay
1SG	iŋ	i	kay	i
2SG	ku	ku	kaa	ki
3SG.M	su	-	-	usu
3SG.F	sa	-	-	ii
1PL	nuŋ	na (exc.) ina (inc.)	kayo (exc.) keen (inc.)	unu
2PL	siin	idin	kiin	isiŋ-siŋ
3PL	soo	-	-	iyo

Marka object pronouns cliticize onto adpositional particles, of which there are three. Object pronouns also co-occur with a non-specific subject pronoun (NSP) meaning ‘one.’ We notice no prosodic difference between them, but according to our speaker’s intuition, sequences of NSP+object pronoun are divisible, while object pronoun+adposition are a single unit. Examples are in Table 7.

Table 7: Pronouns with adpositional particles (Marka)

	Object pronoun	NSP	ka ‘in/from’	u ‘to/for’	la ‘with’
1SG	iŋ	la iŋ	iŋka	iiŋ	inla
2SG	ku	la ku	kuka (koo)	kuuŋ	kula
3SG.M	su	la su	suka	suuŋ	sula
3SG.F	sa	la sa	saka	saauŋ	sala
1PL	nuŋ	la nuŋ	nuŋka	nuuŋ	nunla
2PL	siin	la siin	siinŋka	siinŋ	siinla
3PL	soo	la soo	sooka	sooŋ	soola

4 Verbal morphology

The simplest Marka verbs are formed by a single verbal base. These simple bases may contain just the verb root itself, but more complex bases can contain one or more derivational affixes, such as a Weak Causative, Middle, or even a combination of the two. Suffixes inflecting for person, number, and gender follow the stem. Marka has two verb contexts with a single verbal base, namely the Present Habitual and Past Simple. These contexts correspond to the Present Habitual and Simple Past in Somali (Green et al. forthcoming), and to the Simple Present A and Simple Past in Maay (Paster & Ranero 2015). Like both Somali and Maay, inflection in Marka for first person singular and third person masculine singular are identical. Likewise, inflection for second person singular and third person feminine singular are identical. The basic inflectional properties of Marka verbs for four stem types (Bare, Weak Causative, Weak Causative + Middle, and Middle) are given in Table 8, which shows inflection for the Present Habitual and Table 9, which shows inflection for the Past Simple.

Other contexts (e.g., Present Progressive, Past Progressive, Past Habitual, and Assumptive) are formed via auxiliary constructions containing two verbal bases; the first base is the infinitival form of the main verb which is, in turn, followed by an inflected form of an auxiliary verb. These are comparable to those found in Somali (Green et al. forthcoming), and also to the Present Progressive, Past Progressive, and Generic Future in Maay (Paster & Ranero 2015); exceptions, however, include the Near Future and Conditional in Maay, in which both the main verb and auxiliary are inflected.

In the Marka Present Progressive, the infinitival main verb is followed by an inflected Present Habitual form of *rebo* ‘to do.’ For the Past Habitual, the main

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Table 8: Present Habitual (Marka)

	Bare 'see'	WeakCaus 'cook'	WeakCaus+Middle 'sell'	Middle 'sink'
1SG/3SG.M	deje	karife	iibsade	ɖubme
2SG/3SG.F	dejte	karise	iibsate	ɖubmate
1PL	dejne	karine	iibsane	ɖubmane
2PL	dejtiin	karisiin	iibsatiin	ɖubmatiin
3PL	dejaan	karifaan	iibsadaan	ɖubmadaan

Table 9: Past Simple (Marka)

	Bare 'see'	WeakCaus 'cook'	WeakCaus+Middle 'sell'	Middle 'sink'
1SG/3SG.M	deji	karifi	iibsadi	ɖubmi
2SG/3SG.F	dejti	karisi	iibsati	ɖubmati
1PL	dejni	karini	iibsani	ɖubmani
2PL	dejteen	kariseen	iibsateen	ɖubmateen
3PL	dejeen	karifeen	iibsadeen	ɖubmadeen

verb infinitive is followed by an inflected Past Simple form of *jiro* 'to be, exist.' The Past Progressive and Assumptive are similar in that they involve Present Habitual and Past Simple forms of *rejo*, respectively; the precise meaning of this verb is unclear. In the interest of space, we illustrate the formation of only one auxiliary construction, the Present Progressive of *sugo* 'to wait,' in Table 10.

Table 10: Auxiliary constructions – Present Progressive (Marka)

	Marka	Gloss
1SG/3SG.M	sugo rebe	'I am/he is waiting'
2SG/3SG.F	sugo rebte	'you are/she is waiting'
1PL	sugo rebne	'we are waiting'
2PL	sugo rebtiin	'you (PL) are waiting'
3PL	sugo rebaan	'they are waiting'

Marka creates stative verbs via an auxiliary construction composed of an adjective or adjectival participle followed by an inflected form of the irregular verb *ahaan* ‘to be.’ Such stative verbs are used in instances where one might find an attributive or predicate adjective in other languages. In our description of Marka, we follow others (e.g., Andrzejewski 1969; Ajello & Puglielli 1988) who have called such verbs in Somali *hybrid verbs*, although other names have also been used elsewhere in the literature. Paster & Ranero (2015) refer to such verbs as the Simple Present B in Maay. For the sake of comparison, one might encounter *Way adagtahay* ‘It is difficult’ in Somali, which is similar in form to *Ani farahsiny-ya* ‘I am happy’ in Maay. In Marka, the situation is similar, as in *Uus weynye* ‘It is big.’ In each of these examples, the adjectival portion of the auxiliary construction is italicized.

Like in Maay (and some southern dialects of Somali), all verbal inflection in Marka is accomplished via suffixation. Northern Somali, however, maintains a small class of four irregular verbs whose inflection is accomplished through prefixation in non-auxiliary contexts. These include *ool* ‘to be located,’ *odhan* ‘to say,’ *oqoon* ‘to know,’ and *imow* ‘to come.’ These four verbs correspond to *jaalo* ‘to be located,’ *qoho* ‘to say,’ *aqaano* ‘to know,’ and *imafo* ‘to come,’ in Marka. Table 11 compares inflection in Northern Somali vs. Marka in the Past Simple and the Past Progressive for the verb ‘to say.’ In the Past Simple, this irregular verb is inflected via prefixation in Somali, while in Marka, inflection is via suffixation. Both languages employ an auxiliary construction in the Present Progressive.

Table 11: Northern Somali vs. Marka – ‘to say’

	Past Simple		Past Progressive	
	Somali	Marka	Somali	Marka
1SG	idhi	q̄ihi	odhanayay	q̄oho reji
2SG/3SG.F	tidhi	q̄ahti	odhanaysay	q̄oho reti
3SG.M	yidhi	q̄ahji	odhanayay	q̄oho reji
1PL	nidhi	q̄ahni	odhanaynay	q̄oho reni
2PL	tidhaahdeen	q̄ahteen	odhanayseen	q̄oho reteen
3PL	yidhaahdeen	q̄ahjeen	odhanayeen	q̄oho rejeen

Inflection in Marka of the verb *ahaaf* ‘to be’ is irregular. Table 12 shows that ‘to be’ is conjugated as expected in auxiliary contexts like the Past Progressive, instances and differs somewhat in the Present Habitual compared to other verbs in maintaining a unique third person singular masculine form (see

Table 8). For the Past Simple, Marka has a single invariable form of 'to be' for all person/number/gender combinations.

Table 12: Inflection of 'to be' (Marka)

	Past Simple	Present Habitual	Past Progressive
1SG	ahaaj	ije	ahaadeje
2SG/3SG.F	ahaaj	ite	ahaadete
3SG.M	ahaaj	ije	ahaadeje
1PL	ahaaj	ine	ahaadene
2PL	ahaaj	itiin	ahaadetiin
3PL	ahaaj	ijaan	ahaadejaan

A last point pertaining to verbal morphology in Marka verbs concerns reduplication. Partial prefixing reduplication is used to indicate intensity or iteration of action in some verbs. When this occurs, the maximum size of the reduplicant appears to be CVV; for example, *dhadhaqaaqo* 'to move about restlessly, fidget.' In such instances of reduplication, Marka remains faithful to the underlying quality of the vowel in its reduplicants. We have found that Marka also employs total prefixing reduplication to derive an adjective from a noun, as in *buurbuur* 'mountainous' (cf. *buur* 'mountain').

5 Concluding thoughts

This paper offers a renewed look at the nominal, pronominal, and verbal morphology of the Marka variety of Af-Ashraaf. While we have not yet had the opportunity to conduct a systematic comparison of Marka and its closest relative, Shingani, we have taken the first steps to compare Marka directly to two of its better-known and better-documented relatives, Maay and Somali. Marka shares characteristics with both Somali and Maay, but conclusions concerning the extent to which Marka aligns more closely with one or the other must await further research. At present, we endeavor to highlight those properties of Marka that distinguish it from both Somali and Maay, such as its methods of encoding pluralization and gender. While there is most certainly a great deal more work to be done, we hope that this short description lays the foundation for further inquiries into Marka grammar and provides those with interest in the ongoing debate concerning the internal classification of East Cushitic languages new information upon which to justify their analyses.

Abbreviations

CAUS	causative	NSP	non-specific subject pronoun
EXC	exclusive	OP	object pronoun
F	feminine	PL	plural
INC	inclusive	SG	singular
M	masculine		

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