

Does Chaha threaten the OCP ?

A groundbreaking proposal regarding the structure of Semitic roots was put forth 40 years ago with the autosegmental account offered in McCarthy (1979). Medieval scholars had long noted, but never accounted for, a striking left-right asymmetry in the structuration of Arabic and Hebrew roots : a proliferation of $C_1C_2C_2$ roots ('deaf' roots, e.g. Arabic *m-d-d* 'stretch') vs. the total absence of the symmetrical $C_1C_1C_2$ arrangement.

McCarthy's adoption of the autosegmental model (complete with the Obligatory Contour Principle) provided a two-pronged, rigid answer :

a) roots of type $C_1C_2C_2$ are biliteral, i.e. C_1C_2 ; if C_1C_2 roots are present in the inventory of a Semitic language, they will necessarily surface as $C_1C_2C_2$;

b) a hypothetical $C_1C_1C_2$ arrangement is ruled out altogether by the theory.

And yet, both $C_1C_2C_2$ and $C_1C_1C_2$ roots appear to be present in every known ethiosemitic language. The purpose of this presentation is to assess, based on evidence from the Gurage language Chaha, whether verbs such as *kʷäkʷärä* 'he hugged', *qʷäqʷäsä* 'it became burnt' offer a serious challenge to McCarthy's proposals. Taken at face value, they manifest roots $\sqrt{K^YK^YR}$ and $\sqrt{Q^WQ^WS}$, resp. As such, their existence militates against McCarthy's scheme. Alternatively, their analysis may reveal that they do **not** manifest $C_1C_1C_2$ roots, in which case their existence does not challenge McCarthy's account.

The first thing to establish is whether Chaha positively falls within the scope of McCarthy's account – that is whether McCarthy's Arabic-based proposals successfully handle a challenge offered by Chaha but not Arabic. A very strong argument of that nature exists, the double palatalization of $C_1C_2C_2$ verbs in the case of 2nd feminine formation, e.g. *tiräziz* 'you_{MSC} dream' vs. *tiräziž* 'you_{FEM} dream' from \sqrt{RZ} .

The second point is to ascertain exactly what underlying configuration verbs such as *kʷäkʷärä* and *qʷäqʷäsä* express. Fortunately, the intricate interplay of several phenomena typical of Gurage languages (the realization of Type B, 2nd Feminine formation, Impersonal formation, etc.) makes it possible to tease out what configuration underlies such verbs. It turns out that their behavior is inconsistent with the conjecture that they express $C_1C_1C_2$ roots. Rather, based in part on observations due to Banksira (2000), I will argue that they express reduplicated biradical roots of type $C_1C_2+C_1C_2$ roots, viz. $\sqrt{K^YR+K^YR}$ and $\sqrt{Q^WS+Q^WS}$.

The 3rd point will involve a comparative discussion of those roots which 'lose' their 2nd member $\sqrt{K^Y(R)+K^YR}$ (loss noted by parenthesis) vs. those which do not, e.g. $\sqrt{DF+DF}$ *difädäfä* 'he exerted pressure with the hand', not **dädäfä*.

Going beyond Banksira's argumentation, I will examine what consequences follow for the status of the OCP.

I will conclude that Chaha evidence does not militate against the OCP. Rather, it strongly supports it.

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