The Diversity of Maa (Nilotic) Adverbs:
Speed, Time, Modality, Intensity and Nominal-Tense/Aspect

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Maa linguistic varieties (Maasai, Parakuyo, Chamus, Samburu, among others), of the Eastern Nilotic family (Nilo-Saharan phylum), have words which can modify a predicate or predication and have the function of what cross-linguistically are called adverbs. While these words can be considered a single class due to this shared function and distribution, there are nevertheless morphosyntactic and usage distinctions. This is partly due to disparate historical origins, but also to semantics and different typical collocations. Among other distinctions, some adverbs can function as nominal tense/aspect markers within a determined nominal phrase (DP). Though the origins of all adverbs cannot be traced, the paper documents sources in oblique prepositional phrases, relational nouns, adjectives, relative clauses, and perhaps infinitive verbs, involving a wide range of lexical roots, such as ‘little’, ‘paint, mark’, ‘be abundant (with grass), be generous’, and others. Some synchronic adverbs do not have evident sources in other word classes, including the most frequently used word for ‘previously, before’, and the modal adverb ‘probably not, unlikely’ which is also an attenuative adverb. Maa adjectives and nouns largely overlap in their morphosyntax, but the ability to be modified by certain adverbs distinguishes them.

Keywords: lexicalisation, grammaticalisation, attenuation, intensification, nominal tense

1. Introduction

A source of enduring interest is how the human mind creatively stretches or adapts lexemes for new functions, both lexical and grammatical. The cognitive processes involved include metaphor, metonymy, semantic broadening, etc., sometimes followed by morphosyntactic and phonological adjustments (Meillet 1912; Lehmann 1982; Heine and Reh 1984; Matisoff 1991, among many others). Such processes have given rise to a disparate set of adverbs in Maa varieties (Maasai, Arusha, Parakuyo, Chamus, Samburu, and others), of the Eastern Nilotic family (Nilo-Saharan phylum). One challenge in identifying nearly any part-of-speech category is that items which participate in one function may have only partially overlapping distributional or morphosyntactic properties. Maa adverbs are no exception. Partially differing morphosyntactic properties may exist due to disparate origins, or to the fact that even items which had structurally identical morphosyntax at one point may have different discourse usage patterns and collocational frequencies, leading to divergence.

This paper looks at Maa items which modify predicates and/or predications but which are not auxiliary or lexical verbs (i.e. they are not serial-verb like in function). Hence, they have the function of what cross-linguistically are called adverbs. While Maa adverbs can be considered a single class due to this shared function, they nevertheless display some morphosyntactic distinctions. Many Maa adverbs can be considered lexical even when they have undergone semantic

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1 See Bolinger (1980) for an insightful study of English modal auxiliaries in this regard.
shifts from their source; others verge on grammatical functions. Some adverbs can be used as nominal tense/aspect/modality markers within DPs. I will not aim to determine whether a given adverb (or particular use) is more grammatical versus lexical, as this is clearly a cline. The origins of all adverbs cannot be traced, but sources include oblique prepositional phrase complexes, relational nouns, adjectives, relative clauses, and possibly infinitive verbs. In addition to modifying predicates and predication, some Maa adverbs can also modify adjectives. In fact, the ability to be modified by adverbs distinguishes adjectives from nouns, which otherwise largely overlap in morphosyntax.

The study is based on a corpus of 125 texts, elicited data, and dictionary materials. The paper is organized as follows. Section 2 introduces selected properties of Maa major parts of speech, in particular verbs, those that express property concepts (adjectives and stative verbs), and nouns. Subsequent sections are organized according to approximate semantic type of adverb: locative (Section 3), speed and manner (Section 4), lexical temporal adverbs or adverb expressions (Section 5), semantically broader temporal adverbs (Section 5), and modality, degree, and intensity adverbs (Section 7). Section 7 especially elaborates on penyɔ́, olɛ́ŋ and nalɛ́ŋ, which are semantically coherent in the sense that penyɔ́ can attenuate property-concept terms, while olɛ́ŋ and nalɛ́ŋ can intensify them; but they almost certainly have disparate origins and modernly have asymmetric frequency in text. Section 8 addresses nominal aspect/tense uses. Throughout, I comment on historical sources of adverbs, though a complete analysis of origins cannot be undertaken here and the sources of many are unknown. Section 9 concludes the paper.

2. Background on Maa parts of speech

As background for discussing adverbs, this section briefly describes major properties of (lexical) verbs versus adjectives/nouns. Maa verbs, including many but not all auxiliaries, inflect for person or carry an infinitive prefix. Lexical verbs have their own lexical meaning and arguments. In (1), I consider the infinitive forms aás ‘to do’ and aɪsʊ́m ‘to study, read’ to be verbs – not adverbs, as they still have their lexical meaning even though they elaborate different aspects of a single event, much like verbs would within a serial verb construction (Hamaya 1993); I will call this pattern an infinitive-serial construction. Tɔ́n, on the other hand, could mean either literal ‘sit’ or function as a ‘continuous aspect’ auxiliary in this context.2

(1) n-i-t* ŋ̃ i-y* i-é a-ás a-ɪsʊ́m bɪbli a polepole CN1-2-sit 2SG.NOM INF.SG-do INF.SG-read bible slowly
‘you sit/continue to read the Bible slowly’ (lit. ‘you sit to do to read the Bible slowly’)
(Camus1.016a)

Tucker and Mpaayei (1955) and Schneider (1998) show that a number of Maa property-concept terms are lexicalized as stative verbs. This is true for pr(i)f ‘be brave, be sharp (pointed)’ and bɛ́bɛ́k ‘be light, be flimsy’. In (2) and (3), these roots are inflected for person by a prefix and for main verb status by tone (this is not glossed).

2 This paper uses a modified IPA-based orthography, where <y> = /j/ and <j> = /dʒ/. An accute accent marks High tone, Low tone is unmarked, a circumflex marks Falling tone, and a raised arrow indicates Downstep High. Codes in parentheses at the end of free translations of examples indicate line numbers from texts; other examples are from elicitation. Examples reflect the Maasai (Southern Kenya/Northern Tanzania) variety of Maa unless otherwise specified.
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(2) óre élé murrani, náa k=è-p+i apá olēŋ
dscn this.m.nom warrior.m.nom it.is CN2=3-be.brave before very
‘Now this warrior, he was very brave’ (arkinoi.002)

(3) c-bebék cná mábāti
3-be.light this.f.nom corrugated.iron.sheet.nom
‘This iron (roofing) sheet is light/flimsy.’

With rare exception, verbs can inflect for perfect(ive) aspect.³ Pr(j) ‘be brave/sharp’ and bebék ‘be light/flimsy’ can also inflect for perfect(ive) aspect. With stative verbs, the perfect(ive) form yields an inchoative sense, seen in (4).

(4) á-tí-pij-a
1SG-PF-be.brave-PF
‘I became brave.’

Stative and active verbs must take relative clause morphology to modify nouns. For instance, if pt(j) ‘be brave/sharp’ and bebék ‘be light/flimsy’ are to be used as nominal modifiers, then relative clause prefixes (or prefix complexes) must occur that vary for gender and number of the modified item, as in (5) and (6).

(5) ɔl=tʊŋ áni ϩ-pí
MSG=person REL.M.SG-be.brave
‘a/the person who is brave’

(6) é-ishóp-ó en=kilá ná-bebék amǒ k=é-irówua táatá
3-wear-PF FSG=cloth REL.F.SG-be.flimsy because CN2=3-be.hot today
‘She has put on a flimsy cloth because it is hot today.’

What we might initially consider to be nouns vary for case (nominative versus unmarked absolute) and number (Tucker and Mpaayei 1955). Example (7) shows the full set of forms for ‘kraal’.

(7) em=bɔɔ ‘kraal’ (singular, absolute case)
em=bɔ ‘kraal’ (singular, nominative case)
m=bóótíé ‘kraals’ (plural, absolute case)
m=booíté ‘kraals’ (plural, nominative case)

However, there are challenges in identifying a syntactic category of nouns as opposed to adjectives. Both vary for case and number. Further, the stems may be used either to modify lexical arguments of verbs and referring forms, or they may stand as arguments of verbs and referring forms with no morphological change other than just putting a determiner (a gender+number proclitic or a demonstrative) before the stem (Schneider 1998; Shirtz and Payne 2013; Payne 2020). To see this,

³ A few verbs apparently lack perfect(ive) counterparts, including tii ‘be at’ and ata ‘have’. Schneider (1998) shows there is some variation in the ability of non-verb property-concept terms (“adjectives”) to inflect for aspect (and causative morphology and imperative affixation), but this does not detract from the observation that nearly all verbs by other criteria can inflect for perfect(ive) aspect.
consider the lexemes sapok ‘big’ and botor ‘senior’ in (8) – (12). The tone variations on botor and sapok in (8) – (12) mark case differences.4 In (8) – (10) these lexemes modify argument and referring forms with no additional (e.g. relative clause) morphology, and hence function like adjectives.

(8) n-é-tum kona kéra s=íná sapok olęŋ
CN1-3-get these.F.NOM children.NOM MSG=poverty big very
‘These children get a lot of poverty.’ (Arusha-enkongu 2.10)

(9) óre ená titó botór
DCSN this.NOM girl.NOM senior.NOM
‘now this older girl’ (divorce.008)

(10) en=tásat bótór
FSG=elder.person first/senior
‘the first (i.e. who has seniority) elderly wife’

But in (11) and (12), sapok and botor function as argument/referring forms simply by taking a determiner.

(11) m-ci-táa táatá nnyé e=sapók
OPT-3-become.SBJV now 3SG FSG=big.NOM
‘so that now the big one will become it’ (i.e. so it will become the one that is better known) (embul.089)

(12) k=é-ti*i em=botór
CN2=3-be.at FSG=first/senior.NOM
‘The senior one is there.’ (Camus2.123b)

Whether as modifiers or as argument/referring forms, the plural stems of ‘big’ would be sapúk*í(n) in the absolute case and sápuki(n) in the nominative. The plural stems of ‘senior’ would be botóro(k) in the absolute case and bótoro(k) in the nominative. Case and number variation also occur on most other elements of DPs including demonstratives, pronouns, possessive particles, and some relative clause prefixes (depending on tone properties of the relativized verb). For instance, in contrast to the nominative forms of ‘these (feminine)’ and ‘children’ in (8) , the absolute forms would be konä and kéra. The nominative counterpart to the absolute 3rd singular pronoun in (11) would be ninye. In contrast with all these elements, Maa verb stems, both stative and active, do not display case, with rare exception do not vary for number, nor can they take determiners (unless they are relativized). We conclude that property-concept stems with morphosyntactic properties like those of pit(j) and bebek are lexicalized as verbs, while property-concept terms like sapok ‘big’ and bótör ‘senior/seniority’ have lexicalized as what (for the moment) we can call an “adjective/noun”. The hedge “adjective/noun” is used because, as noted just above, all that is required to turn an “adjective” into a “noun” is to put a determiner before the stem; and vice-versa, many “nouns” can be used in modifying function just by omitting a determiner. Nevertheless, in subsequent sections we will see

4 Nouns/adjectives fall into myriad tone classes for case (Tucker and Mpaayei 1955). The system is “marked nominative” (König 2008), in which subject DPs after the verb and after the oblique preposition te are nominative (NOM). (Elements of) DPs in most – though not all – other syntactic functions are in the absolute (unglossed) form, including subjects before the verb (except those following conjunctions which historically derive from verbs).
that certain adverbs can modify some “adjectives/nouns” but not others; hence, adverbs differentiate a class of adjectives from nouns.

With this brief background on verbs versus noun/adjectives, we turn to various semantic subgroups of adverbs. I briefly comment on locative and speed adverbs, and then focus the discussion around temporal, modal, and degree adverbs.

3. Locative adverbs

Maa relational nouns are (erstwhile) noun forms that do not carry determiners and which indicate locational, spatial, temporal, and other relations. Relational nouns can still vary for case, as seen by dokóya ‘ahead, front’ versus te dokóya ‘at the front/before’ (from en=dokóya ‘head’ [of animate being]). They sometimes function akin to what are called locative adverbs in other languages, such as áŋ ‘home’ in (13), bóó ‘outside’ in (14) from ‘kraal’, shómáta ‘above, over’ from ‘summit, heaven’, abór*i ‘down(ward)’ from ‘lower side, bottom’, etc. When functioning as bare adverbs (without te) they do not vary for case (or number), but correspond to the absolute form of the noun. Compare bóó ‘outside’ in (14) with the forms for ‘kraal’ in (7) above.

I will have little more to say in this paper about locational adverbs (nor do I discuss locational demonstratives or locational interrogative words, which are pronominal).

4. Adverbs of speed and manner

The concept of fast speed can be expressed by verbs such as sioki ‘do quickly, do early, do easily’. I consider these to be verbs which can combine with other verbs in the type of infinitive -serial construction seen in (1) above. Compare the use of sioki in (15), where it is the only verb, with (16) where it is in an infinitive-serial construction.

Fast speed can also be expressed by an ideophone construction involving the verb jo ‘say’. In (17), it is understood that the man ran away quickly, though there is no verb for ‘run’. I consider the SAY+IDEOPHONE pattern to be a specific construction which does not involve adverbs.
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(17) n-é-jó ol=tását ŋám
CN1-3-say MSG=elder.NOM IDEO
‘The elderly man ran away.’ (lit. ‘The elderly man said “ŋám”.’) (ilmurran.073)

Table 1 lists Maa adverbial forms for ‘slowly’. These adverbs also have senses in the domain of manner and degree. The ‘slowly’ terms derive from the singular and plural adjectival property-concept stems kɪ́t and kʊ́tɪ́tɪ́ (k) ‘small, little (size, amount)’.

Table 1. Speed and manner adverbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Variants</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>akití</td>
<td>a kití, akíní (Samburu) ‘slowly, gently, quietly; short time’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>áákótítí</td>
<td>á á kótítí ‘slowly, little-by-little’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These adverbs can modify the predicate or an entire predication.

(18) ēn-chôm taá akití, ltílo ol=owuarú
PL.IMP-go.SBJV EMPH slowly EXIST MSG=beast.of.prey
‘Go slowly, there is a beast of prey (e.g. lion, enemy).’ (errancoi.031)

(19) kɪ-lâk r=sayí́ta m-áákótítí
1PL-pay.PL FPL=payments OPT-slowly
‘We will pay the bride wealth little-by-little (in installments).’ (Wuasinkishu Maa)

Interestingly, in their adverbial function, the tone patterns on the ‘slowly’ stems correspond to the nominative adjectival stems; compare the adverb akití with the nominative and absolute adjective stems in (20) – (21), and áákótítí with the nominative and absolute stems in (22) – (23).

(20) òre áá kúmok náá k=é-tí+i ēn=kití wúéji ...
DSCN be many COP CN2=3-be.at PLACE.SG=small.NOM place.NOM
‘Now being many (clans), there is a little place…’ (enkashe.035)

(21) n-é-jìŋ ēn=kití gúmótó
CN1-3-enter FSG=small hole
‘She entered a small hole.’ (elephare.030b)

(22) ē-girá m=kerâ kóttíí áa-irrug-o
3-PROG FPL=children.NOM small.PL.NOM INF.PL=bend-NPF.MID
‘The small children are bending down.’

(23) n-é-l*ó a-iŋuaá koná kotí́tí kéra
CN1-3-go.SG INF.SG=leave these.F small.PL children
‘It went leaving these small children.’

‘Slowly’ in (19) carries the optative prefix m-, which can occur on verbs. Indeed, we might hypothesize that áákótítí developed from áá ‘be’ plus the plural of ‘small’. This is the construction found in (20) with áá kúmok ‘be many’. However, it is unknown why the nominative melody of ‘small (plural)’ would surface in áákótítí if BE+ADJECTIVE is the constructional source of the plural

5 Polepole ‘slowly’ in (1) above is a code-switch into Swahili.
adverb, since predicate complements occur in absolute melodies: in (20), *kúmok* is the absolute of ‘many’ (the nominative would be *kumók*). It is also not evident what the *a*- in the singular *akìtì* might be. *Akìtì* does not appear to be formed from the singular infinitive *a-* plus singular ‘small’ as the singular infinitive would be expected to be */akìtì*.

5. Lexical temporal adverbs

We now turn to temporal adverbs. Table 2 lists selected expressions which have fairly specific temporal meaning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Variants</th>
<th>Corpus Instances</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>áik*átá</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>‘never, ever’ (lit. ‘another time’)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>káta</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>‘time, period, instance’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>likuí</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>‘day-before-yesterday, alternate day, distal past’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kékún</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nólé</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>‘yesterday’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tááísère, tááísère (Samburu)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>‘tomorrow’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tááta</td>
<td>581</td>
<td>‘today, nowadays; at this point’ (temporally or in flow of ideas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tãdekenyá, tãdekenyá (Wuasinkishu)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>‘(in) early morning light’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tára</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>‘late evening’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>téípa</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>‘(in) late afternoon, early evening’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tèsirán, tèsirán (Purko)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>‘(at) dawn’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These adverbs come from a variety of constructional sources. *Likuí kékún* ‘day-before-yesterday, alternate day, distal past’ follows a DEMONSTRATIVE+NOUN constructional pattern.6 *Kékún* ‘(alternate) day’ involves a semantic shift from *ol=kékún* ‘river bank, side of valley’. *Kát(á)* patterns like relational nouns in not taking a gender+number proclitic, though it can still take modifiers, as in (24).

(24) e-tó-ósh-ó ɛn=kitéŋ kát nabó.
3-PF-hit-PF FSG=bovine time one.F
‘He/she hit the cow one time (once).’ (Wuasinkishu Maa)

In adverbial function, the types of expressions in Table 2 do not show case alternations. Adverbial *kát(á)* ‘time’, which comes from a relational noun, has the absolute melody of the corresponding noun. In contrast, temporal expressions or words that historically involve *te* would have an invariant tone pattern corresponding to the nominative of whatever (relational) noun or other element is part of the expression. This is because *te* governs the nominative case form (Tucker and Mpaayei 1955). Contrast the absolute form *síran* ‘morning, earliest light of dawn’ with the tone pattern in *tesirán* ‘(at) dawn’, seen in the variant *tasérán* in (25).

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6 This is also a common pattern with *ɔlɔ́ ɔ́ŋ* ‘day’. Various demonstrative and non-demonstrative determiners combine productively with time-related nominal roots.
‘It is at dawn (that) we are moving the cows.’ (Purko of Kajiado Maa)

This adverb contains a nominalization of the verb root sur ‘mark, paint’, which metonymically describes the streaked and colored sky at dawn. It is striking that a number of lexicalized temporal adverbial expressions begin with /t/.

Table 2 adverbs can have scope over the entire predication. In (25) and (26), ‘at dawn’ and ‘in the evening’ are the times when the entire cattle-moving events happen. The situation surrounding (27) is that a girl was promised in marriage to another family but ran away to go to school; so when the man’s family arrives to take the bride home, early the very following morning the younger sister is prepared for marriage in her sister’s place, by being shaved. In (28) a, ‘yesterday’ is when the entire event of ‘I thought something’ (namely, that you might ask me words like these the next day) happened. In (28)b ‘today’ concerns the entire event of ‘you ask me words like these’. However, some Table 2 forms can also have scope just over the predicate notion. For example, (24) expresses one hit, not that there was one occasion when someone hit a cow.

Expressions like those in Table 2 can occur in various positions. When modifying the predicate, they typically occur after, though not necessarily contiguous to the predicate, as seen by comparing (24) and (28) above. Even those which have scope over the entire predication may occur at the end of the predication, as with tâaisére in (29). If before the main predicate, they often co-occur with discourse structuring elements like òre ‘discontinuous’ or nêako in the sense of ‘so, therefore’ (from ‘and it becomes’), seen in (30) and in (26) above.

7 Sana ‘very’ is an instance of code-switching into Swahili.
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(29) n-ɛ́-manɪkɪ ol=mórúo m=kéra táaisére
CN1-3-suddenly.see MSG=old.man.NOM FPL=children tomorrow
‘the following day the man suddenly saw the children’ (olaturoni.029)

(30) n-ɛ́-*ákó őre táata e-pon-ú áa-puo mórúáó, ...
CN1-3-become DSCN now CVB.3-go.PL-VEN INF.PL-go.PL elderhood
‘So now as they come to (reach) elderhood, ...’ (murrano.0120)

Using the oblique preposition te with temporal phrases is a productive way of expressing temporal adverbial concepts. Example (31) has the same lexeme as (absolute case) ká(t)a ‘time’ in (24), but in a non-lexicalized DETERMINER+NOUN PHRASE embedded under te. Here we find the nominative case form katá.

(31) őre ta=ná=katá en=kɔ́p oó Kisónko náa Půrka
DSCN OBL=this.F=time.NOM FSG=land of.PL Kisonko COP Purka
‘Now at this time the Kisonko land is Purka (land)’ (enaidurra.035)

The corpus figures in Table 2 show that, for the most part, even lexicalized temporally-specific expressions do not have particularly high frequency. The obvious exception is táatá ‘today, now’. It can mean the specific ‘day’ period that includes the speaker’s temporal reference point, as in (28)b above; or ‘nowadays’ which encompasses more than a single day. But it very commonly has the function of indicating ‘at this point in time’ or ‘at this point in the development of the speaker’s exposition’. For the sense ‘at this point in time’, consider (32). The situation is that someone is up in a tree urinating, and the anti-hero muses (in a direct quote) about what is wrong with this tree that otherwise does not normally leak. Here táatá does not refer to the time period of roughly ‘a day’, but to a particular time when the anti-hero is musing below the tree.

(32) ámaâ k=é-o táatá élé sháni né-m-é-ô oshî aké?
well! CN2=3-leak now this.NOM tree.NOM CN1-NEG-3-leak normally just
‘Well, (why) does this tree leak now and it does not normally leak?’ (konyek.114)

The use of táatá in (30) above refers to a temporal change-point in the typical Maasai male lifespan and not to a temporal point anchored to the speaker’s time of utterance. In a further extension, táatá functions as a discourse marker to show stages in the speaker’s exposition. In (33), the speaker wraps up a description of how young boys are taught to take care of cows, and then as young men are also taught to care for people in the society. He summarizes this section of his exposition with (33); here táatá refers to a discourse-internal point in the flow of ideas.

(33) nɛ́-ákó táatá e=ránámárɛ ɔ̌ ɨ=tógáná
so now FSG=husbandary of.PL M=people
[endá n-á-idip-á a-to-límu, that.NOM REL.F-1SG-finish-PF INF.SG-TELL.ABOUT
‘So now husbandary of people (is) what I have finished describing.’ (murrano.0144a)

From these examples we see that táatá has broadened semantically beyond literal ‘today’. We now turn to another group of adverbs which can also have temporal meaning, but which are generally broader or less specific to a particular time period in their meaning.
6. Less specific temporal adverbs

Lexical specificity is a matter of degree, but Table 3 lists adverbs with temporal content which are generally less specific to particular time points or periods, compared to Table 2 forms. Some Table 3 adverbs also have modality and information structure functions (Section 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Variants</th>
<th>Corpus Instances</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>adé</td>
<td>adák*é (&lt;adé+aké)</td>
<td>78 ‘later’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ánää aké</td>
<td>ánääaké</td>
<td>9 ‘daily, always’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apá</td>
<td>apá</td>
<td>940 ‘before, former, prior’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dët</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 ‘recently’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duuóó</td>
<td>duóó</td>
<td>981 ‘earlier, previously; aforementioned’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kenyá</td>
<td></td>
<td>60 ‘eventually, someday, distant indefinite future’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naár*‘í</td>
<td></td>
<td>0 ‘recently, long ago’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oshí</td>
<td></td>
<td>251 ‘always, usually, normally’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The corpus frequencies in Table 3 show varying usage profiles, but several are high frequency forms, such as duuóó in (34). This reflects their broader and more grammaticalized tendencies. The other very high-frequency form is apá. Maa has no grammaticalized tense, but in its discourse distribution, apá is close to a grammatical marker of past time.

(34) n-é-*’im iná óítóí n-é’u duuóó e-jo-kin-i
    CN1-3-pass that.F path REL.F-NEG.PF earlier CVB.3-say-DAT-IMPS
    ‘He passed the way that he had earlier not been told (to go).’ (Ilmurran 010b)

Distributionally, oshí ‘usually, normally, always’ is a fairly typical member of this group. Even when modifying the whole predication, it may occur directly before or after a verb, as in (35) – (36); or later in a clause, as in (37) where it occurs between the subject and the object.

(35) iná slág oshí e-te-j-ók-i
    that day always 3-PF-say-PF-IMPS
    ‘that (was the) day they always said…’ (aibartisho.022b)

(36) k=é-iborr oshí in=tápuka ó l=t*épésí
    CN2=3-be.white always FPL=flowers.NOM of.MSG M=acacia.tree
    ‘The flowers of an acacia tree are always white.’

(37) é-juŋ il=áyiok oshí aké in=kishú αó ményc
    3-inherit MPL=boys.NOM always just FPL=cattle of.PL their.father
    ‘Boys always inherit cows from their fathers.’

The sources of these adverbs are generally unknown. Most appear to be old or have old elements in them. Ánää aké is a transparent combination of ‘like’ in the sense of ‘similar to’, plus aké; but aké is quite abstract and its source is unclear (Section 7). Apa has a cognate afi in the related language Lopit (Eastern Nilotic) so it is old as an adverb. Naár*‘í has the appearance of a possible relative clause beginning with the relative complex naá- (plural feminine absolute case form for
The source of *kenyá* ‘eventually, someday, distant future’ seems more transparent. It is likely related to the verb *a-kenyó* ‘to rise (of the sun)’, the noun *énk=akenyá* ‘dawn’, and the Table 2 form *tádekenyá* ‘(in) early morning’, though with clear semantic divergence from these other forms. Compare (27) above with (39). The latter is taken from a description of how children grow up in typical traditional Maasai society. The ‘small’ one refers to the last-born son of the family. The entire text is about children, and the death of a young child’s mother is not presented as something imminent or which will happen at any particular (e.g. early) time of day.

(38) **í-démó náárr⁺i kí-nyá-ítá in=kuluukōk?**
2-remember long.ago 1PL-eat-PROG FPL=soils
‘Do you remember those days that we used to eat soil?’ (Wuasin’kishu Maa)

As the highlighted forms in (40) and (41) show, semantically specific and broader temporal adverbs may co-occur, with each other or with non-temporal adverbs like *doí* (Section 7).

(40) **óre *kenyá* aké peē e-yé en=tását, náa élë kíti**
DSCN eventually just when CVB.3-die FSG=elder COP this.M small
‘Now when the old lady (mother) eventually dies, it is this small one’ (who will be in charge).’
(embul.140-141)

(41) **amó k=é-tó-ish-íé doí dét**
because CN2=3-PF-give.birth-INST.PF indeed recently
‘because she has indeed given birth recently’ (KisonkoRites.0022)

7. **Modality, degree, and intensity adverbs**

We now turn to adverbs which, as a group, roughly express intensity, degree and some modality concepts. These are listed in Table 4. (Some items in Table 4 were included in earlier tables as they also have temporal senses.) *Náají* is listed in Mol (1996) only with the temporal sense ‘recently’, but dominantly occurs with the modality sense ‘possibly’ in the texts.

---

8 The final high-toned *-i* is characteristic of the impersonal suffix. If this is part of the etymology, it would leave just *rr* as a remnant of the unknown verb root.
Table 4. Modality, degree and intensity adverbs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Variants</th>
<th>Corpus Instances</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ajó (Arusha Maa)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>‘almost, nearly’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aké</td>
<td>1636</td>
<td>‘again, still; just, only (contrast)’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other aké combinations:
- aké*yé: 42 ‘just’
- adák*é: 14 ‘later today, just later’
- ánna aké, ánnaaké: 5 ‘daily, always’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Selected Variants</th>
<th>Corpus Instances</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dói toi, déi (Samburu), réi (Laikipia)</td>
<td>524</td>
<td>‘indeed, urgency, certainty, actually’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>katókól tóból</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>‘completely’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>náají</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>‘possibly, maybe, might’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>naléṇ</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>‘very’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oléṇ</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>‘very’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ópeny</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>‘alone, only’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>péṇô péṇo, péṇo</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>‘improbably, slightly; attenuative’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>péṣô</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>‘uselessly, nonsensically, impossible’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pì pìi</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>‘completely, quite’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pit*ó</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>‘absolutely nothing’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sìì</td>
<td>426</td>
<td>‘also, just; indeed’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 7.1 discusses meaning and distribution of these adverbs, elaborating particularly on the attenuative and ‘very’ adverbs. Section 7.2 addresses potential sources of Table 4 adverbs.

7.1. Meaning and distribution of modality, degree and intensity adverbs. Ajó in the sense of ‘almost, nearly’ has a low frequency and may be dialect restricted.

(42) abór*i ajó i-nyik-ákí ẹnk=ọhọkẹ down almost 3-be.close-DAT FSG=stomach ‘down almost/nearly approaching the stomach’ (Arusha-eng’ob23.1)

Aké, dói, and sìì are particularly high-frequency forms. All have what we might call emphatic or intensity functions. (Katóból, oléṇ, and naléṇ are also intensifiers. Differences in degree of intensity, as well as information focus functions among these forms need further exploration.

(43) n-é-*ákó táátá e-ta-gol-ik*i-ó dói iyióók naá aké CN1-3-become now 3-PF-be.hard-DAT-PF indeed us FOCUS still ‘So now, it has indeed troubled us often’ (aibartisho.031a)

(44) óre sìì en=kitojó náa en=ktí ọtés, ktí katóból DSCN indeed FSG=hare COP FSG=small animal small completely ‘and a hare is also/indeed a small animal, very small’ (leohyena.017)
The Diversity of Maa (Nilotic) Adverbs

(45) a. ná*á áré amò á-tá-gór-*é olèŋ
   and DSCN because 1SG-PF-be.hard-INST.PF very
   'and since I was very angry with it [a scorpion],'

b. n-á-ár ma=kátá aké s=m-e-túá,
   CN1-1SG-hit that=time just until=OPT-3-die.PF
   'I immediately (lit. just that time) hit it until it died'

c. n-á-púrd-ú́ pú́rd katú́l
   CN1-1SG-smash-EP-smash completely
   'and I crushed it completely.' (mapk01.048-049)

(46) k=á-l*ö aké
   CN2-1SG-go.SG just
   'I WILL go.' [insisting]

Some Table 4 adverbs extend into modal functions. These include at least aké ‘just, only; contrast’ as in (46), náají ‘possible, maybe, might’ as in (47), and pénьò ‘unlikely, improbably’.

(47) k=á-jo i-náúr-u náají
   CN2=1SG-think 2-be.tired-INCHO possible
   'I think you will/may/might become tired' (enaidurra.125)

As a modifier of an entire predication, pénьò indicates ‘unlikely, improbably’. As a modifier of adjectives and verbs, it has an attenuative function, often translatable as ‘a bit, a little, somewhat’. Attenuation communicates a reduced degree of a quality (Segerer and Treis 2018), or a lower degree of approximation or imprecision regarding the normal interpretation of a category (Anderson 2016). Some prior cross-linguistic research suggests that attenuation may be one of the more frequent adjectival derivational categories (Bauer 2002: 42). Maa has no morphology on adjectives to indicate attenuation, but if this is one of the most likely adjectival modifications cross-linguistically, it might be that pénьò as an adverbial attenuative is old. I first examine its syntactic distribution, and then briefly explore its semantics.

Syntactically, pénьò distributes similarly to oshí ‘always, normally’, except that pénьò is not known to directly modify nouns (see Section 8). Thus, pénьò can help differentiate adjectives from nouns. It can modify a wide variety of predicates, occurring either before or after the predicate, to indicate ‘somewhat X’, ‘slightly X’, or a ‘a little bit X’. The predicates in (48) – (49) are dynamic, and in (50) – (51) they are stative.

(48) n-é-ílep-u pénьò
   CN1-3-climb-VEN ATN
   'and it climbs up slightly’ (iloikop2.0046)

(49) ñtáshó pénеu; m-a-yíéu.
   PL.IMPER.stand ATN OPT-1SG-come
   ‘Wait a little bit; let me come.’ (North Samburu Maa)

(50) pénьò n-é-risiö
   ATN CN1-3-be.equal
   ‘they are somewhat (un)equal’ [referring to the fact that the number of young men who went for warriorhood outnumbered those who went to school] (omon.0329)
(51) kimaasâì ánaa k=é-paash-ári pén yö?
Maa.language like CN=3-differ-ITV.MID.NPF ATN
‘Maasai language [varieties], like they differ a bit from each other?’ (ilomon 24.1)

In (52) – (53) it modifies inchoative stems, and in (54) it modifies a perfect(ive)-inchoative predicate built on a stem that otherwise functions as a descriptive modifier.

(52) N-é-m*úé-yú pén yö
CN1-3-be.sick-INCHO ATN
‘they became slightly sick’ (smallpox.016)

(53) amǒ ki-púo áa-iko njí pén yö áa-iropij-u
because 1PL-go.PL INF.PL-do this ATN INF.PL-be.cold-INCHO
‘because we will go to do this to cool down a bit’ (osinkisonk.094)

(54) e-ti-sídꜜán-á doi pén yö
3-PF-good.PL-PF indeed ATN
‘he has become a little better.’ (ilangeni.0034)

Similarly to oshí, pén yö can also modify terms that function as descriptive adjectives, as in (55).

(55) kiti pén yö!
little ATN
‘a little smaller/less!’ (Mol 1996: 200)

Despite his example (55), Mol (1996: 328) defines pén yö as an adverb of time meaning ‘a little while’. This fits with the use of pén yö in (49). With translational motion verbs, one might argue that the motion also occurs for a small amount of time, with the metonymic interpretation that the motion occurs over a short spatial distance, yielding interpretations like those in (48) and (56). Regardless, (51) – (52) and (54) – (55) clearly show that pén yö is not specific just to time and its metonymic extensions. It can indicate attenuated degrees of stative property-concepts like degree of sickness, temperature, goodness, size, equality, difference, etc. Altogether, it is a very productive adverbial means of attenuating concepts.

(56) külô a-íg*ót pén yö
these.M REL.MSG-shift.position ATN
‘those ones (cows) that move a little bit’ (enkashe.046)

Corpus data reveal that pén yö has another modal adverbial function, ‘improbably’, ‘probably not’, ‘unlikely’. In its modal function, pén yö tends to precede the verb, as in (57) – (58).

(57) pén yö doi n-é-tam e-étá-*í al=tɔnáí …
improbably indeed CN1-3-still 3-have-IMPS MSG=person
‘It is unlikely there will be a person …’ (dictionary materials)

(58) éé pén yö n-é-ta lelô il=šikop
yes improbably CN1-3-have those.M MPL=murder.penalty
‘Yes probably they do not have those murder penalty [customs]’ (iloikop2.0122)
The free translations, provided by fluent Maa-English bilinguals, involve negative notions; but there is no negative morpheme in these clauses besides pɛ́nyɔ. Though most of the earlier examples in (52) – (56) may not, at least at first glance, seem to have negative ideas or connotations, in (50) it is presumably pɛ́nyɔ that communicates any idea of ‘inequality’. Indeed, (50) could be analyzed as an instance of the ‘improbable, unlikely’ modality sense of pɛ́nyɔ.

In (59)b, pɛ́nyɔ is verbalized with the prefix i-. The derived stem is then inflected for third person, while the semantically main verb ɪʃɔr ‘allow’ is inflected for first person object. A more literal translation could be ‘it is doubtful/improbable (that) I will be allowed (to see them)’. There is again no negative morpheme other than pɛ́nyɔ; but the text line was clearly rendered with a negative translation regarding the speaker’s expectation or belief about the situation.

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(59)} \quad & \text{a. náa } \text{te=n-á-1*ó} \quad \text{sií } \text{nanó} \\
& \text{it.is OBL=CN1-1SG-go.SG also 1SG.NOM}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{b. náa } \text{é-i-pɛ́nyɔ} \quad \text{doi } \text{n-áa-ɪʃɔr-i} \\
& \text{it.is 3-VBLZ-improbably indeed CN1-3>1SG-allow-IMPS.PL}
\end{align*}
\]

‘and (even) if I go, I don’t think I will be allowed (to see them)’ (sairowua.0754)

I suggest that across all of its uses, the general meaning of pɛ́nyɔ could be rendered as ‘not quite [X]’. This encompasses both ‘less than typical amount/quality/degree [of X]’ in the physio-temporal domain, from which attenuation arises; and ‘not quite [X situation]’ in the reality domain, from which ‘probably not’ or ‘unlikely’ arises. The diachronic direction of semantic shift or extension is unclear at this point; but the modality and attenuation meanings are likely related.

Anderson (2016: 151-154) argues that there are different subtypes of attenuation involving “imprecision” or “pragmatic halos.” Given this, we may ask how Maa speakers have conceptualized the notion of and developed a marker for attenuation. Does it appear to have arisen from conceptualizing a situation, quality, or category as “approaching” the prototype of some quality, akin to the English morpheme like in childlike, plastic-like, or other morphemes with simulative meanings (cf. Masini, Micheli, and Huang 2018; Anderson 2016: 17)? Or has it arisen from conceptualizing a situation, quality or category as “departing from” or being negatively related to the prototype concept of a quality or category? If we accept the hypothesis that the core meaning of pɛ́nyɔ involves negative polarity, then it appears Maa speakers would have developed the attenuative sense via conceptualizing a situation or quality as being “unlike” or “departing from” the prototype designated by a verb or adjectival lexeme.

In opposition to pɛ́nyɔ ‘attenuative’ the reader may have noticed two intensifying adverbs for ‘very’ in Table 4, namely olêŋ and naléŋ. Olêŋ is by far more common: there are 160 instances of olêŋ but only 23 of naléŋ in the corpus, suggesting that the latter is perhaps innovative with the meaning of ‘very’. What modernly accounts for the choice of olêŋ versus naléŋ as adverbs appears to be idiolectal.9 In terms of collocation, both olêŋ and naléŋ can modify dynamic predicates, as in (60) – (61), and stative predicates, as in (62) – (63).

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(60)} \quad & \text{ki-ɡrâ osií áa-omon olêŋ} \\
& 1\text{PL~~PROG always INF.PL~~pray very}
\end{align*}
\]

‘we have been praying very much’ (Camus1.085a)

---

9 Three additional instances of náleŋ ‘very’ occur in the corpus, all from Parakuyo Maa. These may be the result of H-tone spreading from a preceding word, but dialect variation and tone processes in this southern Tanzanian variety need more study.
áy*íá, sére, mí-ki-tá-máyián-a enk=ái naléŋ
all.right goodbye OPT-3>2-SBJV-bless-SBJV FSG=God.NOM very
‘It is OK, goodbye, and may God bless you very much.’ (Camus4.226)

ní-ki-shupá oléŋ
CN1-1PL-be.happy very
‘and we are very happy’ (Camus1.084a)

e-pí táá ti=morrán l-òò l=máásái, e-pí naléŋ
3-be.brave EMPH MPL=warriors.NOM M-of MPL=maasai 3-be.brave very
‘Maasai warriors are brave, they are very brave.’ (osinkisonk.053)

As a modifier of the predicate, oléŋ/naléŋ can be immediately adjacent to the predicate or further out in the sentence, just as we have seen for other adverbs. The adverb oléŋ is after the subject in (61), and after (part of) the object in (64).

k=á-ny*írr élë kitëŋ 1-ái oléŋ sapúk*i í=mowuarák.
CN2=1SG-love this.M ox M-my very big.PL FPL=horns
‘I love this bullock of mine very much (whose) horns are long.’ (dc.014)

In (65), naléŋ modifies a predicate complement formed on the relational noun siadi ‘behind’ (from a body-part term).

náa iná peê e-tii mà kòp siádi naléŋ
it.is that reason CVB.3-be.at that.NOM land.NOM behind very
‘that is why that land is quite behind [in addressing problems]’ (Camus4.221)

In (66) – (68), oléŋ modifies descriptive adjectives. In (69), it modifies a quantifier.

σ=sná sápok oléŋ
MSG=poverty big very
‘a lot of poverty’ (Arusha-enkongu 2.10)

amò é-tiú ãnó en=krëya tarríñò oléŋ ...
because 3-resemble like FSG=disease bad very
‘because it is like a very bad disease …’ (smallpox.025)

n-ê-*ákó òl=tọnjáni yioliò oléŋ
CN1-3-become MSG=person famous very
‘and he became a very famous person’ (sairowua.0011)

kùmok oléŋ!
much/many very
‘very many’ (Camus1 1.31)

Naléŋ can also modify descriptive adjectives and quantifiers, seen in (70) – (71).

amò kìnì naléŋ
because little very
‘because (it is) very small’ (KisonkoRiddles.0090)
Finally, they can modify adjectives used without an accompanying head noun, as in (72) – (73).

(72) sidáí olêŋ
good very
‘very good.’ (said at the beginning of a personal narrative) (Camus1.001)

(73) Náa á-i-tərrónà naá mâ, tərrónâ olêŋ
and 3-VBLZ-bad FOCUS that bad very
‘And that is bad, very bad’ (iloikop.097-98)

Like the attenuative adverb pënų, naléŋ/olêŋ ‘very’ can help differentiate nouns from adjectives, as they cannot directly modify nouns (Payne 2020). This is shown in (74) – (75).

(74) *sːl=tásat olêŋ
MSG=ancient very
(intended: ‘a very old one’)

(75) *sːl=payían olêŋ
MSG=elder very
(intended: ‘a very elder/man’)

Since intensification is semantically opposed to attenuation, it is interesting to find that these two notions are very asymmetrical in frequency. Based on Bauer’s (2002:40) typological study, one might hypothesize that, if grammaticalization and morphologization arise from high frequency of a lexical item collocating with something else, even adverbial attenuation of adjectives might be more common than adverbial intensification. Against this hypothesis, it is interesting to find that adverbial olêŋ/naléŋ ‘very’ is far more frequent than pënų (Table 4).

But in the corpus, the adverbs could be modifying predicates/predications or adjectives. So to probe this hypothesis further, linear contiguity of the attenuating and intensifying adverbs with descriptive modifiers was evaluated. If an adverb modifies a descriptive modifier, it occurs immediately after the modifier. Table 5 shows that in the corpus, this linear arrangement is infrequent for both olêŋ/naléŋ and pënų (Table 5 does not directly probe constituency). Given the low incidence of immediate post-modifier order in Table 5, we conclude that the vast majority of instances of both olêŋ/naléŋ ‘very’ and pënų are modifying the predicate/predication. Furthermore, the linear positions of olêŋ/naléŋ and pënų are not statistically different. Though it is certainly grammatical for pënų to modify an adjective, its absence immediately after adjectives in the corpus is not unexpected given its overall low incidence, at least relative to olêŋ/naléŋ.

Table 5. Linear distribution of adverbial olêŋ/naléŋ and pënų

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Immediately after Adj</th>
<th>Elsewhere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>olêŋ/naléŋ</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pënų</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I thus leave it as a question for further typological research as to whether derivational attenuation is indeed more common than derivational intensification; and if so, why this should be so. I would venture to guess that Maa speakers are not exceptional in the higher frequency with which they use intensifiers compared to attenuators.

7.2. Sources of modality, degree and intensity adverbs. We now consider potential sources for adverbs in Table 4. It must be said from the outset that we cannot identify sources for all. Some of them, as well as adé ‘later’ in Table 3 begin with a Low-tone /a/ and end with a High tone on the final mora. This is exactly the form of singular infinitive verbs, seen in (1) above. The form ajó ‘about, almost, nearly’ may have developed from the ‘try’ sense of jo ‘say, tell, think, try’. If aké ‘just, only’ and adé ‘later’ developed from infinitive verbs, it is uncertain what the historical roots might have been. However, aké and akéyié ‘just, only’ are conceivably related to Samburu Maa kéyiére ‘it is best/suitable’, which Wagner (n.d.) calls “an adverb from a verb” (see also Dahlbacka, et al. forthcoming).

Several Table 4 adverbs begin with /p/. Their etymology is unknown. For pî ‘completely’, there is something iconic or idiophonic in the way it is often pronounced with extra aspiration and loudness, and may be reduplicated or repeated in a single clause, as in (76), or across clauses, as in (77). Pit+ó ‘absolutely nothing’ might be related to pî ‘completely’, but this is speculative.¹⁰

(76) ni-ki-ish-ô pî pî
CN1-1PL-finish-VEN completely completely
‘we finish (a course of study) completely.’ (Camus1.005a)

(77) a. čk=é-njas-*á-i áa-m-aa in=kishómitie
CN2=3-do.first-ITV-PL INF.PL-pass-ITV FPL=clans
l=mámasítan pî
PL.PSR M=Mamasita.PL completely
‘(All) the (sub-)clans of the Mamasita (a major clan) will first exhaustively pass by’
(to choose the next leader)

b. m-é-itiŋ-ô pî
OPT-3-finish-SBJV completely
‘until they are completely exhausted/finished (being examined),’

c. o-m-é-itiŋ-ô pî
until-OPT-3-finish-SBJV completely
‘until they are completely exhausted/finished.’ (intokin.029-031)

The adverb ṣpeny ‘alone, only’ has the same form as the stem of ọl=ṣpeny ‘owner (NOM)’.¹¹ The stem for ‘owner’ is also attested with the sense of ‘exclusive self’ (particularly in combination with overt emphatic pronouns). Possibly the adverb developed from this, first with the exclusive meaning as in (78), and then ‘alone’ as in (79). If they are connected, why the nominative stem

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¹⁰ The usual idiophone construction in Maa contains the verb ‘say’ plus an idiophone (see Section 4). This construction is not used with pî or pit ó.

¹¹ The shapes of the singular and plural stems for ‘owner’ suggest they are relative clause forms based on a no-longer extant verb root *pêp. Relative clauses can behave as nominals just by preceding them with a determiner, which could be the history of ọl=ṣpeny ‘owner (NOM)’. The adverb might be a further development from the relative clause (without a determiner).
would generally be used as the adverb is unclear, but in all available examples, the participant who does something ‘alone’ is a subject.

(78) n-é-l*ót-ú táátá ɔ́pɛny a-wɔr-ıkí
  CN1-3-go-VEN now alone INF.SG-distribute-DAT
  ‘He (the oldest son) alone/only will come to distribute (the deceased father’s cattle)’ (embul.131)

(79) òre taá aké peè i-ló ɔ́pɛny
  now EMPH just when CVB.2-go alone
  amô k=é-ikurrúkurr m-i-irut aké
  because CN2-3-thunder NEG-2-be.frightened just
  ‘Now when you go alone, don’t be frightened because it just thunders.’ (enamuke2.084-086)

The origins of the modal and attenuative adverb pényc are unknown. In contrast, the intensifiers olèŋ and naléŋ ‘very’ almost certainly derive from the verb ley ‘be generous, abundant’. The adverbs begin in a way suggestive of feminine and masculine relative clauses, namely with n- and o-, respectively. However, o- is also the expected allomorph of the masculine gender+number proclitic on a noun beginning with /l/. As adverbs, olèŋ and naléŋ do not have the agreement behavior of synchronic relative clauses, and the tone difference between olèŋ and naléŋ is also mystifying if both are historical relative clause forms. In what follows, I contrast relative clause behavior with the adverb forms, and suggest that naléŋ is likely from a relative clause, but olèŋ may have a nominalization source.

As a verb root, ley can indicate the human-propensity concept of ‘be generous’; but it also saliently refers to land that displays an abundance of green grass. In (80), ‘very green with a lot of grass’ is understood just from ley applied to a geographic feature. Examples (80) and (81) show that ley inflects like a normal Class I verb for person and main verb status (by tone).

(80) e-léŋ-óo koló doinyó
  3-be.plentious-ITV these.M.NOM mountains.NOM
  ‘These mountains are very green with a lot of grass.’ (Kisonko Maa)

(81) peè e-dòl pɔ*őkì nãì ajó k=é-l*éŋ
  purpose CVB.3-see every.NOM who.NOM COMP CN2=3-be.plentious
  ‘so everyone sees that he is generous.’ (elengon2.034b)

Since it is a verb root, ley cannot modify a noun unless it is relativized. Relativized forms vary for gender, number and case of the DP (Section 2). The examples in (82) – (84) show agreement of the relativized verb with masculine, feminine, and place, respectively. The first line of (85) contrasts with (82) to show number agreement in the masculine forms, and the second line of (85) shows a negative relative clause which carries a special relative prefix l- (Tucker and Mpaayei 1955: 22, 122-224).

(82) a. n-é-*ákó k=é-ny*ɔk apá pɔ*őkì nãì olèŋ
  CN1-3-become CN2-3-work.hard before each anyone very
  ‘So everybody used to work very hard’

12 Neither the noun/adjective (em=)pényc ‘piercing’, from the verb peny ‘pierce’, nor ɔl=ɔ́pényc ‘owner’ (nominative ɔl=ɔ́pényc) seem compelling sources.
b. peê ɛ-akó əl=tʊ́ŋání o-léŋ
  purpose CVB.3-become MSG=person REL.M.SG=be.generous
  ‘to become a generous person.’ (lit. ‘person who is generous’) (elengon2.011)

(83) cn=kóp na-léŋ
  FSG=land REL.FSG=be.plenteous
  ‘land with lots of grass’ (translation provided by a native speaker)

(84) peê ɛ-idórr á*á-ŋúáá i=wuejítín nec-léŋ
  purpose CVB.3-migrate INF.PL-leave PLACE=places REL.PLACE.PL=be.plenteous
  ‘(they said the Maasai) should move to leave places that are fertile’ (jo.006)

a. óre ɪl=máásâ ɪ̂náa ɪl=tʊ́ ŋáná apá oo-léŋ oléŋ
  DSCN MPL=Maasai COP MPL=people before REL.MPL=be.plenteous very
  ‘Now the Maasai were people who used to be very generous.’

b. óre ɪl=tʊ́ŋí lɛ-mɛ-léŋ náa ɛ́-ɪ́tɔrrɔ́n*ɔ́
  DSCN MSG=person REL.NEG-NEG-3-be.plenteous COP 3-VBLZ-bad
  ‘Now a person who is not generous is bad.’ (elengon2.007-008)

In contrast to relative clause forms, the adverbs oléŋ and naléŋ do not show agreement with any particular element in the clause. In (86), the noun before oléŋ is feminine so we would expect naléŋ if it were a modifying relative clause; but this does not occur.

(86) n-ɛ́-ata e=sómash oléŋ
  CN1-3-have FSG=hunger very
  ‘and they were very hungry’ (divorce.009b)

In (87), l=Máásâ is plural, shown by the stem form (cf. singular Máásaní ‘Maasai person’) and by ɔ́ of.PL (cf. singular ɔ́). Observe that oléŋ in (87) differs from the plural relative form ooléŋ in (85) above. The nominalization eleŋ on indicates ‘generosity’ in (87), but in other contexts it could indicate ‘abundance’ (prototypically connoting land abundant with food for grazing animals), ‘greenness of land’, or ‘season of plenty’.

(87) e-isur-ɔ́ki apá e=leŋ-ön ɔ́ l=máásâ oléŋ
  3-criticize-DAT before FSG=be.plenteous-NMLZ of.PL M=Maasai.PL very
  ‘The generosity of the Maasai has been criticized.’ (elengon2.040)

In (88)b, there would be case, gender, and number discrepancies if oléŋ were considered a relative form. Inkutukié is the nominative feminine plural form for ‘languages, mouths’. A modifying nominative plural relative should have the prefix náa- on leg; the absolute plural relative form would have the prefix form naa-. Oléŋ in (88) does not correspond to either.

(88) a. óre lekûá n-ɛ́-itapir-áki ɛn=chal-án
  DSCN those CN1-3-make-DAT FSG=be.weak-NMLZ:STATE
  ‘Those do make (show well) the weakness/lightness of (their) languages,’

b. oó n=kútukié áa-shal in=kutukié oléŋ
  of.PL F=languages INF.PL-be.weak FPL=languages.NOM very
  ‘(their) languages are very weak/light.’ (enaidurra.115)
Adverbial naléŋ also does not show the agreement that a relative form would. In (89), mâ köp ‘that land’ is nominative feminine singular. The agreeing relative form would be náleŋ, but we find naléŋ instead. The text corpus also shows many cases of what looks like an ostensibly masculine form olêŋ where the only nouns in the context are grammatically feminine.

(89) naa inâ peê e-tií mâ köp siádi naléŋ
COP that reason CVB.3-be.at that.NOM land.NOM behind very

‘that is why that land is quite behind [in addressing problems]’ (Camus4.221)

In sum, as adverbs, the ‘very’ forms have broadened in meaning to indicate intensity of anything, but the lexical source concerns what most prototypically sustains life among these traditionally pastoralist people. The adverbial forms do not show agreement with preceding nouns, while relative clause forms do. Nevertheless, it is likely that at least naléŋ has its origin in a relativized form, identical to what we find in (83).

Ferreting out the source of olêŋ is more challenging. While o- is the shape of a masculine singular relative prefix, the falling tone pattern on the root is not expected for a singular relativized verb.13 A final Falling verb tone is sometimes associated with a plural participant (see (84) above); but an alternative hypothesis is that olêŋ possibly developed from a noun/adjective formation. Maa has a minor and perhaps unproductive verb – noun/adjective alternation involving a final Falling tone on the latter. The verb words in Table 6 are presented with a “L+final-H” tone melody, which is a feature of the singular infinitive morphological construction. The noun and adjective words in Table 6 have a final Falling tone. Regarding the proclitics on the noun/adjective words, it is a completely regular process for gender+number proclitics to drop their final nasal (for feminine) or lateral (for masculine) before sonorant-initial stems; thus, we find the masculine singular form o=lôm ‘jealousy’ related to the verb a-lôm ‘to be jealous’. This is exactly parallel to the difference between the forms olêŋ versus a-leŋ. It is thus conceivable that olêŋ ‘very’ developed historically from a nominal derivation of the verb root leg; but that this hypothesized noun function of olêŋ has now been pre-empted by the nominalization e=leŋ-ôn ‘generosity’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb</th>
<th>noun/adjective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a-bákk</td>
<td>‘to crack’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-lóny</td>
<td>‘to seize’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-lálp</td>
<td>‘to hold a grudge’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-lóm</td>
<td>‘to be jealous’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-róss</td>
<td>‘to hit over large a area’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-gírá</td>
<td>‘to be quiet’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a-ñél</td>
<td>‘to deviate’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another adverb that might have its origins in a relative clause is náají ‘possibly, maybe’. This adverb come from an extension of an impersonal passive plural relative clause involving jo ‘say, think, try’. The meaning ‘what are said/called’ is evident in the relative clauses in (90) and

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13 Tucker & Mpaayei also (1955: 266, 269) attest to the tone difference between naléŋ and olêŋ. It is worth pointing out that not all of the relative clause tone facts described by Tucker and Mpaayei (1955) hold throughout our data, due to tonal subclasses of verb stems which they did not discuss, and likely some dialect/idiolect variation.
In (90)a,b, ‘cattle’ and ‘tree’ are in the absolute case, and the relative clause prefix-complex n-aá- is expected as the absolute case of a plural relative Class I verb.

The adverb náají ‘possibly, maybe’ is potentially an extension from the sense(s) ‘what are thought/tried’. Example (91) involves the adverb, and concerns the time of an elderly man’s death. The man has put bracelets on his son’s arms and an ox is slaughtered. Note that náají occurs right after the absolute noun kít̥ŋ. However, the adverb has the non-agreeing tone pattern n áa-, which would correspond the nominative case of a plural relative Class I verb.

Why the nominative tone pattern occurs for the adverb remains unexplained, except to note that some other adverbial forms also have nominative tone patterns of source forms.

8. Use of adverbs for nominal tense/aspect

Some adverbs can occur immediately after the determiner within a DP, to modify or restrict the referent. Due to their semantics in this function, this use can be characterized as a type of nominal tense/aspect (Nordlinger and Sadler 2004; Bertinetto 2020). The particular type is what Nordlinger and Sadler call “independent” nominal tense/aspect in that the adverbs say something about the nominal referent rather than about the tense/aspect of the whole proposition. What perhaps differentiates the Maa situation from other languages with nominal tense/aspect is the degree to which the system in Maa is (not) grammaticalized.

Adverbs found in our data in this DETERMINER+ADVERB construction are in Table 7. Several are high-frequency forms from Table 3, but polé ‘yesterday’ is from Table 2, and náají ‘possible’ was included in Table 4 for its dominant modal sense. The corpus frequencies in Table 7 are based only on adverbs after gender+number proclitic determiners; but these items can also occur after demonstrative determiners. Even though the demonstratives and nouns vary for case in (92) – (93), note that the adverb melody does not vary.

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(93) ɛná dúóó tásât
this.F.NOM previous ancient.NOM
‘this previous(ly-mentioned) old woman’ (emutata.042a)

Table 7. Adverbs that may immediately follow a determiner within a DP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Corpus instances after gender+number proclitics</th>
<th>Gloss</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>apá, apá 57</td>
<td>‘before, former’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dúóó 85</td>
<td>‘earlier, aforementioned’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṇolé 2</td>
<td>‘yesterday’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>oshí 13</td>
<td>‘always, usually, normally’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When a Table 7 adverb occurs immediately after a proclitic determiner, a vowel occurs between the determiner and adverb root. Apparently the vowel may be inherent to the adverb or an /a/ can be added. Note that no /a/ is inserted with the demonstrative determiners in (92) – (93), which end in vowels themselves. But one is inserted in the form ma=á-duóó in (16) above. If the intrusive /a/ is morphological, its function is not clear. In this paper I gloss it as epenthetic (EP). Though not found in the corpus used here, Mol (1996: 63, 102) also shows the adverbs doí ‘indeed’, naárr+i ‘recently’ and náají ‘possibly, quite recently’ in the DETERMINER+ADVERB construction with an intrusive /a/. (He does not note the ‘possibly’ sense of náají, which is dominant in the corpus used for this study and illustrates only the ‘recently’ sense in combination with a determiner.)

In the DETERMINER+ADVERB construction, oshí communicates habitual or gnomic nominal-aspect (cf. Bertinetto 2020). En=oshí ṇóny ‘usual vein’ in (94) indicates the vein from which one normally draws blood from a cow (i.e. the jugular vein). In (95), il=oshí reflects that old men often foresee their approaching death. A more exact English translation might be, ‘There are the typical/proverbial old men who see their death coming.’ In (96) the speaker is narrating a dramatic series of events and expects the hearer knows about the nature of suds from Omo soap powder. In both (94) and (96), the speakers are evoking the hearer’s presumed background knowledge, and do not spell out details of how situations or things typically are.

(94) n-é-por en=oshí ṇóny
CN1-3-pierce FSG=always vein
‘He pierced (it) at the usual vein.’ (letabo2.007)

(95) e-tíi il=oshí mórúák ṣó-dsl-ó ᵇn=kɛɛ́
3-be.at MPL=always elders.NOM REL.M.PL-see-VEN FSG=death
‘There are normally/typically men who see (their) death coming.’ (enkeeya2.011)

(96) a. óre íná kátá aké peê e-osh ᵇn=kóp
DSCN that time just when CVB.3-hit FSG=ground
‘Immediately when he hit the ground,‘

b. nét*iú ánna ol=oshí sabún*i li=ómo
CN1-3-be.like like MSG=always soap M.of=omo
‘he became like soap (foam) of Omo always (is)‘ (sairowua.0344)

In the DETERMINER+ADVERB construction, apá and ṇolé are like nominal-tense forms. In (97), ᵇn=apá indicates that generosity was a former characteristic, which may or may not be so
evident in modern society. In (98), il=ŋolélé serves a participant clarification function while also being a nominal-tense form.

(97) K=ɛ́-nár*ɛ́ náa k=ɛ́-ito-bul-áa il=maasáí
CN2=3-be.fitting COP CN2=3-CAUS-grow-ITV MPL=Maasai.NOM
en=apá leŋ-ón enyɛ́ apá*ké n-aá-ta.
FSG=before be.plenteous-NMLZ:STATE their before.just REL.F-REL.F.PL-have
'It is fitting that the Maasai keep making their former generosity flourish.' (lit. 'It is fitting that the Maasai cause to grow their former generosity that they had.')(elengon2.061)

(98) ɛ-shomó-ɪ̀ ᵁ ɪl=a-ŋolélé páyiani.
3-go.PF-PL.PF MPL=EP-yesterday men.NOM
‘Yesterday’s men (e.g. the men we met yesterday) left.’ (Purko Maa)

In (99), ol=adúóó helps clarify which warrior out of a group of warriors stabbed the enemy. Duóó ‘previous(ly)/previously-mentioned’ has a kind of discourse anaphoric function, similar to a “recognition” demonstrative (Himmelmann 1996) which signals to hearers that they should already be familiar with the referent. It is of interest to note that Maa collapses into a single paradigm what has been observed as a type of demonstrative function for some languages and what have been called tense/aspect functions for yet others.

(99) N-ɛ́-pɪk ol=a-duóó mɔrraní e=rem-ɛ́t.
CN1-3-put MSG=EP-aforementioned warrior.NOM FSG=SPEAR-NMLZ:INST
‘the aforementioned warrior put the spear (in) him.’ (arinkoi.063a)

It is noteworthy that reasonably high-frequency intensifiers like olêŋ/nalêŋ ‘very’ are not attested in the the DETERMINER+ADVERB construction. This suggests the construction may have a cognitively “pointing-out” function, helping guide the hearer to cognitively find the right referent within the mental world they have been building, and not all adverbs are semantically suited to this. However, it is not clear that oshi has this “find the right referent within the discourse world” when in the DETERMINER+ADVERB construction, but it still calls on the hearer to search their knowledge store for relevant presupposed information.14

9. Conclusions

This study has helped refine the understanding of part-of-speech categories in Maa. In terms of major category distinctions, roots like pu(j) ‘be brave/sharp’, bebek ‘be thin/flimsy’, sápok ‘big’, bótor ‘senior’, kts ‘small’, etc. differ in their morphosyntactic distribution from adverbs like oshi ‘usual(ly), normal(ly), always’, pényc ‘improbably, attenuative’, olêŋ/nalêŋ ‘very’, apá ‘earlier, before’, and so on. Attenuating pényc, intensifying olêŋ/nalêŋ, as well as other adverbs help differentiate adjectives from nouns.

The paper has defined the Maa adverb as a roughly lexical word that modifies a predicate/predication, and which do not inflect for person or case. At the same time, the study has identified challenges regarding this definition of adverb. However, the issues are basic facts about

14 The size/amount adjectives kts and kini ‘little’ can occur directly after the determiner within a DP, as in (20) – (21). Unlike consonant-initial adverbs, kts does not take a leading a in this environment, though it does take one in the adverbial form ‘slowly, gently’ (Section 4).
the nature of all languages – they are not difficulties for languages, only for approaches to identifying part-of-speech categories which (wrongly) assume such categories have sharp boundaries.

First, I have said “roughly lexical” in the definition above because some of the adverbs have significantly broadened in meaning. Different semantics and usage profiles entail that one versus another adverb may have non-identical structural collocations, to the point that some are becoming more grammaticalized. We have especially noted the use of some high-frequency temporal/aspectual adverbs adverbs within DPs for a nominal tense/aspect function.

Second, while Maa adverbs can be considered a single category due to the shared morphosyntax of not inflecting for person or case and the shared function of modifying predicates/predications, there are nevertheless some distinctions among them. In part this is due to a variety of historical origins. Some have sources in oblique prepositional phrases, others in relational nouns and adjectives, some in relative clause forms, and others possibly in infinitive verbs and idiophonic sources. Some adverbs have tone melodies corresponding to the nominative case of the base lexeme, including those from oblique and some relative clauses. Adverbs from relational nouns have the absolute tone melody of the source. The listed sources do not account for all adverbs. Certainly there is no hint of them for adverbs like pényɔ ‘improbably’, doí ‘indeed, certainty’, and others which probably have had adverbial status since pre-Maa stages.

Third, because some adverbs historically come from other parts-of-speech, the morphosyntax between such adverbs and their sources is not always clear-cut. For instance, we have differentiated adverbs from the INFINITIVE-SERIAL verb construction, which also modifies predicates/predications, but it is possible that the INFINITIVE-SERIAL verb construction is one historical source of adverbs. The difference between a nonce productively-generated oblique temporal expression and a fully lexicalized expression like téípa ‘(in) late afternoon, early evening’ is a cline, as is the relationship between some nouns, relational nouns, and adverbs.

Finally, this study has given us a chance to reflect on the creativity of the human mind in stretching and adapting lexemes for new functions. Though certain semantic pathways are well-trod cross-linguistically (e.g. adaptation of translational movement ‘come’ and ‘go’ for temporal meanings, the extension of locatives to temporal meanings, ‘sit’ or ‘stay’ reanalyzed as a continuative), communities of speakers also can adapt things in more unique ways. Notably, the intensifying adverbs oléŋ and naiéŋ likely come from the verb root leŋ ‘be plenteous, abundant (with green grass); be generous’. This root embodies culturally very important concepts – both the source of food for grazing animals and a human social value –, that crucially bear on what sustained life for a traditional pastoralist population.

**Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ATN</th>
<th>CAUS</th>
<th>CN</th>
<th>CVB</th>
<th>DAT</th>
<th>DSCN</th>
<th>EMPH</th>
<th>EP</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>attenuative</td>
<td>causative</td>
<td>connective</td>
<td>converb</td>
<td>dative</td>
<td>discontinuous</td>
<td>emphatic</td>
<td>epenthetic</td>
<td>feminine</td>
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<td>MPL</td>
<td>MSG</td>
<td>NEG</td>
<td>NMLZ</td>
<td>NOM</td>
<td>NPF</td>
<td>OBL</td>
<td>OPT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>middle</td>
<td>masculine plural</td>
<td>masculine singular</td>
<td>negative</td>
<td>nominalizer</td>
<td>nominative</td>
<td>non-perfect(ive)</td>
<td>oblique</td>
<td>optative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

I am grateful to many Maa speakers, notably including Leonard Ole-Kotikash, A. Keswe Mapena and Stephen Muntet, who have assisted with this research. This work has been partially supported by Fulbright Foundation fellowships (1993-1994 and 2009-2010), and NSF grants SBR-9616482 and SBR-9809387. I am also grateful to the University of Nairobi, Africa International University, the University of Dar es Salaam, Mkwawa University College of Education, and SIL-Africa Area for logistical support.

References


The Diversity of Maa (Nilotic) Adverbs


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