THE “COGNATE ACCUSATIVE” IN HAUSA

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English has a construction, termed “cognate object”, in which the direct object of a verb is a lexically related deverbal noun (Quirk et al. 1985, pp. 750-51). With the exception of a few very common collocations, such as ‘He will sing a song’, where the cognate form has become lexicalized as a concrete noun, the cognate noun tends to be modified, e.g.,

They fought a clean fight.
He breathed his last breath.
She lived a life of leisure.
We danced an incredible dance.
I dreamt a wonderful dream.

The construction is not esoteric, but it does have a certain literary or, as Quirk et al. put it, “orotund” quality.

In Latin (Henderson and Fletcher 1900, pp. 95-96), and Greek (Goodwin 1958, pp. 223-24), the construction, which is well known to classics scholars, is referred to as “cognate accusative”. In these languages, the cognate verbal noun may be a direct object, but it is not necessarily so, since it also may accompany intransitive verbs.

A similar construction, termed “maf’ul muṭlaq”, exists in Arabic (Abboud et al. 1975, pp. 247-48). Arabic differs from Latin and Greek in that the cognate verbal noun never occurs as a direct object. It functions instead as a verbal complement. Semantically it serves to intensify, modify, or enumerate the action represented by the verb.

1. Hausa has two “cognate accusative” type constructions involving the co-occurrence of a verb and its cognate verbal noun. The first has many similarities to the corresponding constructions in English, Latin, Greek, and Arabic. With some collocations, such as an kashēe shi muugūn kisāa ‘He was killed violently’ (lit. one killed him horrible killing), this construction is quite common, in written as well as in spoken Hausa. With others, it is much less so; nevertheless, it is potentially productive and available with almost any verb–verbal noun pairing.

In the Hausa cognate accusative, the verb is followed later in the sentence by a noun phrase containing as its head a cognate verbal noun. The noun phrase with the cognate item functions adverially, i.e., it qualifies the basic meaning of the verb in a detailed and specific way. The cognate
verbal noun does not function syntactically as a direct object. If the verb is transitive, it will normally take its regular direct object followed by the cognate accusative phrase. Examples:

\[ \text{wani macijji yaa sàari yaaròn mìmuunàn saaraa} \]
some snake he slash boy.the horrible.L slashing
‘A snake has bitten the boy seriously.’

\[ \text{taa màaree shì maarii mài ciwòo} \]
she slapped him slap with pain
‘She gave him a painful slap.’

\[ \text{taa zàagee shì zaagìi na bàatà hankàlii} \]
she insulted him insulting of spoiling sense
‘She hurled a gross insult on him.’

With intransitive verbs, the cognate accusative typically occurs immediately after the verb, e.g.,

\[ \text{yaa tsayàa tsayìn dakàa} \]
he stood standing.of pounding
‘He stood firmly in his resolve.’

\[ \text{yaa mutù mutuwàř maràř kyàu} \]
he died death.of lacking goodness
‘He died a miserable death.’

\[ \text{gidàì nàn yaa ginu gìnìn gaskiyaa} \]
house.of this it is-built building.of truth
‘This house is well/honestly built.’

\[ \text{sun kookàa kuukaa mài ban tàusàyii} \]
they cried crying with giving.L pity
‘They cried in a pitiful manner.’

This last example could be translated into English as ‘They cried a pitiful cry’, with ‘cry’ functioning as an object. In Hausa, the long final vowel on \( kookàa \) shows that the verb is intransitive and that \( kuukaa \) does not constitute a direct object.

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1 [In the examples \( ð, ðì, \) and \( ðìì \) are glottalized consonants. The symbol \( r \) represents the rolled/tap rhotic; the retroflex flap is indicated simply as \( r \). In the literal glosses, morpheme boundaries within a word are indicated by a period. The boundary linker used with prenominal adjectives and pre-object verbal nouns is noted as \( L \), whereas the particle \( dà \) that accompanies grade 5 verbs is left unglossed].
The cognate verbal noun is always (or almost always) modified in some way. Commonly occurring modifiers include pre- or post-nominal adjectives, post-nominal genitive phrases introduced by the linker na/ta ‘of’ (masculine/feminine), or less often, the corresponding zero vowel allomorphs -n/-r, and post-nominal phrases containing the common particle mài ‘possessing, with’, or its negative counterpart maràř ‘lacking’.

mun goodèe masà dà matukař göodiyaa
we thanked to.him with enormous,L thanks
‘We thanked him profusely.’

Audù yaa shàharà shàharàa sànanniya
Audu he is-famous fame known.fem
‘Audu is extremely well known / overwhelmingly popular.’

yaa dòokee shì duukàa na rashin hankàli
he him beating of lack.of sense
‘He beat him severely.’

an kaayà dà Bàlaa kaayàrwaa ta wulaakanci
one threw Bala throwing of humiliation
‘Bala was thrown down (e.g., in a wrestling match) in a humiliating manner.’

yaa sai dà mootärśà sayárwàa ta tiilàs
he sell car.of his selling of perforce
‘He was forced into selling his car.’

mun zaunàa dà shìi zaman tàare
we sat with him sitting.of together
‘I lived together with him.’

an wankèe mini kaayaa wankii mài kyàu
one wash to.me clothes washing with goodness
‘My clothes were washed spanking clean.’

yaa buusà sàreeewàa buushìi maràř kyàu
he blew flute blowing lacking goodness
‘He blew the flute badly.’

Instead of having an adjectival modifier, the cognate accusative can be accompanied by a numeral or other quantifier. In this formation, the semantic interpretation is normally the number of times that the action
took place. In all cases, the cognate noun can be replaced by the word *sàu*, which is the normal means of expressing ‘times’. Examples:

*taa maàree shì maarii goomà*
*she slapped him slapping 10*
‘She slapped him 10 times.’

= *taa màaree shì sàu goomà* (lit. she slapped him times ten)

*yaa feekè fensiîri fiikàa ukù*
*he sharpened pencil sharpening 3*
‘He sharpened the pencil 3 times.’

*mun bugàa musù wayàa bugùu hudu*
*we beat to.them wire beating 4*
‘We telephoned them 4 times.’

*taa gwadà tàakàlmii gwajìi hudu*
*she tested shoes test(ing) 4*
‘She tried on the shoes 4 times.’

*mun zaunàa dà shìi zamaa ukù*
*we sat with him sitting 3*
‘We lived together 3 times.’

*matsöoràcii zài mutù mutuwàa mài yawàa*
*coward will.he die death with many*
‘A coward will die many deaths.’

In principle, there is no reason why the cognate noun cannot occur with both a modifier and a numeral, e.g.,

*macìijii yaa sàaree sù múmmuunan saaraa ukù*
*snake he slash them horrible.L slashing 3*
‘The snake bit them seriously 3 times.’

*yaa kaayař dà Bàlaa kaayàřwaa bakwái na wulaakancii*
*he threw Bala throwing 7 of humiliation*
‘Bala was thrown down 7 times in a humiliating way.’

The verbal noun that appears in the cognate accusative phrase is not limited to any particular morphological type. Verbs that have corresponding derivational verbal nouns (more or less equal to the “secondary verbal nouns” of other scholars) tend to use them, see (a); but other verbal noun
types are also common. Grade 5 “efferential” verbs, for example, take weak inflectional verbal nouns (the so-called wa-verbal nouns, as their cognate nouns, see (b), whereas the cognate verbal nouns of monoverbs, irregular verbs, grade 3 verbs, and some other verbs are morphologically non-wa strong inflectional verbal nouns, see (c).

(a) taa zàagee shì zaagìi na baatà hankàlii
    she insulted him insulting of spoil sense
    ‘She hurled gross insults on him.’

    yaa dòokee shì duukàa na rashìn hankàlii
    he beat him beating of lack.of sense
    ‘He beat him severely.’

    yaa yàbee mú yàboo na ƙaryaa
    he praised us praise of lying
    ‘He praised us insincerely.’

    an kashèe shì muugùn kisàa
    one killed him horrible killing
    ‘He was killed violently.’

    Muusaa yaa dàuru dàurìn kàawoo wuƙaa
    Musa he was-tied tying.of bring knife
    ‘Musa is tied up very well
     (hands and feet like a ram to be slaughtered)’

(b) yaa tsoorataɽ dà suu tsooratàrwaaw mài ban tsòoroo
    he frightened them frightening with giving.L fear
    ‘He frightened them beyond description.’

    yaa sai dà mootàrʃà sayârwaaw ta tiilàs
    he sell car.of.his selling of perforce
    ‘He was forced into selling his car.’

(c) yaa ci àbinci muugùn ci irìn na hàrám
    he ate food evil eating type.the of forbidden
    ‘He ate the food horribly/maliciously.’

    naa gan kà ganii na kwarai
    I saw you seeing of very
    ‘I got a good look at you.’
Audù yaa shàhařà shàhařàà sànnàniyyàa
Audu he is-famous fame known.fem
‘Audu is extremely well known / overwhelmingly popular.’

jirgin samà yaa sàuka sàukaà mài ban màamaakìi
plane.of sky he alight alighting with giving.L amazement
‘The plane landed in an amazing way.’

jirgin samà yaa taashì taashii shìdà
plane.of sky he arise arising 6
‘The plane took off 6 times.’

sun caashè hatsii muugìwař càasaa
they thresh grain evil.L threshing
‘They threshed the grain maliciously.’

The typical contrast in cognate accusative constructions is between the verb (which has normal inflectional and conjugational properties of verbs) and the corresponding verbal or deverbal noun (which has normal nominal properties such as case and gender). For example, in the sentence sun kookàà kuukaa mài ban tàusàyiī ‘They cried pitifully’, kookàà is an intransitive verb belonging to the grade 1 morphological class, whereas kuukaa is a verbal noun with masculine gender. However, in certain syntactic environments in Hausa, most notably in imperfective tense/aspects, finite verbs in some classes are replaced by non-finite verbal noun forms, cf. mun zoo ‘We came’ (finite verb zoo), vs. munàa zuwàa ‘We are coming’ (verbal noun zuwàa). Since the erstwhile verb in the verb slot may appear as a verbal noun, one finds cognate accusative constructions in which both related forms are nominal, often being identical. Examples:

sunàà kuukaa kuukaa mài ban tàusàyiī
‘They are crying pitifully.’

yanàà tsayàawaa tsayin dakàa
‘He is standing firmly in his resolve.’

anàà wankìn kaayaa wankìi na gaskìyyàa
‘They wash clothes properly.’

yanàà duukàntà duukàa na rashìn hankàlii
‘He is beating her mercilessly.’

tanàà zaagìn mijìntà zaagìi na baatà hankàlii
‘She is hurling gross insults on her husband.’
yanàa sàyen hatsii sàyen gaskiyaa
‘He is buying grain at an honest price.’

In the examples so far, the cognate accusative served to elaborate on or specify the nature of the action of the verb. The cognate accusative can also function contrastively. This can be indicated either by inserting àmmaa ‘but’ before the cognate accusative phrase and/or by negating it.

yanàa yàbontà àmmaa yàbon karyaa
he.is praising.L her but praise.of lying
‘He is praising her insincerely.’

munàa kòoyon Tuuńancii àmmaa kòoyon gaggawaa
we.are learning.L English but learning.of haste
‘We are learning English but in a rushed manner.’

sun kwaana à gidân àmmaa kwaanan zàune
they.spent-night at house.the but spending-night.of seated
‘They spent the night at the house without sleeping.’

naa san Bàlaa bàa sanìn shaanuu ba
I know Bala neg knowledge.of cows neg
‘I know Bala very well (i.e., not casually ).’

Audù yaa shaa ruwaa àmmaa bàa shàn hàukaa ba
Audu he drank water but neg drinking.of madness neg
‘Audu drank water but not gulping it down selfishly.’

2. The second construction type in Hausa that employs a “cognate accusative” consists of a verb followed by a direct object made up of the genitive linker na/ta plus a cognate verbal noun, e.g., sun sàyi na sàyee ‘They bought the ones to be bought (and left the others)’ (lit. they bought of buying). The semantic thrust of this construction is that the things or people in question (represented by the cognate accusative) constitute the set affected by the verb as opposed to those that are not. This construction requires that the verb take an object, i.e., it must be transitive or prepositional; it cannot be strictly intransitive nor passive. As with the cognate accusative construction described above, the cognate verbal noun is not restricted as to any particular morphological type. Also, as with the previous construction, the erstwhile verb in the syntactic verb slot may appear as a verbal noun form, thereby producing a sequence of two, often identical, verbal nouns. Examples:
sun baṛ na barii (lit. they left of leaving)
‘They left those that had to be left
(e.g., injured soldiers by a retreating army).’

sun haṛbe na haṛbèewaa (lit. they shot of shooting)
‘They shot dead the ones who were supposed to be shot.’

sun sòoki na suukàa (lit. they criticized of criticizing)
‘They criticized those who deserved to be criticized.’

sunàa suukàn na suukàa (lit. they are criticizing. L of criticizing)
‘They are criticizing those who deserved to be criticized.’

sun zàabi na zàabee (lit. they chose of choosing)
‘They chose those available to be chosen.’

sun àa zaabin na zàabee (lit. they are choosing. L of choosing)
‘They are choosing those available to be chosen.’

an kyaalè na kyaalèewaa (lit. one ignored of ignoring)
‘They ignored what could/should be ignored.’

sun ci na ci (lit. they ate of eating)
‘They ate the edibles.’

sunàa cin na ci (lit. they are eating. L of eating)
‘They are eating the edibles.’

mun tsooratař dà na tsooratāřwaa (lit. we frightened of frightening)
‘We frightened the ones subject to fright.’

sun tsaamè na tsàamaa (= sun tsaamè na tsaamèewaa)
they picked-out of picking-out
‘They picked out the ones to be taken out.’

sun waarè na waarrêewaa (lit. they separated of separating)
‘They separated the ones to be separated.’

The linker plus cognate verbal noun represents a noun phrase with a missing but understood head, e.g., [ø na waarrêewaa], where the ø stands for the things or animals or people to be separated. Since the understood head is semantically plural, the linker is usually na rather than ta. However, since singular nouns in Hausa may be, and often are, used in a plural or
generic sense, the feminine linker *ta* will appear if the understood referent has feminine gender, e.g.,

\[ \text{gyàdař Ràbo, mun caasà ta caasàawaa; mun zubà ràgoowàř à rùmbunsà} \]

peanut(s).of Rabo, we shelled of shelling; we poured leftover.the in bin.of.his

‘As for Rabo’s peanuts, we shelled the ones to be shelled; we put what was left in his bin.’

\[ (àyàbà), an sayàř dà ta sayàřwaa; an koomàa dà sauraa cikin gaařeeji \]

(bananas), one sold of selling; one returned with remainder in garage

‘(Bananas), one sold the ones for sale; one put the rest back in the garage.’

3. Hausa has two cognate accusative constructions represented by sentences such as (a) *taa yàbi yaaròo yàboo na karyaa* ‘She praised the boy insincerely’ (lit. she praised boy praise of lying), and (b) *taa yàbi na yàboo* ‘She praised those deserving praise’ (lit. she praised of praise). Both of these sentence types are considered commonplace by native Hausa speakers. Although these constructions—at least the first—are familiar to most Hausaists, they have on the whole been neglected in descriptive as well as pedagogical grammars of the language. The purpose of this paper is to rectify that omission by providing an explicit sketch of the “cognate accusative” in Hausa.

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