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# Comparison in Kambaata: Superiority, Equality and Similarity

Yvonne Treis<sup>1</sup>

The paper is an in-depth study of the expression of comparison in Kambaata, a Highland East Cushitic language of Ethiopia. It discusses not only quantitative comparison, i.e. comparison of relative and absolute inequality and comparison of equality, but also analyses the morphosyntax and syntax of expressions of qualitative comparison, i.e. comparison of similarity. Apart from predicative constructions, attributive comparative, superlative, equative and similitive constructions are taken into account. In comparative constructions (lit. ‘X is tall from Y’), the standard of comparison is marked by the ablative case, as in most languages spoken at the Horn of Africa. Kambaata distinguishes between two superlative constructions, one of which is based on the comparative construction (‘X is tall from all’), while the other is characterised by a locative standard of comparison (‘X is tall among Y’). Kambaata has furthermore two equative constructions. The first one is based on the similitive construction (‘X is tall like Y’), the second one is a periphrastic construction ‘X is tall to the extent Y’. The enclitic morpheme which marks the standard of comparison in similitive constructions is argued to originate from a noun meaning ‘manner’.

## 1. Introduction

This paper is a study of the expression of comparison in Kambaata and encompasses analyses of quantitative and qualitative comparison. It is concerned with comparison of inequality (§3), equality (§5) and similarity (§4). While works on comparison in little known languages often focus on predicative comparison constructions with simple nominal standards of comparison, I also examine constructions with complex clausal standards and attributive comparison constructions. The first sections of this article provide information on the classification and distribution of the language (§2) and give an overview of important grammatical aspects that are required as background for the discussion of comparison (§3). To the best of my knowledge, this paper is so far the most detailed study of the expression of comparison in a Cushitic language. My analyses are based on data collected during fieldtrips to the Kambaata-speaking area from 2002 to 2007 and in 2016. Apart from narratives, conversational data and mock dialogues,<sup>2</sup> my corpus also includes texts from local publications.<sup>3</sup> These sources are supplemented by elicited data. I have generally attempted to avoid translation elicitation but have

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<sup>2</sup> The sources of non-elicited, (near-)natural data start with the abbreviations AN, DW, TD and TH.

<sup>3</sup> Local publications: K89 = Kambaatissata (1989), Geetaahun (2002), Deginet (in prep.) and the Gospel of John.

resorted to target language manipulation elicitation or text-based (ancillary) elicitation (Chelliah & Reuse 2011: 370-73, 379), if elicitation was at all necessary.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Typological overview of Kambaata

Within the Cushitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic language phylum, Kambaata belongs to the Highland East Cushitic (HEC) language group. The language is spoken in the South of Ethiopia in an area approximately 300 km south-west of the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa in the Kambaata-Xambaaro Zone. The immediate neighbours of the Kambaata are speakers of other Highland East Cushitic languages (Alaaba and Hadiyya) and Ometo languages of the Omotic family (Wolaitta and Dawro). According to the 2007 Ethiopian census, there are 615,000 Kambaata speakers.

The language is exclusively suffixing and, regarding its morphological type, agglutinating-inflectional with many portmanteau morphemes. It is both head- and dependent-marking with a fairly elaborate case system and subject agreement on verbs. The language is consistently head-final; hence all modifiers, including relative clauses, precede the noun in the noun phrase, and all dependent clauses precede independent main clauses. The main verb or a copula is the usually the last constituent in the sentence. Clefting is a very common focussing device.

Kambaata has four major open word classes: nouns, adjectives, verbs and ideophones, all of which can be defined on the basis of morphological and morphosyntactic criteria (Treis 2008: 81-97). Nouns are obligatorily specified for one of nine case forms, and for either masculine or feminine gender. Table 1 exemplifies the case paradigms of the masculine noun *dum-á* ‘back room (of a house)’ and the feminine noun *gat-í-ta* ‘backyard’. The accusative is the functionally unmarked case form. It does not only mark direct objects but also certain temporal and manner adverbial phrases, and it serves as the citation form of nouns.

		<i>dum-á</i> (m.) ‘back room’	<i>gat-í-ta</i> (f.) ‘backyard’
Accusative	ACC	<i>dum-á</i>	<i>gat-í-ta</i>
Nominative	NOM	<i>dúm-u</i>	<i>gát-i-t</i>
Genitive	GEN	<i>dum-í</i>	<i>gat-é</i>
Dative	DAT	<i>dum-íi(-ha)</i>	<i>gat-ée(-ha)</i>
Ablative	ABL	<i>dum-íichch</i>	<i>gat-éechch</i>
Instrumental/Comitative/Perlative	ICP	<i>dum-íin</i>	<i>gat-éen</i>
Locative	LOC	<i>dum-áan</i>	<i>gat-éen</i>
Oblique/Vocative	OBL	<i>dúm-a</i>	<i>gát-e</i>
Predicative (with COP2)	PRED	<i>dúm-a</i>	<i>gát-i</i>

**Table 1.** Case paradigms of a masculine and a feminine Kambaata noun.

<sup>4</sup> My work on the expression of comparison in Kambaata was supported by the federation *Typologie et universaux linguistiques: données et modèles* (CNRS, FR 2559) via the project *Expression des comparaisons d'égalité et de similitude* (2014-2018). I am grateful to the Culture Department of the Kambaata-Xambaaro Zone for their support during my fieldtrips. Meaza Kerlos collected most written Kambaata sources. Mirja Saksa obtained the Gospel of John for me. I am indebted to my long-term language assistant Deginet Wotango for the intensive and fruitful discussions of the analyses proposed here. I would like to thank Teshome Danye, Tessema Handiso and all the other Kambaata speakers I have been working with since 2002.

In attributive function, adjectives agree in case and gender with their head noun. They are marked for three cases (nominative, accusative, oblique) and two genders (feminine, masculine). Apart from being used as modifiers, adjectives can be used as the head of a noun phrase without further measures (e.g. nominalisation, dummy head) being taken. In this syntactic function, they have the full case-marking potential, i.e. inflect for nine cases.

Kambaata makes a morphological distinction between fully finite main clause verbs and various types of semi-finite and infinite dependent clause verbs: relative verbs, converbs, purposive verbs and verbal nouns. In Table 2, the verbs are arranged from left to right on a scale of decreasing finiteness. While Kambaata has nine independent, case-inflecting personal pronouns (1s, 2s, 2hon, 3m, 3f, 3hon, 1p, 2p, 3p), subject agreement morphemes on verbs distinguish maximally between seven (1s, 2s, 2hon = 2p, 3m, 3f = 3p, 3hon, 1p), minimally between five forms (1s = 3m, 2s = 3f = 3p, 2hon = 2p, 3hon, 1p).

	← FULLY FINITE				INFINITE →
VERB TYPE →					
INFLECTIONAL CATEGORIES MARKED ↓	MAIN VERBS	RELATIVE VERBS	CONVERBS	PURPOSIVES	VERBAL NOUNS
SUBJECT AGREEMENT	5-7 forms	5-7 forms	5 forms	5 forms	-
ASPECT	Imperfective Progressive <i>e</i> -Perfective <i>o</i> -Perfective	Imperfective Progressive <i>e</i> -Perfective <i>o</i> -Perfective	Imperfective Perfective	-	-
MOOD	Indicative Imperative/Jussive Preventive	-	-	-	-
NEGATION	+	+	+	-	-
SWITCH REFERENCE	-	-	+	+	-

**Table 2. Inflectional categories on main verbs and dependent verbs in Kambaata.**

Ideophones are invariant and are always accompanied by a support verb which carries the inflection. In intransitive clauses ideophones combine with *y-* ‘say’ or *ih-* ‘become’, in transitive clauses with *a’-* ~ *ass-* ‘do’.

### 3. Comparison of inequality

Comparison of inequality subsumes comparison of superiority and inferiority. For both types of comparison, a distinction can be made between relative inequality (*Susan is taller than Peter; Peter is less tall than Susan*) and absolute inequality (*Susan is the tallest of her family; Peter is the least tall of his family*). Kambaata has not grammaticalised any constructions for comparison of inferiority, inferiority is expressed periphrastically (§3.3), hence the focus of this section will be on comparison of superiority (§§3.1-3.2).

### 3.1. Comparison of superiority

In Kambaata predicative comparative constructions, the comparee functions as the subject. As such, it is nominative-marked; see *Bóq*, the nominative form of the personal name *Boqé* in (1). The parameter of comparison is expressed by the predicate, which is either an adjective (1), property ideophone (2) or a property verb (10). There is no grammaticalised parameter marker; the form of the parameter itself is not different from that in positive constructions (see the literal translation). The standard of comparison, i.e. the entity against which the comparee is measured and found to be unequal, is expressed by an ablative-marked adjunct. In (1) and all following examples, the standard phrases occur in curly brackets in the Kambaata and the translation line.

- (1) *Bóq* {*Makkeeb-éechch*} *qeráa'rr-u-a*  
 PN.mNOM PN-fABL long-mPRED-mCOP2  
 ‘Boqe is taller than Makkeebe (lit. Boqe is tall {from Makkeebe}).’ (K89: 2.79)
- (2) *Buttu'll-a-sí* *hagár-u* {*garad-d-a-sí=hann-iichch*}  
 cubs-fGEN-DEF colour-mNOM adult-PL1-fGEN-DEF=NMZ2-mABL  
*gambáll* *y-áano*  
 black.IDEO say-3mIPV  
 ‘The colour of the (civet) cubs is darker than that of the adults (lit. The colour of the cubs is dark {from that of the adults}).’ (K89: 6.56)

Whereas two entities are compared in (1)-(2), one can also compare two conditions in time of one and the same entity. In (3), the medical condition of now is compared to that of before, and a temporal noun serves as the standard of comparison.

- (3) (...) *íib-u-si-i* *muggítt-uhu-u* {*won-áachch*}  
 fever-m.NOM-3mPOSS-ADD diarrhea-mNOM-ADD before-fABL  
*woyy-án* *marr-óochch* (...)  
 be\_better-3mIPV go-3mPVO.REL.ABL  
 ‘(...) if the fever and the diarrhoea get better {than before}, (...).’ (K89: 4.8)

The occurrence of the ablative case is not restricted to constructions of comparison of superiority. Elsewhere in the language, the ablative case marks oblique objects and adjuncts which express the source (4), origin or starting point of an actual (literal) or metaphorical (figurative) movement, the starting point in time, the source material of a production process, what is avoided, from what one is protected or saved (5), and the maleficiary of someone’s death, i.e. to whose detriment someone dies.

- (4) *Daalal-óochch* *buul-á* *argicc-áamm*  
 PN-mABL mule-mACC borrow.MID-1sIPV  
 ‘I borrow a mule from Dalaalo.’ (K89: 1.88)
- (5) (...) *gid-iichchí-i* *wól-o* *daaf-iichchí-i* *ka'mm-am-áan-sa*  
 cold-mABL-ADD other-mOBL danger-mABL-ADDprotect.MID-PASS-1sIPV-3fO  
 ‘I protect her from cold and other dangers.’ (K89: 3.47)

Furthermore, some relational nouns, such as *zakkú* ‘after’, *etar-ú* ‘beyond, exterior; apart (from)’ and *biríta* ‘before, front’, and some adjectives, such as *annann-á(-ta)* ‘different (from)’ and *wol-ú/-íta* ‘other (than)’ (6), govern ablative complements.



**Standard – Comparee<sub>[Focussed]</sub> – Parameter**

- (8) {*Ba'-is-soontí* *ba'-is-íichch*} *qophphán-u-kk*  
 turn\_bad-CAUS-2sPVO.REL turn\_bad-CAUS-mABL lie-mNOM-2sPOSS  
*ammóo baas-á fárr-a-a*  
 but much\_more-mACC bad-mPRED-mCOP2  
 ‘{Compared to (lit. from) the mischief you have done} your lie is much/even worse.’  
 (K89: 4.45)
- (9) {*Ben-á ir-íichch*} *Aacaam-é ir-u-bay lét-a-a-nii?*  
 PN-fGEN land-mABL PN-fGEN land-mNOM-RHET green-mPRED-mCOP-ADD  
 ‘{Compared to (lit. from) Bena’s land}, isn’t Aacaame’s land greener?’

The canonical constituent order Comparee – Standard – Parameter is not retained in attributive comparative constructions (§3.1.4).

**3.1.2. Higher and lower degrees of superiority**

Comparative constructions can be expanded by adverbial modifiers specifying the degree of superiority. The converb form of *abbis-* ‘exceed’ (10), multiplicative numerals (11) or ACC-marked adjectives in adverbial function, e.g. *qah-ú* ‘small, a bit’ (12) and *baas-á* ‘much more’ (8), occur before the parameter.

- (10) *Mannoom-á íib-u {bikk-íichchi-s} abbíshsh*  
 body-fGEN heat-mNOM norm-mABL-DEF exceed.3mPCO  
*abb-ée=da (...) móos-i-ta mal-áa*  
 be\_big-3mPVE.REL=COND illness-mGEN-fCOP2 sign-fPRED  
 ‘If the body temperature is much higher (lit. exceedingly high) (...) {than its norm}, it is a sign of an illness.’  
 (K89: 8.101)
- (11) *Ziishsh-i wom-á umúr-u {wól-ua-n-s*  
 bee-mGEN queen-fGEN age-mNOM other-m.OBL-N-DEF  
*ziishsh-i=hann-íichch} ont-íta kod-áta qeraa'rr-áno*  
 bee-mGEN=NMZ2-mABL five-fACC time-fACC be\_long-3mIPV  
 ‘The queen bee becomes five times older than the other bees (lit. The age of the queen bee is five times long {from that of the other bees}).’  
 (K89: 4.27)
- (12) *Me'-áa waaliy-íichch-ut {goon-ch-íichchi-s} qah-únka*  
 female-fGEN walia-SG-fNOM male-SG-mABL-DEF small-fACC<N>  
*gabbéem-a-ta*  
 short-fPRED-fCOP2  
 ‘The female walia ibex is a bit shorter {than the male (walia ibex)}.’  
 (K89: 5.40)

The adjective *abb-á(-ta)* ‘big; much’ fulfils various functions in comparative constructions. Firstly, it can express the parameter of comparison as in (13).

- (13) *Baad-óon-ta-nne {shomboq-íin hujat-eennó huj-éechch}*  
 country-mLOC-L-1sPOSS bamboo\_species-mICP work-3honIPV.REL work-fABL  
*leem-íin hujat-eennó húj-it ább-a-ta*  
 bamboo\_species-mICP work-3honIPV.REL work-fNOM big-fPRED-fCOP2  
 ‘In our country, the work with *shomboqu*-bamboo is more widespread (lit. bigger, more) {than the work with *leema*-bamboo}.’  
 (K89: 6.53)

Secondly, if modifying the parameter, it marks a higher degree of superiority of the comparee vis-à-vis the standard (14), and thus has the same function as the degree adverbials in (10)-(12).

- (14) *Qáanc-u* {*fuutt-iichch*} *abb-á* *qáar-a-a-nii*  
 enset\_fibre-mNOM cotton-mABL big-mACC strong-mPRED-mCOP2-ADD  
*kee'mm-áno-a-nii*  
 be\_heavey-3mIPV.REL-mCOP2-ADD  
 'Enset fibre is much stronger and heavier {than cotton}.'

If fully reduplicated, *abb-á* 'big; much' can express an extra-high degree of superiority.

- (15) *Da'llis-u* {*Caakkis-óochch*} *abb-ánka* *abb-á* *qeráa'rr-u-a*  
 PN-mNOM PN-mABL big-mACC<N> big-mACC tall-mPRED-mCOP2  
 'Da'lliso is MUCH taller {than Caakkiso}.' (DW\_Dialogue2014-12-10)

Thirdly, *abb-á* 'big; much' makes comparison of superiority possible, if the predicate of the clause is not a property adjective, verb or ideophone; see the non-property verb *qorab-* 'take care' in (16).

- (16) *Hadar-áta* {*beet-iichch*} *abb-á* *qoráb-u* *has-is-áno*  
 deposit-fACC son-mABL big-mACC take\_care-mNOM want-CAUS-3mIPV  
 'One has to take more/better care of the thing/person left in one's safekeeping {than of one's son}.' (K89: 5.48)

For the use of *abb-á* 'big; much' with clausal standards see §3.1.3.

Kambaata has two inherently comparative adjective lexemes, *woyy-á(-ta)* 'better, best' (24) and *baas-á(-ta)* 'worse, (negative) more' (18),<sup>6</sup> and two corresponding inchoative-stative verb *woyy-* 'be(come) better' (17) and *baas-* 'be(come) worse, (negative) more'. Even if no standard of comparison is mentioned in the immediate context, these property lexemes imply that two (or more) entities are compared to each other and that the comparee exhibits the parameter encoded by the adjective to a higher (or, depending on the context, to the highest) degree.

- (17) *Xuujj-oommí=g-iin* *át* {*es-áachch*} *abbís-s* *woyy-íteent*  
 see-1sPVO.REL=G-mICP 2sNOM 2sABL exceed-2sPCO be\_better-2sPVE  
 'As I can see, you are/have become much better than me.' (K89: 3.4)

- (18) *tíin* *báas-a-ta* *buxím-a*  
 IDEM1.fNOM worse-fOBL-fCOP2 poverty-fPRED  
 'This is worse/the worst poverty.' (Possible context: Last year, we were extremely poor, but this year the situation even worse.)

### 3.1.3. Clausal standards

If a whole clause headed by a finite verb expresses the standard, it is nominalised (NMZ2) so that it can carry a case morpheme (19)-(20). Clausal standards are commonly followed by the degree marker *abbá* 'big, much' (19) or *aluudú* (ACC) (19) / *alíudiin* (ICP) 'above' (20).

<sup>6</sup> *Baas-á* can also be used as an intensifier in adverbial function (8).



- (19) *Xáph-u-s* {*has-is-anó=hann-iichch*}  
 root-mNOM-DEF want-CAUS-3mIPV.REL=NMZ2-mABL  
*aluud-ú* (~ *abb-á*) *qeraa'rr-ée=da* (...) *aliud-iin*  
 above-mACC [~ big-mACC] become\_long-3mPVE.REL=COND  
 ‘If the roots grow longer {than desired (lit. it makes want)}, (...)’ (K89: 8.9)
- (20) *Gajáajj-u-s* {*has-is-anó=hann-iichch*} *aliud-iin*  
 reason-mNOM-DEF want-CAUS-3mIPV.REL=NMZ2-mABL above-mICP  
*higg*<sup>7</sup> *shamm-ó=tannéehaa-t*  
 pass.3mPCO rot-3mPVO.REL=REAS.VV-COP3  
 ‘The reason (for these bananas to taste bad) is that they are riper (lit. more rotten) {than desired (lit. it makes want)}.’ (TH\_Tä2003-09-05)

If the clause is headed by a verbal noun, which retains the argument structure of a verb but inflect like a noun (Treis 2012), no nominalisation is necessary, as in (21) where verbal nouns are used as heads of the standard and the comparee NP.

- (21) {*Beeh-iichch*} *méxxin it-u* *wóyy-a-a*  
 share-mABL alone eat-mNOM better-mPRED-mCOP2  
 ‘Eating alone is better {than sharing}.’

#### 3.1.4. Attributive comparative constructions

In predicative comparative constructions, the parameter is expressed by an adjectival or verbal predicate of a main clause or of an adverbial clause (see e.g. the conditional clause in (10)). The comparee in subject function triggers gender agreement on adjectival parameters (22)-i and person/gender agreement on verbal parameters (22)-ii.<sup>8</sup>

#### (22) Predicative comparative constructions

##### (i) Adjectival Parameter

Comparee	Standard	Parameter
GENDER <sub>i</sub> /NOM	GENDER <sub>j</sub> /ABL	GENDER <sub>i</sub> /COP
SUBJECT	ADJUNCT TO PARAMETER	PREDICATE

##### (ii) Verbal Parameter

Comparee	Standard	Parameter
GENDER <sub>i</sub> /NOM	GENDER <sub>j</sub> /ABL	GENDER <sub>i</sub> /PERSON <sub>i</sub> /TAM
SUBJECT	ADJUNCT TO PARAMETER	PREDICATE

Apart from predicative comparative constructions, Kambaata also has attributive comparative constructions (23). Here all components of the comparative construction are found inside one NP. The comparee is the head of the NP, which can occupy any syntactic function in the clause. It is modified by a phrase containing the parameter preceded by the ablative-marked standard. Adjectival parameters agree with the comparee in case and gender (23)-i; verbal parameters<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> According to a consultant, the converb *higg* ‘passing’ could be dropped without a change in meaning.

<sup>8</sup> Including verbs accompanying ideophonic parameters.

<sup>9</sup> Including verbs accompanying ideophonic parameters.

show gender and person agreement and need to be relativised (23)-ii. If the relative verb expressing the parameter is negative, it also agrees in case (and, again, in gender) with the head;<sup>10</sup> this additional agreement morpheme occurs in round brackets in (23)-ii.

(23) Attributive comparative constructions

(i) Adjectival Parameter

[[{Standard}]]	Parameter] <sub>MODIFIER</sub>	Comparee] <sub>NP</sub>
GENDER <sub>j</sub> /ABL	CASE <sub>i</sub> /GENDER <sub>i</sub>	CASE <sub>i</sub> /GENDER <sub>i</sub>
ADJUNCT TO	ATTRIBUTE TO	ANY SYNTACTIC
PARAMETER	COMPAREE	FUNCTION

(ii) Verbal Parameter

[[{Standard}]]	Parameter] <sub>MODIFIER</sub>	Comparee] <sub>NP</sub>
GENDER <sub>j</sub> /ABL	GENDER <sub>i</sub> /PERSON <sub>i</sub> /TAM/REL (-CASE <sub>i</sub> /GENDER <sub>i</sub> )	CASE <sub>i</sub> /GENDER <sub>i</sub>
ADJUNCT TO	ATTRIBUTE TO	ANY SYNTACTIC
PARAMETER	COMPAREE	FUNCTION

Attributive comparative constructions are exemplified in (24)-(26). In (24), two coordinated comparee nouns ('metal and stone') are modified by an adjective, expressing the parameter ('better'), which itself governs the adjunct expressing the standard of comparison ('from/than wood') (cf. (23)-i). The comparee nouns in (24) are marked for the nominative case because they function as the subject of *dagámmee* '(3m) is found'.

- (24) (...) [[{*haqq-iichch*} wóyy-u]<sub>MODIFIER</sub> *birat-uhú-u* *kin-uhú-u*]<sub>NP</sub>  
 wood-mABL better-mNOM metal-mNOM-ADD stone-mNOM-ADD

*dag-ámm-ee=tannée* (...)  
 find-PASS-3mPVE.REL=REAS

'(...) because metal and stone (which are) better (i.e. more useful) {than wood} are found (...).' (K89: 4.74)

In (25), the noun expressing the comparee ('poem') is the object of *xáaf* 'Write!' and requires the accusative case in this function. The preceding modifier phrase contains a negative relative verb expressing the parameter of comparison, which itself governs the standard noun phrase ('from/than ten lines') as an adjunct.

- (25) (...) [[{*tordúm-a maar-iichch*} *kot-tumb-úta*]<sub>MODIFIER</sub> *qexeeshsh-áta*]<sub>NP</sub>  
 ten-mOBL line-mABL be\_less-3fNREL-fACC poem-fACC

*xáaf*  
 write.2sIMP

'(...) write a poem (which is) not shorter {than ten lines}.' (K89: 5.35)

Attributive comparative constructions become fairly complex when the standard of comparison in the modifier phrase is again modified. In (26), the standard *taméech* 'from/than the use' is preceded by the genitive noun *daabb-ó* 'of bread', which is itself modified by two coordinated genitive nouns ('of wheat and oat') and a relative clause ('which is very common in Ethiopia').

<sup>10</sup> More information on negative relative verbs (participles) is found in Treis (2012).

- (26) [[{*Tophph-é*      *aaz-éen*      *abbís-s*      *lall-itée*  
Ethiopia-fGEN    inside-mLOC    exceed-3fPCO    occur-3fPVE.REL  
*alas-í-na*      *gardaam-í* *daabb-ó*      *tam-éechch* }  
wheat-mGEN-CRD    oat-mGEN    bread-fGEN    use-fABL  
[*kot-túmb-ut*]PARAMETER ]MODIFIER *tám-it*]NP      *yóo-se*  
be\_less-3fNREL-fNOM      use-fNOM      COP1.3-3fO  
'It (= food made from enset) has a use (i.e. benefit) that is not smaller {than the use of  
wheat and oat bread which is very common in Ethiopia}.' (K89: 5.55)

### 3.2. Comparison of absolute superiority

For the expression of absolute superiority, we find two different superlative constructions in Kambaata, (i) a construction with an ablative-marked universal quantifier as standard of comparison and (ii) a construction with a locative standard of comparison. Most commonly, the standard phrase precedes the comparee phrase. The English paraphrase are as follows:

- (27) (i) Ablative superlative construction: 'From all (X), A is good.'  
(ii) Locative superlative construction: 'Among X, A is good.'

Both constructions are considered semantically equivalent by native speaker consultants; they may, however, have pragmatic differences that are still to be explored.

#### 3.2.1. Superlative constructions with an ablative-marked standard of comparison

Construction (i) is formally identical to the constructions expressing relative superiority (§4.1); the only difference concerns the choice of the standard of comparison, which is either the universal quantifier *horá* 'all' (28)-a or a numeral quantifier (28)-b that specifies the number of members of the set from which the comparee is taken.

- (28) a. {*Hor-íichchi-n*} *gabbáanch-u-s*      *áy-ee-t?*  
all-mABL-N    short-mNOM-DEF    who-mNOM.VV-COP3  
'Who is the shortest? (lit. {From all}, the short (one) is who?)' (K89: 2.79)
- b. *Agánn-u*      {*sas-íichchi-ssa-n*}      *gabbáanch-u-a*  
PN-mNOM    three-mABL-3pPOSS-N    short-mPRED-mCOP2  
'Aganno is the shortest of the three of them (lit. short {from the three of them}).' (K89: 2.79)

The quantifier can also be used as a modifier in the standard phrase, e.g. as in (29) where the head of the standard phrase is the nominalizing enclitic =*r*- 'ones, thing(s)'.

- (29) {*Hór-aa=r-íichchi-n*}      *abbíshsh*  
all-mOBL=NMZp-mABL-N      exceed.3mPCO  
*kichche'-ishsh-o-ée-hu*      *m-á*      *agújj-ee-he?*  
be\_sad-CAUS-3mPVO-1sO.REL-mNOM    what-mACC    seem-3mPVE-2sO  
'Which incidence do you think has made me saddest? (lit. {From all things}, the one  
that has made me very sad seems (to be) what to you?)' (K89: 6.124)

A morpheme *-n* of yet undetermined pragmatic function – and hence just glossed “N” – is obligatorily added phrase-finally after the ablative morpheme of the standard NP in superlative constructions; cf. all examples in this section. While this *-n*-morpheme is also found in other contexts, it is to be noted that the standard in comparative constructions of relative superiority

(§3.1) is not combined with this morpheme.<sup>11</sup> More work is still required on the functional range of *-n*, which is simply labelled an “emphasis marker” by Schneider-Blum (2007) in Alaaba, Kambaata’s closest relative.

Kambaata’s primary superlative construction, in which the standard is expressed by a universal quantifier, belongs to the cross-linguistically most widespread Type A of Gorshenin’s superlative typology (2012: 87).

### 3.2.2. Superlative constructions with a locative-marked standard of comparison

The first superlative construction type (§3.2.1) is widely attested in my corpus, the second type is less common. There are two instances attested in a mock dialogue, on the basis of which five other examples were elicited. One additional example has been found in a local publication, Geetaahun (2002). The ablative superlative construction (§3.2.1) can be considered a sub-type of the comparative construction (§3.1). In contrast, the locative superlative construction is not directly related to the comparative. Instead, it is a simple positive construction, i.e. non-comparative qualifying construction, extended by a locative adjunct.

The locative standard *qophphan-áan* ‘among lies’ in (30) refers to the totality of lies from which the comparee, *isé=bii* ‘hers (i.e. her lie)’, is singled out and to which it is compared. Another superlative construction with a locative standard is given in (31). Superlative type (i) and (ii) do not only differ with respect to the case marking on the standard NP but type (ii) also lacks a universal or numeral quantifier.

- (30) {*Qophphan-áan*} *isé=bii* *baas-á* *fárr-a-a*  
 lie-mLOC 3fGEN=NMZ1.mNOM much\_more-mACC bad-mPRED-mCOP2  
*hatt-íta* *ám-a-’* *re-tée* *y-ít* *qophphan-táa-la?*  
 how-fACC mother-fNOM-1sPOSS die-3fPVE say-3fPCO lie-3fIPV-MIT  
 ‘Her lie is the worst ever (lit. {among lies}, hers is very bad)! How dare she say that her mother has died (lit. How dare she lie, saying: ‘My mother has died.’)?’  
 (DW\_Simulation Market Dialogue\_2014-12-24)

- (31) *āā* *xúujj-eemm*, {*min-éen*} *isí=bii* *qeráa’rr-u-a*  
 yes see-1sPVE house-mLOC 3sGEN=NMZ1.mNOM tall-mPRED-mCOP2  
*tadáa* *iill-án* *qax-ée* *isí=g-a* *shool-ú* *fooq-á*  
 now reach-3mICO extent-fDAT 3GEN=G-mOBL four-mACC floor-mACC  
*minn-ee’íi* *áy* *yóo’?*  
 build-3mPVE.REL.NMZ.VV.mNOM who.mNOM COP1.3  
 (Preceding question by dialogue partner: Have you seen the house that Degefu built?)  
 ‘Yes, I have seen it, it’s the tallest house (lit. {among houses}, it is tall). Who has ever built (a house with) four floors like he (has done)?’  
 (DW\_Simulation Market Dialogue\_2014-12-24)

<sup>11</sup> Exception: If the standard of comparison contains a disjunction, the conjunct preceding *íkko* obligatorily occurs with the *-n*-morpheme (ex. a). The connector *íkko* triggers the occurrence of *-n* in all contexts, i.e. also outside of comparative constructions.

a. (...) {*lokk-áachchi-n* *íkko* *gammaam-iichch*} *ább-at* *tám-it* *yóo-s*  
 foot-fABL-N or equine-mABL big-fNOM use-fNOM COP1.3-3mO  
 ‘(They) are of better use {than feet or equines} (...).’ (K89: 5.55)

A native speaker consultant confirmed that *qophpanáan* ‘among lies’ (30) and *minéen* ‘among houses’ (31) could be replaced by ablative standards plus a universal quantifier (§3.2.1), i.e. *qophphaníichch horíichchin* ‘from/than lies’ and *miniichch horíichchin* ‘from/than all houses’, respectively.

Ex. (32) is another example from a local Kambaata publication on oral literature.

- (32) {*Haqq-áan*} *fárr-u* *m-áha-a-n?* *Undulúmm-a-a*  
 wood-mLOC bad-mNOM what-mPRED-mCOP2-Q mortar-mPRED-mCOP2  
 ‘What is the worst wood(en thing) (lit. Among wood, the bad is what?) – The mortar.’  
 (Geetaahun 2002: 152)

Kambaata’s secondary superlative construction, in which the scope is expressed in a locative adverbial phrase and marked by a morpheme not used as a standard marker in comparative constructions, belongs to Type S[cope] superlative of Gorshenin’s (2012: 111f) typology.

### 3.2.3. Attributive superlative constructions

Kambaata has attributive superlative constructions in which all components of the comparison (comparee, standard and parameter) are found inside one NP. In ex. (33), the comparee *kasalá* ‘charcoal’ is the direct object of *áffeemm* ‘I have grabbed (i.e. I have)’. In the comparee NP, of which *kasalá* is the head, we find a modifier consisting of the adjective *danaam-ú* ‘good’, expressing the parameter of comparison, and the universal standard *hor-íichch-in* ‘from all’.

- (33) (...) *mát-o* [*{hor-íichchi-n} danaam-ú*]<sub>MODIFIER</sub> *kasal-á*]<sub>OBJECT NP</sub>  
 one-mOBL all-mABL-N good-mACC charcoal-mACC  
*áff-eemm* *y-áyyoo* *manch-iin* *gambá* *y-éemm*  
 grab-1sPVE say-3mPROG.REL man.SG-mICP come\_across.IDEO say-1sPVE  
 ‘(...) I came across a man who claimed: “I have the best charcoal (lit. I have grabbed {from all} good charcoal)”.’  
 (DW\_Simulation Market Dialogue\_2014-12-24)

Adjectives can be used as heads of NPs without being nominalised; cf. the use of *fayy-á* ‘healthy’ in (34). The referent with the quality expressed by the adjective can be determined in the linguistic or extra-linguistic context.

- (34) *Fayy-á* *aaqq-itéent*  
 healthy-mACC take-2sPVE  
 ‘You took the healthy one (understood from the context: healthy child).’  
 (TH\_2003-05-28)

Hence we also find examples in which the comparee of an attributive superlative construction is retrievable from the context and thus omitted. In (35), the adjective *kee’mmáashsh-u* ‘(the) heavy (ones)’ has become the head of the NP from which the comparee was dropped.

- (35) [*{Ka’llicx-íichch hor-íichchi-n} kee’mmáashsh-u*]<sub>PARAMETER</sub>  $\emptyset$ <sub>COMPAREE</sub>  
 accident-mABL all-mABL-N heavy-mNOM  
*makíin-i-a* *ka’llicx-a*  
 car-mGEN-mCOP2 accident-mPRED  
 ‘The most dangerous accidents are car accidents (lit. {From all accidents}, the heavy (ones) are car accidents).’  
 (K89: 4.106)

Attributive superlative constructions with a locative standard NP (§3.2.2) are not (yet) attested in recorded or written text data. Elicitation confirmed, however, that they are possible (36).

- (36) *{Woqq-áan}* *orc-áam-u* *woqq-óo* *Duuráam-e-a*  
 road-mLOC mud-PROP-mNOM road-mNOM PN-fGEN-mCOP2  
 ‘The muddiest road is the one of Durame (lit. The muddiest road {among roads} is the one of Durame).’

### 3.3. Comparison of inferiority

Kambaata has not grammaticalised or conventionalised comparative constructions of inferiority. In order to express that someone has a quality to a lesser degree than somebody else, periphrases with the inchoative-state verb *kot-* ‘be(come) not enough, less, insufficient, small, decrease’ are possible but, in fact, rarely attested in my database (37).

- (37) *Handis-ó* *dúub-u* *{hiz-ee-sí=hann-iichch}*  
 PN-mGEN wealth-mNOM brother-mGEN-3mPOSS=NMZ2-mABL  
*qah-úuka* *kot-áno*  
 small-mACC<N> be\_less-3mIPV  
 ‘Handiso’s wealth is a little less {than his brother’s} (i.e. Handiso is a little less rich than his brother).’ (K89: 3.17)

Instead, inferiority is expressed by negative equative constructions (§5) (38).

- (38) *Hór-a-ni-i!* *Haláab-u* *Hoosaan-i* *qax-á* *qee’rr-áno-ba’a*  
 all-mOBL-L-ADD PN-mNOM PN-mGEN extent-mACC be\_far-3mIPV-NEG  
 ‘Not at all! Alaaba is not as distant as Hosaina (i.e. it is less distant).’

### 4. Comparison of similarity

A similitive construction is a type of comparative construction expressing equal manner or quality between a comparee and a standard of comparison (Haspelmath & Buchholz 1998, Fuchs 2014). Kambaata marks the standard of similitive comparison by an enclitic multifunctional morpheme =*g* (gloss: G); the standard is a genitive modifier to =*g* (39).

- (39) *Án* *{qurxummeem-á=g-a}* *waachch-ú* *dand-eemmi=da*  
 1sNOM fish-fGEN=G-mACC/OBL swim-mACC be\_able-1sPVE.REL=COND  
*m-á* *ih-áno*  
 what-mACC be-3mIPV  
 (Wish) ‘If only I could swim {like fish}!’ (TD2016-02-11\_001)

The standard phrase is an adverbial modifier to the predicate. It consists minimally of a genitive noun plus =*g*; the enclitic is itself case-marked; see *-a* ACC/OBL in (39). The double case-marking in the standard phrase – once on the semantic head, once on the standard marker =*g* – points to a nominal origin of the enclitic. The standard marker =*g* is in fact a manner nominaliser. Before proceeding with the analysis of similitive constructions (§4.4), information on the historically primary function of =*g* as a manner nominaliser is provided in §§4.1-4.3. Treis (forthcoming b) gives a more detailed account of the multifunctionality of =*g*, which is used, among others, as a marker of complement clauses (82), purpose clauses and temporal clauses of immediate anteriority (‘as soon as’).

#### 4.1. The morphology of the manner nominaliser =g

The morpheme =g belongs to a group of enclitic nominalisers including =b ‘place’ (40), =bii(-ta) NMZ1 ‘one (m/f)’ (30)-(31), =hann NMZ2 ‘one (m)’ (2), =tann NMZ2 ‘one (f)’ and =r NMZp ‘thing(s), ones’ (6), (29), all of which are of (pro)nominal origin and take modifier phrases, i.e. genitive (pro)nouns, inflected adjectives and relative clauses rather than roots or stems as their input.<sup>12</sup>

- (40) *lal-i=b-a* ‘(the) place of (the) cattle, (the) cattle-place’  
cattle-mGEN=PLACE-mACC
- (41) *lal-i=g-a* ‘(the) manner of (the) cattle,  
cattle-mGEN=G-mACC/OBL the cattle’s way of doing things’

The case marker following the nominalisers is not fixed but dependent on the syntactic function and the semantic role of the phrase in the clause, i.e. the ACC/OBL-marking -a on the standard phrase in the simulative construction in (39) is due to its adverbial function. The morpheme =g is inherently masculine (see the gloss of the case/gender portmanteau suffix with which it combines) and inflects almost like a full noun (Table 5).

	=g (m.) ‘manner’		<i>dum-á</i> (m.) ‘back room’	<i>min-í</i> (m.) ‘house’
ACC	=g-a	← syncretism ←	<i>dum-á</i>	<i>min-í</i>
NOM	=g-u		<i>dúm-u</i>	<i>mín-u</i>
GEN	=g-íi		<i>dum-í</i>	<i>min-í</i>
DAT	=g-íi(-ha)		<i>dum-íi(-ha)</i>	<i>min-íi(-ha)</i>
ABL	=g-íchch		<i>dum-íchch</i>	<i>min-íchch</i>
ICP	=g-íin		<i>dum-íin</i>	<i>min-íin</i>
LOC	=g-áan		<i>dum-áan</i>	<i>min-éen</i>
OBL	=g-a		<i>dúm-a</i>	<i>mín-e</i>
PRED	=g-a		<i>dúm-a</i>	<i>mín-i</i>

Table 3. Case paradigm of =g compared to that of masculine full nouns

The case paradigms of =g and the noun *dum-á* ‘back room’, a masculine noun of the -á-declension, are almost identical.<sup>13</sup> The =g-morpheme only lacks a difference between the accusative and oblique case (the syncretic form is glossed ACC/OBL), which is a type of syncretism not attested for any other nominal declension.<sup>14</sup> While the vast majority of masculine nouns distinguish between eight case forms, the =g-morpheme distinguishes only between seven. Another small difference concerns the genitive form, which is a long -íi for the manner morpheme but a short -í for nouns of the -á-declension. The equal sign indicates that

<sup>12</sup> The exceptional cases where the manner morpheme is added to demonstrative roots and where it thus has characteristics of a derivational morpheme rather than a phrasal enclitic are discussed in §4.7 below.

<sup>13</sup> See Treis (2008: 103) for an overview of the Kambaata nominal declensions.

<sup>14</sup> The ACC and the OBL forms cannot be differentiated if the case marker is the last morpheme of the word. However, the presence of additional suffixes, e.g. the pragmatically determined morpheme -n, causes a distinction to surface again between the ACC and OBL forms, which was presumably made in an earlier stage of the language. The combination of =g-a OBL and -n results in =g-a-n (60). In contrast, in the ACC case, the -n is infixated into the older, uneroded ACC form =g-aha, which results in =g-anka (53).

the enclitic =g is phonologically and syntactically dependent on a host. It is stressless in certain case forms and can never be used in isolation.

#### 4.2. The manner nominalizing function of =g

The =g-morpheme is attached to any type of modifier phrase for the purpose of nominalisation and generates phrases that are translatable as ‘manner/way of [(pro)noun]’ (42), ‘[adjective] manner/way’ (43)-(44), or ‘manner/way that [relative clause]’ (45). The resulting manner phrases can assume any syntactic function and any semantic role in the clause. Example (42) contains two manner-nominalised phrases, the subject noun phrase *Sabir-ó=g-u* ‘Sabiro’s way’ and the ablative-marked adverbial noun phrase *Shaameeb-i=gíichch* ‘from/than Shaameebo’s way’. See also (64).

- (42) {*Shaameeb-i=g-iichch*} {*Sabir-ó=g-u*} *wóyy-a-a*  
 PN-mGEN=G-mABL PN-mGEN=G-mNOM better-mPRED-mCOP2  
 ‘Shaameebo’s way (of doing things) is better than Sabiro’s way (lit. {From Sabiro’s way}, {Shameebo’s way} is better).’

Apart from genitive (pro)nouns, the manner nominaliser takes adjectival phrases as input. Most frequently, =g is used with the adjectives ‘good’, i.e. *danám-o=g(g)-a* ‘well, in a good way’ (44), and ‘bad’, i.e. *fárr-a=g(g)-a* (43) and *híil-a=g(g)-a* ‘badly, in a bad way’. Apart from these three adjective, =g is attested on 14 other adjectives in the Kambaata schoolbooks (K89).

- (43) *Ku* *hegéeg-u* {*fárr-a=gg-a*} *fooshsheeh-áyyoo’u*  
 DDEM1.mNOM area-mNOM bad-mOBL=G-mACC/OBL smell-3mPROG  
 ‘This area smells {in a bad way/badly}.’

- (44) *Ta* *huj-íta* *hujat-íi* *kann-iichch*  
 DDEM1.fACC work-fACC work-mDAT IDEM1m-mABL  
 {*danám-u=gg-u*} *yóo-ba’a*  
 good-mNOM=G-mNOM COP1.3-NEG  
 ‘There is no better way than this (one) to do the work (lit. There is no {good way} from this (one) to do the work).’

In Kambaata, modifying adjectives always agree with their head noun (Treis 2008: 88-93) – and thus also with the manner nominaliser – in case and gender. The oblique case of the adjective in (43) and the nominative case of the adjective in (44) is triggered by the accusative/oblique and the nominative case markers of the enclitic =g, respectively.<sup>15</sup> As seen in the preceding examples, the manner morpheme is either realised as a single =g or a geminate =gg, which are in free variation. The geminate =gg is a frequent variant of =g when the stress falls on the penultimate syllable of the host.

Finally, the manner nominaliser takes clausal inputs; more precisely, it is added to modifying (relative) clauses. The nominalised entity is used in object function in (45).

<sup>15</sup> Cardinal numerals and demonstratives, which are also case/gender-agreeing modifiers, cannot be the input of the manner nominalisation. Hypothetical forms such as *\*lám-u=gg-u* two-mNOM=G-mNOM ‘two ways’ or *\*ku=g-u* DDEM1.mNOM=G-mNOM ‘this way’ have been rejected as ungrammatical. It is, however, possible to add the manner nominaliser to ordinal numerals, e.g. *woná=g-u* ‘the first way’ (NOM), *lanki=g-u* ‘the second way’ (NOM) etc. Ordinal numerals do not show case/gender-agreement; they share features of genitive nouns in Kambaata (for details see Treis 2008: 236f, 313ff; forthcoming a).



- (45) (...) {*mat-íta*      *zar-án-tee*      *oddishsh-áta*  
                  one-fACC      tear-PASS-3fPVE.REL      clothes-fACC  
*gob-baanti=g-a*      *kúl*  
                  sew-2sIPV.REL=G-mACC/OBL      tell.2sIMP  
                  ‘Explain (lit. tell) {the way in which you mend torn clothes} (...)!’      (K89: 6.74)

### 4.3. The nominal origin of the manner nominaliser =g

Even though =g is no longer used as an independent word, it is very likely that =g goes back to a full-fledged noun ‘manner, way of doing something’. The original form is, however, unknown. In Sidaama, a closely related HEC language, there is a noun *gara* (m.) ‘manner, way of doing something’ (Gasparini 1983: 114), whose Kambaata cognate may have served as the source for =g. The nominal origin of =g is reflected in its case-marking potential (Table 3). It can also host morphemes that are found on regular nouns, e.g. the additive morpheme ‘also, too’ (ADD) (46), the interrogative -’*nnu*-morpheme ‘and what about?’ and the pragmatically determined -*n*-morpheme (N) (53).

- (46) (...) {*bun-á*      *kaas-sáa=g-á-a*  
                  coffee-mACC      plant-3fIPV.REL=G-mACC/OBL-ADD  
*qorab-báa=g-á-a*      *caakk-is-anó*      *raappoor-á*  
                  keep-3fIPV.REL=G-mACC/OBL-ADD      light-CAUS-3mIPV.REL      report-mACC  
*hínc*      *á’*  
                  bring\_closer      do.2sIMP  
                  ‘Bring a report (to class) which explains {how/the way in which they plant coffee (plants) and how/the way in which they look after (them)}.’      (K89: 8.99)

The position of the copula in non-verbal clauses provides further evidence for the nominal origin and status of =g. In (47), the manner nominalisation (in curly brackets) is the predicate; the headless, nominative-marked relative clause is the subject. The masculine gender allomorph of the non-locative copula -*a* (mCOP2) is triggered by the masculine gender of =g.

- (47) *Gens-á*      *haww-ishsh-óo-hu*      {*daddaabb-íta*  
                  PN-mACC      problem-CAUS-3mPVO.REL.NMZ.VV-mNOM      letter-fACC  
*soh-éenno-a=g-a*  
                  send-3honIPV.REL-mCOP2=G-mPRED  
                  ‘What troubles Gensa is {the way that one sends a letter} (i.e. Gensa does not know how to send a letter).’      (K89: 2.109)

According to a general syntactic rule in Kambaata, the non-locative copula (COP2) is found after derivational and inflectional morphemes towards the end<sup>16</sup> of the predicate if the predicate consists of a single morphological nominal word. It shifts to the preceding word if the predicate is modified by a genitive noun, adjective, numeral or relative clause (Treis 2008: 414f). In (47), the copula is found predicate-medially, or said differently, on the relative modifier – which is evidence that the manner nominalisation is still considered a multi-word noun phrase consisting of a modifier and a head noun rather than a single morphological word.

<sup>16</sup> The copula can still be followed by possessive, coordinative and pragmatically determined suffixes.



- (53) (...) *qakkíchch-u láah-u he'-anó plaaneet-áan {wól-o*  
small-mNOM prince-mNOM live-3mIPV.REL planet-mLOC other-mOBL  
*plaaneet-i=g-anka} danáam-u=rr-u-u*  
planet-mGEN=G-mACC<N> good-mNOM=NMZp-mNOM-ADD  
*fárr-u=rr-u-u mut-áno-a*  
bad-mNOM=NMZp-mNOM-ADD sprout-3mIPV.REL-mCOP2  
 (...) on the planet where the little prince lived there grew good ones (= plants) and bad ones (= plants) {as on other planets}. (Deginet in prep.)

The comparee can also be a temporal adverbial. In (54) one does not compare the similarity in manner of two entities with respect to a predicate but the similarity of two situations or events at two different points in time, i.e. this year and last year.

- (54) *Aní-I kazammáan-u wóyy-a-a.*  
1sNOM-ADD this\_year-mOBL better-mPRED-mCOP2  
*{Nur-é=g-a} xíd-at haww-is-sim-ba-'e*  
last\_year-mGEN=G-mACC/OBL pain-fNOM problem-CAUS-3fNIPV-NEG-1sO  
 'Me, too, I am better this year. Pain doesn't trouble me (as badly) {as last year}.'  
 (K89: 4.125)

To summarise, the invariantly ACC/OBL-marked standard phrase gives no indication about which other explicit or implicit noun phrase in the clause is the comparee for which it serves as the standard of comparison.

By definition, similative constructions express sameness of manner (Haspelmath & Buchholz 1998: 278), whereby manner needs to be understood in a broader (vague) sense, namely not only as the techniques, the instruments and the means that are applied and the type of movements (motor patterns) that are carried out. For example, in (48), the compared entities share the same instrument (a shard), and probably also the same technique (licking) and body posture for drinking. In (50), the compared entities share the same means of preparation, namely boiling water. Sameness of manner could also mean that the actions are carried out at the same rate (e.g. in (51)) or that the disposition, the attitude or other psychological, social and physical conditions are shared by the compared entities. One can, therefore, argue that the morpheme =g in its function as standard marker in constructions expressing comparison of similarity, as illustrated in the examples of this section, has undergone semantic extension. While =g is a nominaliser of manner in the narrow sense of the word (techniques, instruments, means, types of movement) in the non-comparison examples in §4.2, the manner encoded by =g in similative constructions is manner in the broader (vague) sense of the word. The comparee and the standard of comparison may, for instance, have similar properties and possess the same attributes, e.g. in (52) and (53) and they may have a similar shape, habits, needs, intentions etc. A narrow manner interpretation is often not possible in similative constructions. In (55), it is completely left open to interpretation in which respect comparee and standard are similar. They could, for instance, carry out an action in the same way, to the same extent, with the same goal or just share a physical, psychological, social quality.

- (55) *Aní-I kii-haa=g-anka*  
1sNOM-ADD 2sGEN-mCOP2=G-mPRED<N>  
 'Me, too, I do/am like you.'

#### 4.5. Attributive similitive constructions

All elements of a similitive construction may be found in one noun phrase. In these attributive constructions, ‘an X which V-s like a Y’, the comparee serves as the head of the noun phrase, see *beet-ú* ‘son’ in (56), and the standard of comparison, marked by =g, is expressed in a relative clause modifying the head noun.

- (56) [*Is-i=g-a* *xeeel-ámm-ee*]<sub>MODIFIER</sub> *beet-ú*<sub>COMPAREE</sub>  
 3mGEN =G-mACC/OBL curse-PASS-3mPVE.REL son-mACC  
*magan-uhú-u aass-ún-ka*  
 God-mNOM-ADD give-3mJUS-NEG  
 ‘And may God not give me a son who is cursed {like him}!’ (K89: 8.11)

If a ‘be’ verb is required in the relative clause, ‘an X which is like a Y’, the locative copula *yoo-* ‘be located, exist’ COP1 is used. It would be ungrammatical to drop the relative verb *yoo* in the attributive similitive construction in (57), as a standard phrase cannot directly modify a noun (as in English ‘there are students like Awwano’).

- (57) [*Awwan-ó=g-a* *yoo*]<sub>MODIFIER</sub> *ros-áan-n-u*<sub>COMPAREE</sub> *yoo=da* (...) <sub>COP1.3.REL=COND</sub>  
 PN-mGEN=G-mACC/OBL COP1.3.REL learn-AG-PL3-mNOM COP1.3.REL=COND  
 ‘(...) if there are students who are {like Awwano}.’ (K89: 2.8)

If an attributive similitive construction is headless, it is nominalised with a dummy head, e.g. =r ‘thing(s), ones’, and thus serves to express ‘N-like thing(s), N-like one(s)’.

- (58) *ba'll-i=g-a* *yoo=r-a*  
 board-mGEN=G-ACC/OBL COP1.3.REL=NMZp-ACC  
 ‘board-like thing’ (K89: 6.73)

The use of COP1 in attributive similitive constructions (57)-(58) is especially noteworthy because this copula is otherwise found only in constructions expressing location, existence and possession (Treis 2008: 398-407). Instead of COP1, one would have expected the use of the verb *ih-* ‘be(come)’, which is the fully inflectable verbal substitute of the ascriptive and identificational copulas COP2 and COP3 in subordinate clauses (Treis 2008: 427ff).

#### 4.6. Similitive clauses

The standard of comparison is not necessarily a (pro)noun phrase but can also be an entire clause (59)-(60). Similitive clauses are relativised clauses plus the standard marker =g.

- (59) {*Mánn-u min-i-sí am-áta*  
 men-mNOM house-mGEN-3mPOSS mother-fACC  
*sharr-anó=g-anka* *handar-iti-I sharr-itáa'-indo?*  
 chase\_away-3mIPV.REL=G-mACC<N> dove-fNOM-ADD chase\_away-3fIPV-Q  
 ‘Do doves chase away (their children) {like men chase away their wives (lit. their mother of the house)}?’ (K89: 8.20)

- (60) {*Mánn-u ayyár-u yoo-ba'ii hé'*  
 men-mNOM air-mNOM COP1.3-NEG.REL.VV live.3mPCO  
*dandeeh-úmb-o=g-a-n*} (...) *qég-u*  
 be\_able-3mNREL-mOBL=G-mOBL-N blood-mNOM  
*yoo-ba'i=ddá-a he'-iíha dand-áno-ba'a*  
 COP1.3-NEG.REL=COND-ADD live-mDAT be\_able-3mIPV-NEG  
 ‘{As people cannot survive without oxygen,} they cannot survive if there is no blood  
 (...).’ (K89: 8.100)

Similative clauses are used in a productive idiomatic sentence pattern which expresses that the subjects do something in a way the situation permits them to do it, which is always interpreted as an uncomfortable, unsatisfactory way of doing something (61). In these patterns, the subordinate clause contains a causative form of the verb in the syntactically superordinate clause. The subject of the subordinate clause is only marked by subject agreement on the verb (3m) but remains otherwise unexpressed; it can be assumed to be *magán-u* mNOM ‘God’. The subordinate verb is in a perfective verb form in all examples, while the aspect marking in the superordinate clause may vary.

- (61) {*Gashsh-ee-’é=g-a*} *gáll-eemm*  
 spend\_the\_night.CAUS-3mPVE-1sO.REL=G-mACC/OBL spend\_the\_night-1sPVE  
 (Question: How was your night? – Possible answer:) ‘I passed the night {as (God) made me pass it} (i.e in an uncomfortable way).’

#### 4.7. Deictic similatives

Kambaata has two deictic similative adverbials, *20it-íta* ‘like this, thus’ (62) and the corresponding interrogative form *hatt-íta* ‘how?’. Both adverbials occur invariantly in the accusative case, no other case form is accepted by native speakers.

- (62) *Hitt-íta qumucc-ít uurr-iteentii m-iíhaa-t?*  
 like\_this-fACC squat-2sPCO stand-2sPVE.REL.NMZ.VV.mNOM what-fDAT.VV-COP3  
 ‘Why are you squatting (here) like this?’ (K89: 6.123)

Furthermore, Kambaata has the deictic similative adverbials, *hatti-g-úta* ‘how?’ and *hitti-g-úta* ‘like this, thus’, which are morphologically more complex but which seem to be synonymous and in free variation with the simpler deictics. Apart from an accusative form in *-íta*, these adverbials can occur in the locative (*-óon*) (63) and the oblique case (*-o*).

- (63) *Éjj xuud-u’нна’éechh hattig-óon dag-o’éta*  
 before see-3mNCO<1sO> how-fLOC recognise-3mPURP<1sO>  
*dand-ée-’e-la?*  
 be\_able-3mPVE-1sO-MIT  
 ‘How could he recognize me when he had never seen me before?’ (Deginet in prep.)

*Hatti-g-úta* ‘how?’ and *hitti-g-úta* ‘like this, thus’ are segmentable into a feminine demonstrative stem, namely the interrogative demonstrative stem *hatt(i)-* ‘which?’ and the medial demonstrative stem *hitt(i)-*, a suffix *-g* and the feminine accusative ending *-íta*. The suffix *-g* in these similative deictics is likely to be historically related to the enclitic similative standard marker *=g* ‘like’ described above. However, *=g* and *-g* trigger different gender



The syntax of the two equative constructions in (65) is identical. As in the case of comparative constructions (§3), the standard phrase is an adjunct to the predicate expressing the parameter; inside the standard phrase the standard marker is the head, while the standard is a genitive modifier (possessor). The comparee is encoded as the subject; it usually precedes the standard NP, but may be shifted into the pre-predicate slot if focussed (cf. §3.1.1). Both constructions lack a parameter marker. In Henkelmann’s typology of equative comparison (2006: 377), Kambaata would thus belong to language type I.A.

The constructions in (65) differ with regard to their frequency of occurrence as well as with regard to the origin, multifunctionality and degree of grammaticalisation of their respective standard markers. These aspects will be treated in the following sections. Both constructions are attested in spontaneous, written and elicited data.

### 5.1. Equative constructions with =g ‘manner’

In the first type of equative construction, the standard phrase is marked by the manner nominaliser =g, which is added to a genitive-marked standard (pro)noun phrase (66)-(67).

- (66) *Án* {*tees-ó* *caf-í* *doo'll-ó=g-a*}  
 1sNOM now-fGEN swamp-mGEN type\_of\_bird-fGEN=G-mACC/OBL  
*dan-aam-íta* *m-íi* *ih-áam-ba'a* *y-itóo'u*  
 beauty-AAM-fACC what-mDAT be-1sIPV-NEG say-3fPVO  
 ‘‘Why am I not beautiful like/as beautiful {as that flamingo}?’’ she said.’  
 (TD2016-02-11\_001)

- (67) *Waalii-í* *máal-u* {*fellee'-í=hann-í=g-anka*}  
 walia-mGEN meat-mNOM goats-mGEN=NMZ2-mGEN=G-ACC<N>  
*xee'nnáashsh-a-a*  
 tasty-mPRED-mCOP2  
 ‘The meat of mountain goats is tasty like/as tasty {as that of (domestic) goats}.’  
 (K89: 5.41)

The nominaliser itself is marked for the ACC/OBL-case and may carry the pragmatically determined morpheme *-n*. In (66)-(67), the parameter is expressed by an adjective, in (68) by a property verb.

- (68) *Riyéen-u* {*haarr-í* *oddishsh-á=g-a*} *al-éen-ta-nne*  
 rayon-mNOM silk-mGEN clothes-fGEN=G-mACC/OBL body-mLOC-L-1pPOSS  
*laaf-áno-ba'a*  
 be\_soft-3mIPV-NEG  
 ‘Rayon is not soft like/as soft {as silk clothes} on our body.’  
 (K89: 6.45)

In (69), the adjectival parameter *xalig-á* ‘strong’ is the predicate of a subordinate conditional clause and combines with a ‘be(come)’-verb, which carries for it subject agreement and subordinating morphology. If the parameter was a property verb or a property ideophone accompanied by a light verb, it could carry itself the morphology required of predicates in subordinate clauses.

- (69) {*Zoobb-ée=g-a*} *xalig-á* *ik-kumbóochch*  
 lions-mGEN=G-mACC/ACC strong-mACC be-2sNREL.ABL  
*urr-ú-* *kad-dókkooont*  
 frontyard-fACC-1sPOSS step-2sPREV  
 ‘Unless you are strong like/as strong {as lions}, don’t dare to step into my front yard!’  
 (K89: 6.124; corrected by DW)

In attributive equative constructions, all components of the comparison (comparee, standard and parameter) are found inside one NP. In (70), the comparee *billaww-á* ‘knife’ is the head of the object NP of the clause. It is modified by an adjectival parameter *iphph-á* ‘sharp’, which is preceded by the =g-marked standard phrase in adverbial function.

- (70) {*Kii=hann-í=ganka*} *iphph-á* *billaww-á* *hi’rr-áamm*  
 2sGEN=NMZ2-mGEN=G-mACC<N> sharp-mACC knife-mACC buy.MID-1sIPV  
 ‘I will buy a knife (that is) as sharp {as yours}.’

Examples in which clausal standards of equative constructions are marked by =g are not attested in my database; see instead §5.2.3.

## 5.2. Equative constructions with *qax-á* ‘extent’

In the second type of equative constructions, the standard phrase consists of the accusative-marked noun *qax-á* ‘extent’, which is preceded by a genitive modifier expressing the standard of comparison; see *Da’llis-ó* ‘of Da’lliso’ (2sGEN) in (71) and *isé* ‘her’ (3fGEN) in (72).

- (71) *ā’ā’ā*, *Caakkis-u* {*Da’llis-ó qax-á*}<sup>17</sup> *qeráa’rr-u-a-ba’a*  
 no PN-mNOM PN-mGEN extent-mACC tall-mPRED-mCOP2-NEG  
 ‘No, Caakkiso isn’t as tall {as Da’lliso}.’ (DW\_Dialogue\_2014-12-10)
- (72) *Siggis-i-I* {*isé qax-á*} *biishsh-a-ta*  
 PN-fNOM-ADD 3fGEN extent-mACC red-fPRED-fCOP2  
 ‘Siggise, too, is as light-skinned (lit. red) {as she (is)}.’

Even though equative examples with *qax-á* have been readily provided by Kambaata speakers in elicitation sessions, they are much less common than equative constructions with =g in spontaneously produced data; note, however, that (71) is a non-elicited example. It is not clear whether equality expressions with *qax-á* should be interpreted as dedicated, conventionalised constructions. Most notably it remains to be explored with which semantic type of parameter and for which type of equative relation the use of *qax-á* is felicitous.

In spite of examples such as (72) (parameter of comparison: colour) from elicitation, *qax-á* seems to be used primarily for the expression of equality in size and equality of amount. Furthermore, if the parameter of comparison is not expressed overtly (73)-(74) and if *qax-á* thus functions as the predicate of the equative construction, the implicit parameter of comparison is always understood to be size or amount, which shows that *qax-á* is not (yet?) a semantically void standard marker.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>17</sup> A consultant noted that *Da’llis-ó qax-á* could here be replaced by *Da’llisó=g-a* (§5.1) without any apparent change in meaning.

<sup>18</sup> Note that size/amount polysemy is also observed in the adjectives *qah-ú(-ta)* ‘small (size); little (amount)’ and *abb-á(-ta)* ‘big; much’.



- (73) *Ku bóos-u hikkánni-a qáx-a*  
 DDEM1mNOM water\_pot-mNOM IDEM2mGEN-mCOP2 extent-mPRED  
 ‘This water-pot is as (implicit parameter: big) as that one.’
- (74) *Kan boos-í wó’-u qakkíchch-u-a*  
 DDEM1mOBL water\_pot-mGEN water-mNOM tiny-mPRED-mCOP2  
*ka[n] isí=bíihú-u kánni-anka qáx-a*  
 DDEM1mOBL 3mGEN=NMZ1.mNOM-ADD IDEM1mGEN-mCOP2<N> extent-mPRED  
 ‘The water of this pot is very little, and the one of this (pot) here is as (implicit parameter: much/little) as this (first) one.’

It is safe to say that the standard marker *qax-á* ‘extent’ is little (if at all) grammaticalised. Unlike the manner nominaliser =*g* used in the first type of equative construction, it is not phonologically eroded and shows no signs of being encliticised to the standard. As we see next, it still qualifies as a full noun.

### 5.2.1. The morphology and polysemy of *qax-á*

*Qax-á* is a masculine noun with full case-marking potential (Table 4). As such, it can be used any syntactic function in the clause.

ACC	<i>qax-á</i>
NOM	<i>qáx-u</i>
GEN	<i>qax-í</i>
DAT	<i>qax-ii(-ha) ~ qax-ée(-ha)</i>
ABL	<i>qax-iíchch ~ qax-éechch</i>
ICP	<i>qax-iin</i>
LOC	<i>qax-áan</i>
OBL	<i>qáx-a</i>

Table 4. Case paradigms of *qax-á* (m.) ‘extent’

The noun *qax-á* is highly polysemous and is used with the concrete lexical meanings ‘amount, quantity, number’ (75),<sup>19</sup> ‘volume, contents’, ‘size, height, length, circumference’, ‘(spatial) distance, limit’, and, as seen in (76), ‘(temporal) distance, period of time, while’.

- (75) *Kánn qax-iíchch m-á aass-áan-ke-la?*  
 DDEM1.mOBL amount-mABL what-mACC give-1sIPV-2sO-MIT  
 ‘What can I give to you from this amount? (i.e. It is too small to share.)’
- (76) *Halaalis-amm-óochch zakk-iin qah-ú qax-á*  
 cut\_throat-PASS-3mPVO.REL.ABL after-mICP small-mACC while-mACC  
*egérr fóol-u-s fúlli-yan reh-ee’iíchch (...)*  
 wait.3mPCO soul-mNOM-3mPOSS leave.3mPCO-DS die-3mPVE.REL.ABL  
 ‘After (the bull’s) throat has been cut, one waits a little while, and when the soul has left (the bull) and it has died [...].’ (TH\_Ta2003-09-26)

The noun *qax-á* is also used with a more abstract meaning ‘degree’ in (77).

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of the use of *qax-á* to express approximate number see Treis (forthcoming a: §9).

- (77) *Gaaz-í hír-at ammóo abbíss barg-itán*  
 fuel-mGEN price-fNOM but exceed.3f add-3fIPV  
*gal-táyyoo=bikkíiha zabb-i-sí hír-ati-i*  
 spend\_time-3fPROG.REL=REAS medicine-mGEN-DEF price-fNOM-ADD  
*hikkanní qax-ánka le'-áyyoo'u*  
 IDEM2m.GEN degree-mACC<N> grow-3fPROG  
 'Because the price of fuel is increasing, the price of medicine is growing to the (same) degree (or: rate) as that one (= the fuel).' (K89: 7.155)

The noun *qax-á* can also be an adverbial modifier of quality verbs, e.g. *cúlu ass-* 'be appealing (to sb.)' in (78).

- (78) *Téesu hegeeg-ú-nne xuud-deentí-raan*  
 now neighbourhood-mACC-1pPOSS see-2sPVE-IRR  
*muccúrr m-ii qax-á-ndo cúlu ass-áyyoo'u*  
 be\_clean.3mPCO what-mGEN degree-mACC-Q appealing make-3mPROG  
 'If only you could see to what degree/extent our neighbourhood has become clean and has been made appealing!' (K89: 4.126)

In accordance with universal processes of semantic change, it seems reasonable to assume that *qax-á* had a fairly concrete meaning of 'amount', 'size', 'distance', 'period of time' in the beginning and later developed a more abstract sense 'degree', which facilitates its use in the expression of equality.

### 5.2.2. Equative adjectives

Based on the stem as the noun *qax-á* of §5.2.1, Kambaata also has a dedicated equative nomino-adjective *qax-á(-ta)* 'which is (about) as much/many as, which has (about) the amount/size/distance etc. of'.<sup>20</sup> As a modifier, it agrees in case and gender with its head noun; in (79) the oblique case of *qax-ata* signals agreement with a feminine non-nominative/non-accusative noun, more precisely with *ma'nnéen* fLOC 'at a place'. Furthermore, it agrees in gender with its subject if it is used predicatively; see *yamáz-ut* 'waist' (80), which triggers a feminine predicative form of *qax-á(-ta)*.

- (79) *Bonqoq-íichchi-s ónt-e xibb-é meetir-í qax-ata*  
 cave-mABL-DEF five-fOBL hundred-fGEN metre-mGEN as\_much\_as-fOBL  
*ma'nn-éen móochch-u fellaa'-ú-s bógg-ee*  
 place-fLOC wild\_animal-mNOM goats-mACC-DEF loot-3mPVE  
*mánn-u canc-áyyoo ikke*  
 people-mNOM shout-3mPROG INACT  
 'At a place as much as/about 500 metres away from the cave, people whose goats had been looted by a wild animal were shouting.' (K89: 8.22)

<sup>20</sup> Cf. dedicated quantitative equatives in European languages, as discussed in Haspelmath & Buchholz (1998: 298-301).

- (80) *Uull-á yamáz-ut 40 kum-é kilomeetir-i-ta*  
 earth-fGEN waist-fNOM 40 thousand-fGEN kilometre-mGEN-fCOP2  
*qáx-a*  
 as\_much\_as-fPRED

‘The circumference (lit. waist) of the earth is as much as/about 40,000 km.’ (K89: 6.164)

Unlike other adjectives in Kambaata, which can govern accusative, dative and ablative complements (Treis 2008: 90), *qax-á(-ta)* combines, unexpectedly, with a genitive phrase, see *meetir-í* ‘of metre(s)’ in (79). Otherwise only nouns (or enclitics of (pro)nominal origin) are modified by genitive phrases in Kambaata. Therefore, the word class status of *qax-á(-ta)* cannot be determined unequivocally and it is called a nomino-adjective.

Kambaata also has a dedicated deictic equative adjective *hibank-á(-ta) ~ habank-á(-ta)* ‘that/so many, that/so much’ (81), whose exact functional range is still to be explored.

- (81) *Án ammóo j-eechch-ú-s hibank-á gizz-á*  
 1sNOM but time-SG-fACC-DEF that\_much-mACC money-mACC  
*baat-ii dand-im-bá’ ikke*  
 pay-mDAT be\_able-3mNIPV-NEG INACT

(Preceding sentence in the dialogue: The amount of money that he requested for the land lease was three-fold higher than he had asked for the same plot in the years before.)  
 ‘But I was not able to pay that much money by then.’ (DW\_Dialogue\_2015-02-04)

### 5.2.3. Equative clauses with *qax-á* ‘extent’

If a clause is headed by a finite verb expresses the standard of comparison in equative constructions, it is relativised and the clause thus made the modifier of *qax-á* ‘extent’. The standard marker occurs either in the accusative (82) or the ICP case (83).

- (82) (...) {*iitt-itoonte-’é qax-ánka*} *isso’ootá-a*  
 love-2sPVO-1sO.REL extent-mACC<N> 3pACC-ADD  
*iitt-itoonti=g-á-a dag-gáa’*  
 love-2sPVO.REL=G-mACC/OBL-ADD know-3fIPV

‘(...) it (= the world) will know that you loved them {as much as you loved me}.’  
 (John 17, 23, literal translation)

- (83) (...) *na’ootí-I {dand-inoommí qax-íin} kabár*  
 1pNOM-ADD be\_able-1pPVO.REL extent-mICP today  
*ann-am-aakk-á-nne kaa’ll-ínun*  
 father-mother-PL2-fACC-1pPOSS help-1pJUS

‘(...) let us help our parents {as much as we can}.’ (K89: 3.98)

My corpus only contains quantitative equatives of the type ‘V as much/many as’ with a clausal standard where the parameter of comparison is implied in the standard marker *qax-á* ‘extent’. Equatives with a clausal standard and an explicit non-quantitative parameter, e.g. ‘She is as intelligent/beautiful/nasty as we had assumed’, are not attested. Neither can equative constructions with a clausal standard marked by =g ‘manner’ (§6.1) be provided. Note, however, that =g cannot replace *qax-á* in the examples of this section.

## 7. Summary and Outlook

The constructions applied for the expression of the four types of comparison studied in this paper, comparison of relative superiority, absolute superiority, equality and similarity, have been shown to have standard markers that are grammaticalised to different degrees. In comparative constructions, the standard phrase is marked by a true case morpheme, the ablative case, which is one of the nine cases for which nouns in Kambaata inflect. The same case morpheme is also used to mark the standard in one type of superlative construction, which is based on the comparative construction. In the second type of superlative construction, the locative case is used as a marker of the standard of comparison. To the best of my knowledge, locative-marking on standards of comparison is not reported for other languages of the Cushitic family or of the Ethiopian Linguistic Area. In similitive constructions, the standard marker is not a case morpheme but a monosyllabic phrasal enclitic =g, which can no longer be used without a host and which has probably undergone phonological reduction in recent times (Kambaata does not have any monosyllabic nouns), but which has been shown to have retained most features of a noun. The similitive standard marker =g is also the most common marker of standards in equative constructions. Alternatively, Kambaata speakers make use of an equative periphrasis of the type ‘X is tall to the extent of Y’. The noun *qax-á* ‘extent’ used in this periphrastic construction does not seem to have undergone any phonological reduction and is still used as a full, albeit semantically polysemous (or vague) full noun.

The present paper could only touch on some of the functions of the enclitic morpheme =g in the section on similitive and equative comparison. The morpheme is, however, highly multifunctional; a detailed description of this multifunctionality is provided in Treis (forthcoming b). In the same publication some preliminary information can also be found on the expression of hypothetical similarity (‘do as if’) (Treis forthcoming b: §2.4); a more thorough investigation of this sub-type of comparison of similarity is still required in the future.

## 8. Abbreviations

AAM	propriative
ABL	ablative
ADD	additive
CAUS	causative
COND	conditional
COP1	<i>yoo</i> -copula
COP2	<i>ha-/ta</i> -copula
COP3	VV- <i>t</i> -copula
CRD	coordinative
DAT	dative
DDEM	demonstrative adjective
DEF	definite
DS	different subject
f	feminine
G	multifunctional =g-morpheme (source meaning: ‘manner’)
GEN	genitive
hon	honorific, impersonal

ICO	imperfective converb
ICP	instrumental-perlative-comitative
IDEM	demonstrative pronoun
IDEO	ideophone
IMP	imperative
INACT	inactual
IPV	imperfective
JUS	jussive
L	linker
LOC	locative
m	masculine
MID	middle
MIT	mitigative
N	pragmatically determined morpheme (function as yet unclear)
NEG	negation
NIPV	non-imperfective
NMZ.VV	nominalization marked by a long vowel
NMZ1	nominalisation with = <i>bii(-ta/-ha)</i>
NMZ2	nominalization with = <i>hann/=tann</i>
NMZp	nominalization with = <i>r</i>
NOM	nominative
NREL	negative relative
O	object
OBL	oblique
p	plural
PASS	passive
PCO	perfective converb
PL1	plurative with – <i>C-áta</i>
PL2	plurative with – <i>aakk-áta</i>
PL3	plurative with – <i>n-ú</i>
PN	proper noun
POSS	possessive
PRED	predicative
PREV	preventive
PROG	progressive
PVE	<i>e</i> -perfective
PVO	<i>o</i> -perfective (perfect)
Q	question
REAS	reason
REL	relative
s	singular
SG	singulative
VV	vowel lengthening

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