

Deep adjectival syncretisms in Dogon
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1. study of adjectives
 - universal as a stem-class? (Dixon, Croft, Baker)
 - range of senses (minimal, maximal)
2. cognitive study of metaphorical extensions
 - Lakoff on English *hot*
3. extension vs. deep syncretism
 - extension: basic sense (concrete), figurative extensions (concrete/abstract)
 - hot* : basic sense = high temperature
 - extended: *hot (spicy) sauce, hot (sexy) chick, hot (important & breaking) news*
 - extensions basically metonymic (*Metonyms We Live By ??*)
 - deep syncretism: X is the basic term for two concepts in different domains
 - hard to find a good example of this in English, etc.
4. deep syncretisms, and some nearly so (data from Dogon lgs, plus Hombori Songhay)
 - both poles syncretic
 - 'hot/cold' (temperature) = 'fast/slow' (speed)
 - mainly just one pole syncretic
 - 'sweet' (taste) = 'sharp' (sharpness)
 - 'hard/(soft)' (hardness) = 'dry/(wet)' (wetness)
 - brief mention
 - 'red' = 'hot'
5. 'hot/cold' = 'fast/slow'
 - 'fast/slow' focally denotes speediness (person, animal), rapid completion (work[er]), or quick reaction (as in 'fast-handed' = 'quick to get into fights')
 - 'hot/cold' focally denotes temperature of e.g. water

'hot'	'fast'	'cold'	'slow'	language
dwěỹ ⁿ -	dwěỹ ⁿ -	yégèlè-	pèjí-	Najamba
ógĩ	ógĩ	támĩ	támĩ	Nanga
ógù	ógù	tôm	tôm	Jamsay
ôw	ôw	tâm	tâm	Beni
kònn-ò	tàr-ò	yèyn-ò	yèyn-ò	Hombori

6. notes on ‘hot/cold’, ‘fast/slow’

intermediate terms

‘lukewarm’ (e.g. Jamsay búgàm-búgàm), mainly for liquids

no simple term for intermediate speed (‘half-fast’ ??)

intensifying adverbials

Jamsay táwtáw ‘very fast’ = ‘very hot’, cèrⁿénéné ‘very cold (water)’ = ‘very moist (earth)’ = ‘very slow’ = ‘very heavy’

Hombori búttú ‘very slow-moving (donkey)’, pejorative term

extensions:

‘hot’ or ‘hot/fast’ extended to:

‘painful (e.g. injection)’ [Najamba]

‘grave (illness)’ [Nanga]

‘trouble (tempers) flaring’ [Nanga, Jamsay, Beni]

verb ‘boil’ extended to:

‘grave (illness)’ [Najamba]

‘trouble (squabbles) flaring’ [Najamba]

‘hard (work, without a break)’ [Najamba]

‘cold’ or ‘cold/slow’ extended to:

‘calm (village, e.g. at 3AM or after a death)’ [Beni]

native explanations for ‘hot/cold’ = ‘fast/slow’

a) running hard (or being sick) makes one sweat (feel hot)

b) rapid movement resembles restless activity of fire

c) slowness/stillness associated with sleep (as is hardening of e.g. butter)

7. ‘sweet’ = ‘sharp’

‘sweet’ an abbreviation for ‘delicious, good-tasting’

‘sharp’ refers to knife and hoe blades (not to points)

‘sweet’	‘sharp’	‘bitter’	‘blunt’	language
èlí-	èlí-	gàlí-	dùmbé	Najamba
éřì	éřì	gáří	nǎ:-dúmbĩ	Nanga (nǎ: ‘mouth’)
éřù	éřù	jé:řù	dũm	Jamsay
éřim	éřim	gářim	dùmbú	Beni
kà:n-ò	kà:n-ò	hòtt-ò	hòtt-ò lùt-ò (‘deaf’)	Hombori

8. notes on ‘sweet(/bitter)’, ‘sharp(/blunt)’

‘sweet’ in sensory contexts has variable range

wide range: ‘good-tasting/-smelling’ (tea, cream of millet, fruits, water, meat)

narrow range: ‘sweet’ (tea, cream of millet, fruit) [Najamba]

‘sweet’ bounded in all languages by term for ‘good, pretty’ with visual and abstract-evaluative senses, and esp. in Najamba also by terms for ‘tasty (meat, milk, peanuts)’ emphasizing texture (tenderness of meat), oiliness, etc.

antonyms of ‘sweet’: negative ‘not sweet’ very common, alongside more concrete terms for ‘bitter/pungent/salty’ and ‘sour (acidic)’; however, Hombori hòtt-ò ‘bitter’ is the regular antonym of ‘sweet’

extensions

‘sweet/sharp’ → ‘fun (person)’ [Nanga, Jamsay], ‘nice (person)’ [Najamba], ‘cute (sexy) (girl)’ [Hombori], ‘harmonious (household)’ [Hombori]

‘bitter/blunt’ → ‘painfully hot (sun)’ and ‘painful (injection)’ [Hombori]

native explanations for ‘sweet/(bitter)’ = ‘sharp/(blunt)’

most informants baffled; Jamsay informant suggests ‘sweet’ derived from ‘sharp’ based on metaphor of cutting (cf. proverb ‘truth cuts through lies’)

9. ‘hard(/soft)’ = ‘dry(/wet)’

‘hard’ denotes ‘internally solid, hard to break’ (stone, metal, wood), also ‘firm (e.g. sand one day after a rain) and ‘tough (meat)’

‘soft’ has a wide range ‘yielding, tender, brittle, supple’ except in Nanga
‘dry’ and ‘wet’ focally denote moisture levels

‘hard’	‘dry’	‘brittle’ ‘yielding’	‘supple’	‘soft&moist’ (= ‘mushy’)	‘wet’	language
măy- dɛŋ	màyô: măy ⁿ	bùrí- yòrú	—	—	tèmbô: tɛm	Najamba Jamsay
mâw ⁿ	mă:	yòrúw	—	—	—	Beni
már ⁿ i, ɛ:	mă:	búrí yòrí	bùté	òróndò	témbíy-yé	Nanga
m(b)ăw	măy ⁿ	òrí⇒	òlú	òlú	òlú	Tabi
măw ⁿ	măw ⁿ	bùrúm	—	òrúm	òrúm	Walo
măy ⁿ	măy ⁿ	yòrú	—	òrú	òrú témbí’yé’sà	Pergué
kò:g-ò	kò:g-ò	bà:n-ò	—	—	tà:y-ò	Hombori

many extensions to humans mediated by bahuvrihi compounds (cf. *hard-headed*, *tight-fisted*)

10. notes on ‘hard/soft’, ‘dry/wet’

‘hard’ extends to humans as

‘wiry, solidly built but short and thin’ (Jamsay, Hombori)

‘in good physical shape’ (Nanga)

‘energetic (person)’ (Najamba, Beni)

‘stingy (e.g. often refusing requests)’ (Najamba, Beni)

Nanga divides ‘soft’ into

búrí ‘soft, breakable (wood, rock), soft (sand)’

yòrí ‘soft, pliable (metal), soft (body, skin)’, also ‘physically weak (person)’

bùté ‘supple (goatskin)’

11. further links between ‘hard/soft’ and ‘dry/wet’

- a. ‘soft and moist’ (i.e. ‘mushy’) category (Jamsay, Nanga), merging with ‘wet’ (Beni)
- b. ‘dry’ often used in all languages in the sense ‘stiffened (by drying)’
 ‘dry’ extended to humans as ‘wasting away (*dépérissant*)’ (Najamba, Nanga) or ‘wiry’ (Jamsay)
 ‘wet’ extends to ‘fresh (grass), green (wood)’ (Tabi, Beni, Jamsay, Pergué, Nanga, Walo),
 but not in Najamba where e.g. ‘fresh (grass)’ = ‘raw (meat), unripe (fruit)’
 intermediate category ‘half-dry, moist’: Pergué sò:lú, Najamba òmó: (also ‘green [wood]’), also verb ‘(e.g. washed clothing) be half-dry’

12. ‘red’

basic sense ‘red, orange, brown’ expressed by stable cognate set in Dogon

bán, bārⁿí, bārⁿú, bārⁿáyⁿ etc. < *ban(i)

‘hot dry season (e.g. April-early June)’ < *‘sun-red(ness)’, ‘beat (drums)’ < *‘red(ness)’ (?)

	‘hot season’	‘be hot season’ (subj in parentheses)	‘beat drum’	‘anger’ (‘heart-...’)	‘red(ness)’	
a.	nòŋ-bár ⁿ à ùsìyè-bár ⁿ à	(nòŋ) (ùsìyè)	bà ^r nú bà ^r ná	bà ^r nú bà ^r ná	bà ^r nú bà ^r ná	Tabi Nanga
b.	nĩ-bár ⁿ á [nĩ-nĩ:]-bár ⁿ á	(nĩ:) (nĩ:)	bà ^r ná bà ^r ná	bà ^r ná bà ^r ná	bà ⁿ à’r ⁿ á bà ⁿ à’r ⁿ á	Jamsay Pergué
c.	ùsù-bór ⁿ ɔ ùsù-bór ⁿ ɔ	ùsú ùsú	bà ^r nɔ bà ^r nɔ	bà ^r ná bà ^r ná	bà ^r ná bà ^r ná	Beni Walo
d.	ŋgín	(ŋgín)	băn băn	—	bà ⁿ á’lí’yé	Najamba

further connection: ‘arrow poison’ or ‘medicinal poison to stimulate hunting dogs’

bà^rná (Tabi, Jamsay, Nanga) or bà:rⁿá (Pergué)

semantic relationships

*‘red’ → ‘hot dry season’
 ‘anger’ (hot?)
 ‘beat drums’ (hot?)

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