

INTENSIFIER 'VERY' IN SOME AFROASIATIC LANGUAGES

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Afroasiatic languages use repetition (like probably all other languages), full and partial reduplication as well as gemination to derive intensive forms of verbs, deverbal nouns and adjectives but, obviously enough, they use also special lexemes, viz. adverbs to express intensity of a quality as well as of state and action.

It is known from other languages that the intensifying adverb 'very' and its synonyms are usually derived (cf. Grzegorzczkowska 1975) from the following subgroups of the notion 'intensive': 1. 'big size' like English *greatly*, Polish *wielce*, *ogromnie*, 2. 'big number' like English *much*, Italian *molto*, Bulgarian *mnogo*, Turkish *çok*, 3. 'big strength' like Polish *mocno*, *potężnie*, Ancient Greek *sfodra*, Turkish *pek* and from a subgroup No. 4 which refers to standard and hierarchy, e.g. emphasizing full conformity with the ideal norm, e.g. English *very* (< Old French *verai* < Latin *verus* 'true'), *really*, *completely*, *well*, *seriously*, Polish *całkowicie*, *dobrze*, Russian *v'es'ma*, superiority, e.g. Persian *bi andāze*; 'super', English *unusually*, *exceedingly*, *incredibly*, Polish *nader*, *niezwykle*, *nadzwyczaj*, *niezmiernie*, *skrajnie*, *niewiarygodnie*, French *très* (< Latin *trans* 'exceeding, over'); also more figurative like English *terribly*, *awfully*, *bloody*, Polish *niesamowicie*, *serdecznie*, *okropnie*, *strasznie*, *cholernie*. German *sehr* (< 'schmerzlich', viz. 'painfully'). Strangely enough Russian innovation *očen'* has no clear etymology while Polish innovation *bardzo* (older adverb *wielmi*) going back to 'fast, quickly' is not so exceptional as it might seem since the development 'fast/quick' > 'intensive' > 'good, well' (e.g. 'fast work' > 'good work'; that speed may sometimes exclude quality is another matter) is rather natural. On the semantic development in the opposite direction see Turkish *pek gittiği için çabuk yoruldu* 'soon he became tired since he was walking fast' where *pek* conditioned by the verb 'to walk' contextually means 'fast' rather than 'strongly' not to mention 'very'.

Since this kind of adverb has a very strong expressive function, it is quite natural that there are many stylistic variants which compete and also changes, viz. shifts from primary to secondary usage are frequent and innovations appear rather easily. This is why even in groups of subfamilies of closely related languages there is variation (e.g. in Romance languages there is Italian *molto* historically identical with Portuguese *muito*, Catalan *molt* and Spanish *muy* all going back to Latin *multum* / *multus* but in French there is *très* and in Romanian *foarte* < 'strongly'; in Germanic see e.g. German *sehr*, Dutch also *zeer* but with rival *heel*, *erg*, *bar* and *bijster*; Danish *meget* and Swedish *mycket*, Icelandic *mjög*) and common proto-forms of such adverbs cannot be reconstructed – it is possible even that common forms in many cases simply did not exist. Also borrowing occurs rather easily, e.g. English *very* from Old French, Turkish *gayet* 'very, extraordinarily, unusually' from Arabic.

Let us turn to Afroasiatic. Akkadian *mād-iš* / *ma'd-iš* and *ma'da* / *ma'du* go back to the root *m-y-d* / *m-'-d* occurring in the verb *miād-u(m)* / *ma'ād-u(m)* 'to be(come)

many, numerous' and in the noun *ma'dû / mādû* '(large) quantity, wealth, abundance'. In *mād-iš / ma'd-iš* there is the terminative / adverbial ending *-iš* which occurs also in *dann-iš*, Old Assyrian *dann-iš-am* 'very much', later *ad(d)ann-iš* which is another adverb meaning 'severely, very' going back to the same *dannu(m)* 'strong, powerful, mighty, great', *danānu* 'to be(come) strong'. The initial *a-* goes back to the pleonastic use of the preposition *ana*, viz. *ana ma'd-iš* 'to a great degree' (CDA 16; cf. *šu-m'ud-iš*) while *-am* is the well known ending of adverbial case homonymous with the accusative ending (*-an* in Arabic). Babylonian, Middle and New Assyrian *magal* 'very (much), greatly' is of unknown origin and the suspected Sumerian origin has been declared (GAG 217) as quite uncertain. Cf. also Old Akkadian *mal'ān-um* 'entirely, totally' going back to Old Akkadian *mal'u(m)* 'full, complete', cf. *malû(m)* 'to be(come) full', as noun 'abundance, fullness' and Babylonian *rab-iš* 'greatly' derived from *rabû* 'to be (too) big/bigger', 'big'. There is also an Old Babylonian stylistic variant *watr-iš(š)* 'superfluously' derived from *watru(m)* 'huge, excellent; surplus'.

In Biblical Hebrew the standard intensifying adverb is *m'od* 'very' (as a noun meaning 'force, might') which has cognates in Akkadian (see above) and in Ugaritic *mid* (**mi'd*) / *mud* 'abundantly, very (much), greatly, incessantly, utterly', e.g. *'z mid* 'very strong' (DUL 512) while the etymological connection with Arabic *ma'ada* 'to be flourishing, fresh', if correct at all, is only indirect. Biblical Hebrew *harbe* 'big number' is used also adverbially strengthened by *me'od* resulting in *harbe me'od* 'very greatly', German 'gar sehr'.

In Aramaic there is *yatīr-a* 'exceedingly, very' < 'exceeding, extraordinary, unusual' (see Akkadian *wataru* 'to be outsize, surplus') and Biblical Hebrew *yeter* 'abundance, excess' may be an Aramaism indeed. Syriac *saggī* 'very much, greatly' is connected with *sga* 'to increase, to multiply, to grow in number' just like *rabb-aṭ / rebb-aṭ* is derived from *r-b-b* 'to be big, great'.

In Classical and in Modern Literary Arabic both *jidd-an* and *kaṭīr-an* have clear derivational links with *jidd* 'seriousness, earnestness' and *kaṭīr* 'many, much, numerous' respectively. Classical Arabic *li l-gāya* 'extremely, very much' contains *gāya(t)* 'extreme limit, utmost degree' and is probably derived from *g-w-y* 'to stray from the right way, to misguide, to seduce, to lure', cf. *gāyy* 'trespassing, transgression, seduction'. In modern Arabic dialects there is a variety of innovations, e.g. Cairo Arabic has also *hālīṣ* (Classical Arabic *halīṣ* 'pure, clear; sincere') and 'awi (< *qawī* 'strong') both meaning 'very'. In Palestinian Arabic *ktīr*, e.g. *kān mabṣūṭ ktīr* 'he was very pleased indeed!', *baḥebbo ktīr* 'I love/like him very much' and comparative *bass ana baḥebbo aktar* 'but I love him more!' In many Maghrebian dialects there is *bezzāf / bi l-żuzāf* < *bi l-jizāf* 'a lot, much, very', connected with Classical Arabic (of Persian origin) *jizāf / juzāf* 'muchness, copiousness' and *jizāf-an* 'at random, without measuring and without weighing'.

In Ethiopic the standard intensifier is *teqqa* which means 'exactly, precisely, accurately; certainly, surely; completely; greatly, exceedingly, extremely, very, very much, indeed etc.' (see CDG 596 and *ṣanqaqa* p. 594) which is connected by an unorthodox sound correspondence with Arabic *daqqaqa* 'to proceed with accuracy'. It can be also intensified in its turn: *baheqqu teqqa* 'very, exceedingly, utterly' where *baheqqu* means rather 'in reality, really' (cf. Arabic *fī l-ḥaqīqa* and Tigre *ḥaqq* 'right' and Tigrinya *ḥaqqi* 'truth' – this might be a case of borrowing or of a calque from Arabic) than 'sufficiently, enough' (*heqq* meaning alone 'little, a little, moderate, somewhat, mediocre') as suggested by Leslau (CDG 240) who gives further meanings

'very, very much, greatly, considerably, thoroughly, completely, exceedingly, utterly, intently, accurately, entirely'.

In Amharic there is *bātam* 'very (much)' connected with *ṭam* (another, older form *ṭa'əm*) 'taste, flavour, savor' derived from the Pan-Afroasiatic root *ṭ- 'm* 'to eat, to taste' and originally meaning 'with a good taste, well tasting > good, well'. Another adverb, viz. *əḡḡəḡ* 'much, very, exceedingly, enormously' derived from *addāḡā* 'to grow, become big', strengthened by *bātam* in *bātam əḡḡəḡ* 'extremely'.

In older Harari there was *baḡih* (modern *baḡih*) derived from the root *b-z-h* 'to be numerous, abundant' well spread in Ethiosemitic and occurring also in Arabic, e.g. *bazh* 'abundance of wealth' (see CDG 117 and EDG vol. III, 168 as *bāzza*) and *gidir* derived from *gidir / gidri* 'big' and connected also with *gudō* 'high', the root *g-d-r* being used also in Wolane and Zay (EDG vol. III, 264).

In Modern South Arabian there is Mehri *wīyen* 'very much' which has a cognate in Jibbali *biyyā* 'enough' and *bē* 'very'. The root *w-y-n* occurs also in Cushitic, e.g. Beja *win*, Somali *weyn* 'to be big', Rendille *wéen* id.

Egyptian *wr-t* (Old Egyptian *wrj / wrj-t*) 'very' goes back to *wr-t* 'greatness of size or quantity; importance' derived from *wrr* 'to be great, much, many, important' and the same origin has '3-w 'greatly, much' going back to '3y 'to be great', cf. abstract '3-t 'greatness'. They can be used jointly, viz. as '3(w) *wrt* and each of them can be further intensified by (j)r (j)*ht nbt* 'than all other', e.g. *nfr wrt m33 r ht nbt* 'it was extremely beautiful to look at'. There are also forms with preposition (j)r, e.g. *r ykr* 'exceedingly' (*ykr* 'excellence, virtue', *jr* '3jt/r '3t 'greatly, very' (see above), *r mnḥ* (cf. *mnḥ* 'efficient, beneficent, excellent') 'thoroughly'.

Coptic (*e*)*mašo* 'very, much' (can be repeated for further intensification!) has been connected by Dévaud with *aše* 'a big number, multitude, a lot' (see DELC 128 and 20); the same development also in case of *emat(e)* from *ato* 'a big number' – both might be related. Another adverb *mpša* 'very, much' is probably related to (*e*)*mpša* 'to be worthy, to deserve' although Černý CED 87 says that -p- has been inserted under influence of *mpša* 'to be worthy' and the word may go back to **mša* (see above). *Tonole* in German 'sehr, gewiss, wahrlich' (Westendorf 1965/1977, 236, DELC 217 'vraiment; beaucoup, certainement') does not have a convincing etymology. *Epehwo* in German translated as 'überaus, sehr' is derived from *howo* 'greater part, greatness', German 'Überschuss, Überfluss, Mehri 'viel, mehr, grosser' (cf. Černý 304-305).

In Tuareg Berber there is *hullan / hullen / wEllen* 'much, very' of unclear origin and *iəḡgin* 'much, very' which goes back to *iḡat* 'to be numerous, in big number, to be much' and actually means '(which is; being) in big number'. Kabyle Berber has Arabic loans *nezzeḥ* (cf. Literary Arabic *nazih* 'pure, blameless, honorable, correct', Algerian Arabic 'much, very, considerably') and *mlih* (Arabic *malīḥ* '(salty), pretty, beautiful'.

In Cushitic there is Beja *winnet / wunnet* 'greatly, very, very much' which is derived from *win* 'large, big'. 'Afar has an adverbial ending -m (or rather -Vm which may be a cognate of Akkadian -am ?) and 'very' is derived from roots meaning 'big', viz. *kaddam*, 'great', viz. *na'ba-m* 'many', viz. *mango-m* but also *mangih* 'often, mostly; much'. In Somali there is *aad* 'very' of unknown origin. In Rendille there is *weyti* 'very (much)' going back most probably to *wéen* 'to be big', see above for Beja.

Since 'very' does not belong to basic vocabulary, it is not found in the vocabularies of the little known Chadic languages. Hausa *kwarai / kwarākwā* 'very, unusually, fully, completely, very well, splendid' is most probably connected with *kwara* 'big size', less probably with *kwarākwara* 'strong, hard'. Other forms, like Gisiga *doḡa* 'much, very'

(connected with *ḏa* ‘much, many’) or Mupun *haken, zam, ḏes* all meaning ‘very’ remain etymological riddles.

The conclusion is very simple: 1. intensifying adverbs of the ‘very’ type cannot be reconstructed for the Afroasiatic family and even for the particular subbranches with a possible, but uncertain, exception of Cushitic which might have **weyn* while the use of *m-’-d* in Akkadian, Ugaritic and Hebrew may be due either to genetic relationship or to contact; 2. this kind of intensifying adverb is derived from adjectives and/or stative verbs meaning ‘(having) big, unusual size, number or, less frequently, another intensive quality, exact or exceeding standard’ which seems to be universal.

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