

# On the Modern Classification of Somali Proverbs

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## I. Introduction

Scholars have devised several types of classification of paremias (proverbs, sayings, proverbial phrases etc.) The most commonly used are: *the alphabetical classification*, which requires the arrangement of proverbs depending on the initial letters of their first word; *the lexical classification*, which implies the distribution of proverbs according to their key words, and *the thematic classification*, which involves the placement of proverbs in compliance with their content.

Among the advantages of these systems of classification is their simplicity. Their common disadvantage is that they are based on random signs unrelated to the nature of proverbs themselves.

The nature of proverbs was discovered by the famous Russian folklorist G. L. Permyakov forty years ago.<sup>1</sup> According to him, proverbs are signs and models of certain situations or relationships between objects. Considered as signs, they are parts of language; when viewed as models, they become examples of folklore.

The sign nature of paremias makes them convenient elements of any language. A Somali speaker, instead of describing in his/her own words such a situation as, "If a man acts alone, he cannot do much, or his efforts are not effective," resorts to a cliché of words and says: **Far keliya fool ma dhaqdo**. *One finger does not wash a face* or **Ceel nin tooxsaday isna ku caddiban, cuudna ma cokana**. *He who draws water out of the well alone exhausts himself, but does not water his flock well.*

Another contribution of Permyakov to the development of modern paremiology was his logico-semiotic classification of proverbs. The purpose of this article is: 1) to acquaint the reader with its principles and 2) using examples from my collection of over 5,000 Somali proverbs and sayings, to demonstrate their universal character.

## II. THEMATIC PAIRS OF OPPOSITE ENTITIES

The core theme of any paremia is an invariant<sup>2</sup> pair of opposite entities that embrace the meaning of the images used. Permyakov divided these pairs into four structural types which form the following thematic groups:

### I. Invariant pairs of opposing entities representing different sides of the same thing:

#### I1. CONTENTS – FORM

**Hubkaa kaa war dheer.** *Your clothes speak louder than you.*

#### I2. WHOLE – PART

**Badi waa isku wada dhanaan.** *The sea is everywhere [i.e. in all its parts] salty.*

#### I5. THING – SIGN

**Nin salaan badani waa sabool ama waa wadaad, ama waa ciidan, ama waa beenaale.** *He who is too friendly is either a beggar, or a mullah, or a servant, or a liar, and others.*

### II. Invariant pairs of opposing entities representing physically different objects:

a.Pairs whose members exist on their own, but admit the existence of intermediate forms (i.e. they differ in the degree of qualities):

**Ila1. BIG – SMALL**

**Nin aad waxar ka dooneysid weyl baa la weyddiistaa.** *If you want to receive a kid, ask for a calf.*

**Ila4. STRONG – WEAK**

**Nin kaa xoog badani hortaa buu xanaaqaa.** *Who is stronger than you will get angry before you.*

**Ila7. OLD – YOUNG**

**Kor waayeel waa wada indho.** *An old man sees even with his skin [lit: his skin is made of eyes], and others.*

b. Pairs with no intermediate forms between their members:

**Iib1. TWO – ONE**

**Shimbiri laba geed kama wada berdeysato.** *A bird cannot peck the fruits of two trees at the same time.*

**Iib14. FRIEND – ENEMY**

**Cadowgaana kol ka digtoonow, saaxiibkaana kun jeer.** *Fear your enemy, but fear your friend a thousand times more.*

**Iib17. OBVIOUS – COVERT**

**Is-qariye ma qufaco.** *He who hides does not cough, and others.*

c. Pairs whose members represent a thing and its absence (at least formally):

**Iic1. WORD – SILENCE**

**Hadal nin badiyey ma wada odhan, nin yareeyeyna kama wada tegin.** *He who talked much did not tell all he wanted, and he who talked a little told almost all he wanted [i.e. there is no point in talking a lot].*

## IIc2. UNITY – DISUNITY

**Gacan gacan bay dhaqdaa, wadajirna wejigay dhaqaan.** *The hand washes the hand, and together they wash the face [i.e. joined actions are more effective].*

## IIc4. KNOWLEDGE – IGNORANCE

**Hubsiiimo hal baa la siistaa.** *To know something for certain, one would even part with a she-camel, and others.*

## III. Invariant pairs of opposite entities, representing physically different things, which cannot exist without each other:

### III1. ACTION – REACTION

**Doqon wixii casarkii lagu caayo ayay cishihii kugu caaysaa.** *How you curse a fool in the afternoon so will he curse you in the evening.*

### III2. GENERATING – GENERATED

**Shabeelka ilmihisu waa giiran yihiin.** *A leopard cubs are also spotted.*

### III6. DESTROYING – DESTROYED

**Wiilkana waa u geeraar, mulacana waa u geeri.** *What is play [lit.: a poem] for a boy is death for a lizard, and others.*

## IV. Invariant pairs of opposite entities, representing the most frequent intersections of elementary thematic pairs:

### IV1. QUALITY – QUANTITY (the intersection of “Good – Bad” and “Many – Few”/ “Two – One”/ “Big – Small”/ “Long – Short”)

**Hangaraarac lug uma dhutiyo.** *A millipede will not limp because of one leg.*

**IV6. YOUR PLACE – SOMEBODY ELSE’S PLACE (the intersection of “One’s own – Somebody else’s” and “Thing – Place”)**

**Mukulaal mininkeeda joogtaa miciyo libaax bay leedahay.** *A cat in its own house has lion’s fangs.*

**IV10. INWARD – OUTWARD (the intersection of “Contents – Form” and “Backwards – Forwards”)**

**Qur go’day iyo roob galbeed midna ma soo noqdaan.** *The soul that has flown away and the rain that has gone to the West do not return.*

The total number of thematic pairs found in paremias of any nation slightly exceeds one hundred. Thus, the theme of the Somali proverb **Ama leg hay, ama lug hay** *Catch hold of a brisket or at least of a leg* [because even a bad thing is better than nothing] is neither *brisket* nor *leg*, but the invariant pair Good-Bad in the images of those parts of an animal’s carcass, one good and the other bad, used in this proverb. The proverbs brought together according to their themes establish thematic or object-image groups.

A proverb may include several thematic pairs or include none. It means that some proverbs can be attributed to a variety of thematic groups or to none at all<sup>3</sup>. Among proverbs with several thematic pairs, one of them typically prevails. For example, in the proverb **Quraanyo aruurtay bulac bay jiiddaa** *Together ants can carry even a lizard*, the opposition of Unity-Disunity is more important than that of Large-Small expressed by the images of the ants and the lizard. Thematic groups can also be of the same value, as in the proverb **Wax-laawe wax looma dhiibto, wax-ma-kase wax looma sheegto** *He who has no things is not trusted with property and he who has no brains is not trusted with secrets*. Two thematic pairs, forming the thematic groups Rich-Poor and Clever-Foolish, are represented here. In common cases like these the thematic meaning of a proverb depends on the context in which it is placed, making the second thematic pair auxiliary.

### III. FORMATIVE GROUPS

The members of the invariant thematic pairs establish 28 relation types. Not all of them sound conventional, but they carefully signal established relations. Here is the complete set of the formative groups based on the above mentioned relation types.<sup>4</sup> They combine paremias of similar logical structures and organize proverbial material within thematic (object-image) groups:

#### FORMATIVE GROUP 1. Usualness – Unusualness

**Rag waa shaah, dumarna waa sheeko.** *Men like tea, women like conversation.*

#### FORMATIVE GROUP 2. Stability – Changeability

**Bahal ceeriin ma daayo, ninna caadadii ma baajo.** *The beast will not pass by raw (meat), and the person will not give up his habit.*

#### FORMATIVE GROUP 3. Limitedness – Unlimitedness

**Boqorba wax baa la sii baraa.** *Even a chieftain is to be taught.*

#### FORMATIVE GROUP 4. Consistency – Inconsistency

**Timir laf baa ku jirta.** *There is a stone in every date [i.e. Every good thing has a bad part].*

#### FORMATIVE GROUP 5. Non-Feasibility – Feasibility

**Xarig keliya geel ma wada xiro.** *You can't tie the whole herd of camels with one rope.*

#### FORMATIVE GROUP 6. Reversibility – Irreversibility

**Hadal daan la qabtuu leeyahay, dabo la qabto ma leh.** *The word can be caught by the head [lit.: by the cheek], you cannot catch it by the tail [i.e. you cannot retrieve a spoken word].*

FORMATIVE GROUP 7. Originality – Monotony

**Maan dad waa mudacyo afkood.** *A person's mind is like the tip of an awl [it can be both sharp and dull].*

FORMATIVE GROUP 8. Interdependence – Independence

**Adhi been waa didaa, beense ma dhutiyo.** *Sheep and goats stampede for a false reason, but they do not limp for a false reason.*

FORMATIVE GROUP 9. Compatibility – Incompatibility

**Meeshaad nin ka qaadanaysaba nin baad kaga tegaysaa.** *Wherever you win someone for yourself, you (also) lose someone.*

FORMATIVE GROUP 10. Generation – Non-Generation

**Erayba eray buu kugu dhaliyaa.** *A word gives birth to a word [lit.: in you].*

FORMATIVE GROUP 11. Transformation – Non-Transformation

**Geel laba jir soo wada mar.** *All the camels were once two years old.*

FORMATIVE GROUP 12. Sequentiality – Non-Sequentiality

**Markaad kaliil aragtid roob filo.** *When the heat comes, wait for rain.*

FORMATIVE GROUP 13. Manifestation – Non-Manifestation

**Abeeso dhul-u-ekaan bay kugu dishaa.** *The abeeso<sup>5</sup> snake kills you by its resemblance to the ground.*

FORMATIVE GROUP 14. Non-Replaceability – Replaceability

**Geel waa geel, in goysana waa geel.** *A camel is a camel that can be exchanged only for another camel.*

FORMATIVE GROUP 15. Qualitative Correspondences – Non-Correspondences

**Atoor sagaaro intiisa waa ku duq.** *Even though a male dik-dik is small, he may be old.*

FORMATIVE GROUP 16. Natural-qualitative Correspondences – Non-Correspondences

**Geedba mirihiisuu dhalaa.** *Each tree bears its own fruits.*

FORMATIVE GROUP 17. Quantitative Correspondences – Non-Correspondences

**Sida loo kala xaar weyn yahay looma kala xoog weyna.** *If someone has a lot of shit, it doesn't mean that he has much strength.*

FORMATIVE GROUP 18. Circumstantial Correspondences – Non-Correspondences

**Meeshaad ku qoydaa lagu qalalsadaa.** *You should dry where you got wet.*

FORMATIVE GROUP 19. Actantial Correspondences – Non-Correspondences

**Ninkaad beri ku baran weydid bil kuma baratid.** *The man whom you failed to know within a day you will not know within a month.*

FORMATIVE GROUP 20. Sameness – Difference of the relations between one object and two or many other objects

**Wax aad jeceshahay walaalkaana la jeclow.** *What you wish for yourself, wish for your brother [i.e. for other person].*

FORMATIVE GROUP 21. Sameness – Difference of the properties of one object for two or many other objects

**Qof dhibkiis waa qof kale dheeftiis.** *What is a loss for one is a gain for another.*

FORMATIVE GROUP 22. Qualitative Superiority – Non-Superiority

**Maroodigu takarta saaran ma arkee kan kale tan saaran ayuu arkaa.** *An elephant does not see the gadfly sitting on it but sees the one sitting on another elephant.*

FORMATIVE GROUP 23. Quantitative Superiority – Non-Superiority

**Nin gu' kaa weyni garaadna kaa weyn.** *He who is a year older than you is wiser than you.*

FORMATIVE GROUP 24. Existential Superiority – Non-Superiority<sup>6</sup>

**Geel nin aan lahayn geeridii war ma leh.** *The death of a man who does not own camels is no news.*

FORMATIVE GROUP 25. Superiority – Non-Superiority of objects in terms of their quality grade or value

**Inta jiilaal loo adkaysto jir looma adkaysto.** *A prolonged drought is easier to withstand than a prolonged rain [i.e. even good in excess is bad].*

FORMATIVE GROUP 26. Superiority – Non-Superiority of objects depending on their relation to the norm

**Ha noqon malab la leefi karo, hana noqon dacar la tufi karo.** *Do not become honey – you will be eaten, do not become aloe – you will be spit out.*

FORMATIVE GROUP 27. Overcoming – Non-Overcoming

**Nin wixii dhibaa labo ma dhibo.** *What is hard for one is not hard for two.*

FORMATIVE GROUP 28. Advantageous – Disadvantageous position of an extraneous or an intermediary object

**Dameer iyo doc-ka-yeer daankaa lagu dhuftaa.** *A donkey and a busy-body both deserve to be slapped in the face.*

IV. LOGICO-SEMIOTIC CLASSIFICATION  
OF SOMALI PROVERBS WHICH FORM  
THE 'STRAIGHT-CROOKED' THEMATIC GROUP.<sup>7</sup>

I**ib**11. STRAIGHT – CROOKED

Somali proverbs and sayings that cover straight and crooked things, like truth and falsehood, honest and dishonest people, justice and injustice.

1. Usualness – Unusualness (Regularity – Irregularity)  
of Straight and Crooked

**Gari Ilaah bay taqaan.** *Justice knows only Allah [i.e. it is impartial to people who demand it].* x<sup>8</sup>: I**ib**15 People – Non-People.

**Xaq-ku-dhashe xaq ma diido.** *Born in the law does not reject the law.*

**Run iyo ilkaba waa la caddeeyaa.** *Truth and teeth should both be polished.* x: I**a**10 Good – Bad. I**a**11 Light – Dark.

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**Beenlow nin dhintay iyo nin dheer ayuu marqaati u qabsadaa.** *A liar calls a witness either he who is dead or he who is faraway.* x: I**ib**12 Alive – Dead. I**a**8 Close – Distant.

**Beenaale marqaatigiisuu fogeeyaa.** *A liar chooses his witness from a faraway place [i.e. he calls as a character witness someone unable to come].* x: IIa8 Close – Distant.

## 2. Stability – Changeability of Straight and Crooked

**Beeni marka hore waa malab, marka dambana waa malmal.** *At first, a lie appears honey, but it soon turns aloe [i.e. bitter].* x: IIa10 Good – Bad.

## 3. Limitedness – Unlimitedness of Straight and Crooked

**Xaajo toosan lama wadwado, waa intaas oo ay meel xun tagtaa** *If you do not stop the discussion about a fairly [literally: straightly] resolved case, it can only be spoiled.* x: IIa10 Good – Bad.

## 4. Consistency – Inconsistency of Straight and Crooked

**Nin rag ahi raadkiisu u toosan** *A straight [lit.: real] man's footprints are also straight.* x: III18 Thing – Footprints.

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**Ul qalloocan hoos toosan ma yeelato.** *A curved stick casts no direct shadow.* x: III18 Surrounding – Surrounded.

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**Nin been badani mar bay run ku baaqataa.** *Sometimes the truth remains with a liar [and this sometimes allows him to tell the truth].*

**6. Reversibility – Irreversibility  
(and Recurrence – Non-Recurrence) of Straight and Crooked**

**Beenlow runtiisuna waa been, runlowna beentiisu waa run**  
*A liar's truth is false; a truthful person's lie is true.*

**9. Compatibility – Incompatibility  
(and Friendliness – Hostility) of Straight and Crooked**

**Lillaahi iyo laqdabo meel ma wada galaan.** *Straightforwardness and slyness cannot enter one and the same place.*

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**Runtaada hore beentaada dambay u roon tahay.** *Your previous truth helps your present lie.* x: IIa36 Early – Late.

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**Beentaada hore runtaada danbay u baas baxdaa.** *Your previous lie damages your present truth.* x: IIa36 Early – Late.

**10. Generation – Non-Generation  
of Straight and Crooked by Straight and Crooked**

**Hal booli ahi nirig xalaal ah ma dhasho.** *A stolen she-camel does not give birth to a legitimate calf.* x: IIb4 Like – Unlike.

**12. Sequentiality – Non-Sequentiality  
of Straight and Crooked**

**Gartaada inta aanad geedka tegin baa la naqsadaa.** *Before you go to the tree,<sup>10</sup> consider if you can win the case.*

**Nin aan run sheegin been baa u qarsan.** *He who doesn't tell the truth hides a lie.* x: IIb17 Obvious – Covert.

**15. Qualitative Correspondences – Non-Correspondences  
of Straight and Crooked**

**Hadal been ah dheg been ah baa lagu dhegeystaa.** *A false speech is listened to by a false ear.* x: IV10 Inward – Outward.

**19. Actantial Correspondences – Non-Correspondences  
of Straight and Crooked**

**Dab munaafaq shiday mu'min baa ku gubta.** *A fire lit by a sinful man [lit.: a hypocrite] burns a sinless man [lit.: a good Muslim]* x: III1 Action – Reaction.

**20. Sameness – Difference  
of attitude toward Straight and Crooked**

**Nin qaldan qabashadii iyo nin qumman quwayntii iyo nin qolman wax-siintii baa tol ku dhaqmaa.** *It is in restraining those who are at fault, supporting those who are upright and helping those who are in need that chanship is profitably exercised.* x: IIa13 Rich – Poor.

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**Nin aan gardarro qaadani gar ma qaato.** *He who does not accept unfair treatment (of himself), does not accept fair treatment (of other people).*

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**Labadii xaqdarro ku heshiisaa xaqay ku diriraan** *Two friends in injustice will quarrel over justice.* x: IIb26 Peace – War (Quarrel).

**21. Sameness – Difference  
of the properties of one object for Straight and Crooked**

**Wax qof la toosan baa qof kale tuur la leh.** *What is straight for one is a hunchback for another.*

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**Gari laba nin kama wada qosliso.** *A fair court decision cannot please [lit.: make laugh] both parties.*

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**Gar waa loo wada Islaan.** *As regards justice everyone is a Muslim [i.e. everyone is equal].*

**Gar iyo geeriba loo siman.** *All people are equal for justice and death. x: IIb12 Alive – Dead.*

**Wiilkaaga iyo wiilka gaalka garta u sin** *Be so fair to the son of an infidel as you are fair to your own son. x: IIb3 Relative – Non-relative. IIc12 Belief – Unbelief.*

## 22. Qualitative Superiority – Non-Superiority of Straight and Crooked

**Hadal run baa lagu caddeeyaa, ilkana rummay.** *Rummay<sup>11</sup> brightens teeth, but truth brightens speech. x: IIc1 Word – Silence.*

**Run Ilaah baa kugu jecel.** *Allah loves you for the truth.*

**Runta sheeg, beentaa ha la moodee.** *Tell the truth, even if it is taken for a lie. x: IV10 Inward – Outward.*

**Run sheeg, wax kuu marqaati fura ma weydide.** *Speak the truth and you won't be left without witnesses. x: IV10 Inward – Outward.*

**Muslinow run sheeg, Muslinowna run uga qaado.** *You, Muslim, tell the truth, and you, Muslim, do not doubt it. x: IV10 Inward – Outward.*

**Runi rag kama nixiso** *Truth does not frighten men.*

**Runi rag waa ka nixisaa, waxse ma yeesho.** *Truth can frighten men, but it does not harm them. x: IIa10 Good – Bad.*

**Sir-ma-qabe Allaa u sahan ah.** *Allah himself helps an honest man to find a good pasture.* x: Iib28 Help – Hindrance.

**Sir-ma-qabe saab baa biyo u celiya.** *For an honest man even a saab<sup>12</sup> holds water.* x: Iia32 Dry – Wet.

**Tol xeer lihi caydh ma leh.** *In a law-abiding tribe, there are no poor people.* x: Iia13 Rich – Poor.

**Gaal dil, gartiisana sii.** *You may kill an infidel [if he deserves it] but be just to him [i.e. be just even to your enemy].* x: Iib14 Friend – Enemy. Iib12 Alive – Dead.

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**Xaajo qalloocan xoolahaagaa lagu bixiyaa.** *For an erroneous [lit.: crooked] decision, you will have to pay with your property.* x: Ii29 Profit – Loss.

**Sirrow ma hodmo.** *The swindler never thrives.* x: Iia13 Rich – Poor.

**Dadka ayaa u itaal daran nin gardaran.** *Of people, the one who is wrong is the weakest.* x: Iia4 Strong – Weak.

**Dhagarqabe dhulkaa u dhaqdhaqaaqa.** *The ground quakes under a rascal [i.e. it seems to him that he is pursued].* x: Iib25 Brave – Coward.

**Dhagarrow ma liibaano.** *The rascal never succeeds.* x: Iia10 Good – Bad.

**Gar-diid waa Alle-diid.** *He who renounces the truth [lit.: justice], renounces God.*

**Nin been badani isagaa u dhinta.** *He who lies a lot dies of lies.* x: Iia16 Many – Few. Iib12 Alive – Dead.

**Ilaahow, gar eexana ha nagaga tegin, garasho-yarina ha nagu cadaabin.** *O Allah, do not forgive us for a biased judgment, but do not punish us for a mistake.* x: IIa10 Good – Bad.

**Wax-is-weyddiini ma xuma ee wax-is-weydaarsi baa xun.** *It is not wrong to ask each other for something; it is bad to dodge each other.*

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**Gari iyadoo aan gacan lahayn bay geed kugu xirtaa** *Although justice has no hands, it will tie you to a tree* [i.e. you will be punished you if you are wrong]. x: III1 Action – Reaction.

**Xaqa haddii afka laga awdo, feeruhuu ka dillaacaa.** *If you don't let the truth come out through your mouth, it will break your ribs (and still come out).* x: IV10 Inward – Outward.

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**Beenu baal la qabtay leedahay.** *A lie has a wing to be caught by* [i.e. although a lie is winged, it cannot fly far].

**Beeni raad ma leh.** *A lie leaves no trace* [i.e. it has no weight].

**Soomaalidu been waa sheegtaa, beense ma maahmaahdo.** *Somalis can lie, but they do not lie in proverbs.* x: IIc1 Word – Silence.

**Carrab dalab leh lug dalab leh laga garan og.** *It is easier to recognize the crookedness of one's tongue* [i.e. one's lie] *than the crookedness of one's leg.* x: IIc1 Word – Silence.

**Qofkii isha daba dadkaa arka, kii uurkana Eebbe.** *If you twist your eye, people see, and if you twist your soul, God sees.* x: IIb15 People – Non-People. IIb17 Evident – Covert.

**Nin gar eexo galay Rabbina ku og, kii uu ka galayna ku og, kii uu u galayna ku og.** *The biased verdict is known to God, the plaintiff and the defendant [i.e., an unfair decision cannot be concealed].* x: IIb15 People – Non-People. IIb17 Evident – Covert.

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**Run sheeg waa ceeb sheeg** *Telling the truth means also telling shameful things.* x: IIa10 Good – Bad.

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**Beenlow waa falalow.** *A liar is like a sorcerer [i.e. he can achieve what others cannot].*

**Awr xamil waa qaadaa, xarig qalloocanse ma qaado.** *A camel can carry a heavy load, but not a crooked one.* It means: Hardship can be suffered, injustice cannot. x: IIa25 Heavy – Light.

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**Run iyo beeni kala raad leh.** *Truth and lie have different footprints.* x: III18 Thing – Traces.

### 23. Quantitative Superiority – Non-Superiority of Straight and Crooked

**Dhul jid baa ka toosan, dadna kii qaada.** *The road is straighter than the ground, and the one who walks along it is ahead of others.* x: IIb16 Active – Passive.

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**Been waa ku qadeysiisaa, kumase cashaysiiso.** *A lie may provide you with dinner, but will not give you supper [i.e. you will not be able to cheat people twice].* x: IV10 Inward – Outward.

**Beeni mar bay ku waraabisaa, kumase rakaadiso.** *The lie can give you to drink once, but not a second time.* x: IV10 Inward – Outward.

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**Been fakatay runi ma gaarto.** *The truth will not catch up with a runaway lie [i.e. lie spreads faster than truth].* x: I Ib55 Run away – Catch up.

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**Intii la cayriyo been baa u gaabisa.** *Of what you chase away, the slowest is a lie [i.e. lying is the hardest thing to get rid of].* x: I Ia15 Quickly – Slowly.

#### 24. Existential Superiority – Non-Superiority of Straight and Crooked

**Hadal run kama maarmo.** *Speech cannot do without truth.* x: I Ic1 Word – Silence.

**Hadal waa run-kama-rayste.** *Speech without truth gets sick.* x: I Ic1 Word – Silence.

**Marqaati waa waa gar waa** *He who has no witness does not win the case.* x: Victory – Defeat.

#### 25. Superiority – Non-Supriority of Straight and Crooked in terms of their quality grade

**Been sheeg, laakiin been run u eg sheeg** *Tell lies, but let your lies resemble the truth.*

**Runta sheeg, beentaa ha la moodee** *Tell the truth even if one may think you are lying.*

**Runta sheeg, dacarna ha ka qadhaadhaatee** *Tell the truth even if it tastes more bitter than aloe.* x: I Ia10 Good – Bad.

**26. Superiority – Non-Superiority  
of objects depending on their relation to the norm**

**Gar jilicsan geeri baa hoos taalla.** *Doubtful* [lit.: *weak*] *justice is fraught with death.* x: IIb12 Alive – Dead.

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**Geed intuu yar yahay baa la toosiyaa** *The tree should be straightened while it is young.* x: IIa7 Old – Young.

**Usha intay qoyan tahay baa la toosiyaa.** *The stick should be straightened while it is wet.* x: IIa32 Dry – Wet.

**27. Overcoming – Non-Overcoming of Straight and Crooked  
by a more or less powerful agent**

**Wixii malab lagu toosin waayo mindi baa lagu toosiyaa** *What cannot be straightened with honey [i.e. in a good way] can be straightened with a knife [i.e. in a bad way].* x: IIa10 Good – Bad.

1. As demonstrated above, the logico-semiotic classification elaborated by Permyakov is applicable to the Somali proverbial stock, to confirm its universal character. In this classificatory system, every proverb occupies the only possible place at the intersection of the thematic group to which this proverb belongs, and the formative group, which reveals the type of logical connection established by the members of the thematic pair of this proverb.

2. Only 9 out of the 28 formative groups are not illustrated by Somali proverbs. In my collection there are none that suit the following formative groups:

**7. Originality – Monotony of Straight and Crooked;**

**8. Interdependence – Independence of Straight and Crooked;**

**11. Transformation – Non-Transformation of Straight and Crooked;**

**13. Manifestation – Non-Manifestation of Straight and Crooked;**

**14. Non-Replaceability – Replaceability of Straight and Crooked;**

**16. Natural-qualitative Correspondences – Non-Correspondences of Straight and Crooked;**

**17. Quantitative Correspondence – Non-Correspondence of Straight and Crooked;**

**18. Circumstantial Correspondence – Non-Correspondence of Straight and Crooked;**

**28. Advantageous – Disadvantageous position of an extraneous or an intermediary object in relation to Straight and Crooked**

The types of logical connections covered by these formative groups are not typical of Somali proverbs which make up the thematic group Straight and Crooked. The extensive chapter devoted to this thematic group in Permyakov's book, based on proverbs from among 200 peoples excludes formative groups 5, 7, 8, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 21, 24, 27 and 28. Some of these formative groups (5, 19, 21, 24 and 27) are illustrated with Somali proverbs, attesting to the rich Somali proverbial stock and the extraordinary diversity of its logical structures.

3. As for the formative groups 7, 8, 13, 14, 16 and 18, which are not presented either in the book of Permyakov or in this article, the types of logical connections covered by them are apparently alien to the proverbs which form the Straight – Crooked thematic group.

4. Regarding the formative groups 11, 17 and 28, the Somali paremiological stock may contain proverbs that refer to them, but my research has not uncovered them.

5. Finally, in the "evaluative" formative groups 22, 23, 24, 25 and 26 one finds proverbs and sayings that reveal the details of an unwritten code of ethics that guides the behavior of members of traditional Somali society. The Somali ways of doing things are reflected in them

as a way of seeing the world and sanctioning appropriate behavior or ways of life that remain constantly in flux.

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### Notes

1. G. L. Permyakov. Proverbs and Sayings of the Oriental Peoples. Moscow. 1979, p. 17.
2. Invariant is something stable and constant, which is shared by all relevant variants, i.e. changing forms and varieties.
3. They make up the so-called "non-objective group", which unites proverbs about indefinite things that are not included in any thematic groups, as well as about "each", "one" or "another" thing: **Nin iyo qabkiis** *Each person has its own pride*; **Ma-gefe waa Ilaah** *Allah alone is sinless*; **Nin madaxuu ka cirroobaa, ninna maanka** *One person's head becomes gray, another person's mind becomes gray* [i.e. mature], etc.
4. Each formative group consists of two sub-groups, specifying the types of logical relations established by the thematic pairs of proverbs that make up this formative group. For example, Formative group 1 "Usualness – Unusualness" (see below) consists of Sub-group K "Regularity – Irregularity" and Sub-group L "Perfection – Imperfection", while Formative group 3 "Limitedness – Unlimitedness" consists of Sub-group K "Limitedness – Unlimitedness of things in time and space" and Sub-group L "Limitedness – Unlimitedness of things in terms of degree (of quality)". However, the description of formative sub-groups is outside the scope of this article.
5. A large poisonous snake which has a sand-like colour pattern.
6. i.e. Superiority – Non-Superiority of a subject and its absence.
7. This article deals only with one-phrase proverbs. The Somali paremiological stock also includes paremias consisting of two or more sentences, as well as dialogue clichés and so-called 'numeral' proverbs. As a rule, they include several (often equal) thematic pairs.
8. The intersection mark x: is followed by the index and the decoding of the additional invariant thematic pair from Permyakov's classificatory system, which is present in a paremia (in some paremias there are several of them).
9. Asterisks separate proverbs of different logical transformations. They can be conveniently illustrated with the 22nd Formative group, which includes many proverbs: Straight is good \* Crooked is bad \* Straight is significant \* Crooked is insignificant \* Straight is bad etc.
10. Usually, all important matters related to the life of the Somali community are solved under a tree, in the shade of which members of the tribal council gather. Complaints and court proceedings are also considered there.

11. A twig used to clean the teeth.
12. An openwork wicker frame for holding a water-jar.

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