The Afrikaans past participle: Kaaps and the written standard

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1.Introduction

If one compares the standard variety of Afrikaans as it is reflected in writing with the colloquial variety spoken mainly in an around Cape Town, South Africa, referred to as Kaaps or Afrikaaps, differences in grammar and vocabulary are quite obvious, on the one hand, but on the other hand Kaaps casts light on a number of general features of Afrikaans. The reason for this is that texts in Kaaps as they are appearing at present, tend to accentuate the colloquial style and pronunciation of the speakers in a revealing way, highlighting features of the standard variety which are hidden by grammatical, spelling, idiomatic and other conventions.

In the present contribution we will look at a number of aspects of the past (or perfect or passive) participle (PP) in relation to the verb system of Afrikaans. Some preliminary information on Kaaps could be obtained from a small collection of recent prose writings, namely

- a short story by Nathan Trantraal (2017) and six instalments of his column "Sypaadjies" in *Rapport Weekliks* (2018 - 2019);
- a novella *Kinnes* ('Children') by Chas Rhys (2018:7-107);
- a collection of short stories by Brian Fredericks (2020:11-120), *As die Cape Flats kon praat.*

To this was added as a precursor, Adam Small's 1965 play *Kanna hy kô hystoe*, on which Small himself comments: "Die tonele is uit ons arm buurt." ('The scenes are from our poor neigbourhood.')

The following aspects of PP formation and usage will be discussed:

- the phonological constraint of PP formation;
- lexical clusters as PPs;
- the PP as part of the construction Modal Auxiliary + PP + *het*;
- the PP and the auxiliary *het* 'have'.

2. A prosodical template

In order to be a well-formed PP, a structure needs to comply with the phonological constraint of a **rising stress contour**; an initial syllable of low stress is followed – not necessarily directly – by the syllable bearing main stress. I shall refer to this constraint – which is also present in Dutch and German – as a prosodical template. Unlike in Dutch and German, where other constraints also have to be met, the Afrikaans PP which is based on an uninflected verbal base, may meet the constraint by the mere addition of the unstressed prefix *ge-* in the case of a monosyllabic verb, e.g. *sê* 'say' > *gesê*, as in the past tense utterance,

> *Sy het dit gesê*
> she have it say.PP
> 'She said it.'

If the verb already has rising stress, as in *probéér* 'try', *ge-* affixation is optional (e.g. *(ge)probeer*)and when the verb already has an unstressed prefix, such as *ver-, be-* or *ont-.* The attachment of *ge-* is proscribed but nevertheless occurs in colloquial speech. *Ge-* is obligatory when the first syllable bears main stress, as in *ántwoord* 'answer', which is only recognisable as a PP when *ge-* is affixed, thus *geantwoord.*

If we neglect the so-called separable PPs with initial non-verbal morphemes, such as *afgeluister* 'eavesdrop' (lit. 'off listen'), the prosodical template may be represented as follows:

$$[_{PP}[_{V}\ [\text{n-1 stress}]\ \ldots\ [\text{n stress}]\ \ldots\ ]_{V}]_{PP}]$$

The use of **English** verbal bases in Kaaps PPs (cf. Hendricks 2016:7, 22) provide a good testing ground for the prosodical template, particularly as stress is still recognisable while factors such as the recognition of affixes no longer play a part. It is notable that Trantraal, Rhys and Fredericks meet the prosodical requirement in an exemplary way, i.e. monosyllabic past participles consistently affix *ge-* (e.g. *Hy't 'n uber* ***gephone*** 'He phoned an uber'), past particiles with initial main stress has *ge-* (e.g. *Hulle't nie* ***geworry*** *met my nie* 'They didn't worry about me'), and all past participles commencing with a weakly stressed syllable usually do not affix *ge -* (e.g. *hy't* ***apologise*** 'he apologised').

Very few English past participles occur in the play by Small, in fact only *hy't suicide ge-commit,* and *ge-appear* – both cases where *ge-* would be optional. Small also differs from the other Kaaps texts in affixing *ge-* to the unstressed prefix *ver-* of **Afrikaans** past participles, e.g. *geverstaan* 'understood', *gevertel* 'told', *geverdydelik* 'explained', *geversôre* 'cared for'. The following table shows the distribution of *ge-* with English bases according to the prosodical template in the texts under consideration.

For *ge-* affixation to English loans in the Kaaps texts, see Table 1.

	Trantraal	Rhys	Fredericks	Small
mono-syllabic PP – *ge-* obligatory	gevote (6)	gechoose (34)	gewaste (9)	_
initial main stress – *ge-* obligatory	ge-interview (10)	gegatecrash (23)	gedownload (7)	_
unstressed initial – *ge-* optional	pretend (12)	apologise (18)	embrace (4)	_
unstressed initial – *ge-* redundant	_	geprotect (4)		ge-commit (3)

Table 1. Afrikaans PPs on English verbal bases (tokens)

Trantraal tends to use the English PP form in passives, e.g. *na hy* ***arrested*** *was; ôs was* ***interrupted; arrested*** *wôd; dat W.D.* ***charged*** *was met al 23 murders.* The following is no English PP and also lacks *ge-*: *alles wôd* ***over-enunciate.***

3. The extended template: linking verbs

The main verb is often preceded by a small set of so-called "direct linking verbs" which can modify the main verb in several ways, while retaining their lexical meaning, for example *laat* ('let'): causative; *probeer* ('try'): control; *begin* ('begin'): inchoative; *bly, aanhou* ('keep on'): durative; *ophou* ('stop'): telic; *hoor* ('hear'): auditive; *sien* ('see'): visual; *gaan* ('go'): motional. I hypothesize that the prosodical template has been reanalysed to include

verb clusters, where the linking verb usually has lower stress than the main verb and the affixing of *ge-* is therefore optional. (Indirect linking verbs are excluded from the discussion as they are not attested in the texts.)

Though the texts also have very few occurrences of linking verbs, it is clear from Table 2 that *ge-* less forms predominate in the case of Trantraal, Rhys and Fredericks, while Small has slightly more forms with than without *ge-*. Examples:

(a)*Hy moet sieke sy ma* ***gehoor skrie*** *et* [Trantraal]
he must perhaps his mother hear.PP scream have.AUX
'Perhaps he heard his mother screaming'
(b)*Het jy hom* ***gesien tik****?* [Fredericks]
have you.SG him see.PP tik
'Did you see him using tik?'
(c) *sy't* ***bly nêgh*** [Rhys]
she.have keep.on nag
'she kept on nagging'
(d)*voorlat ons … in die Kaap* ***gekom bly*** *het* [Small]
before.that we in the Cape come.PP live have
'before we came to live in the Cape'

There are indications in the text that Small made use of redundant *ge-* to signal social difference. In a dialogue between Kanna, who had gone overseas to study, and a hawker, Skoen, back home (p68), Kanna omits *ge-* but Skoen affixes *ge-*:

Kanna *Wiet julle wat maak ek vir 'n lewe? … Het ek al* ***laat wiet****?*
'Do you.PL know what I do for a living? … Have I sent word?'
Skoen *Nie, Kanna het nie* ***gelaat wiet*** *nie.*
'No, Kanna hasn't sent word.'

	Trantraal	**Rhys**	**Fredericks**	**Small**

	+ge	--ge	+ge	--ge	+ge	--ge	+ge	--ge
begin(ne)		1		3				1
hoor	1							
la(a)t		5					4	6
ga(a)n				2		1	3[1]	2
kô(m)				4		1	5	3
aan(ge)hou				1				
bly				1				
probee				1				
op(ge)hou	1						1	
sien					1			

Table 2. Affixation of *ge-* to direct linking verb

4. Compound tense form

In present-day Afrikaans only four modal auxiliaries still alternate between a present tense and preterite, namely *sal* 'will'/ *sou* 'would', *wil* 'want to'/ *wou* 'wanted to', *moet* 'must, have to'/ *moes* 'had to' and *kan* 'can'/ *kon* 'could'. A question to be asked is whether the tendency towards preterite loss has progressed further in Kaaps than the standard variety. A verbal construction in which the process can be observed, is

MODAL AUXILIARY (PRES/PRET) + PP + *HET* 'have'

as in the following utterance, which has at least three interpretations:

Sy moes gister gewerk het.
she must.PRET yesterday work.PP have
(i)'She had to work yesterday' PAST TENSE
(ii) 'She should have worked yesterday (but didn't) IRREALIS
(iii) 'It is fairly certain that she worked yesterday.' EPISTEMIC

[1] E.g. *hy't moet Kietie **ge**gaan lê* 'he had intercourse with Kietie' (p55)

(cf. Hendricks (2016:24) on the use of the present rather than the preterite form in this construction.) Though the the preterite has important roles in the expression of epistemic function and the irrealis, the selection of modal present + PP + *het* rather than a modal preterite is of particular interest, see two examples of the former from Fredericks (2020:108):

Ammal weet die mense ***wil*** *my* ***geskiet het*** *… Hulle* ***moet*** *reg* ***gekyk het.***
all know the people want.to.PRES me shoot.PP have they must.PRES right look.PP have
'Everyone knows the people wanted to shoot me … They should have looked properly.'

In order to determine the usage of modal preterites in Kaaps in this construction the texts were compared to the results of a search in the context '__ + PP + *het*' in the Taalkommissiekorpus, which is representative of the written standard. Table 3, without a text and function breakdown, shows very little or no usage of modal preterites in general in the Kaaps texts, in contrast to almost equal usage of presents and preterites in the Taalommissiekorpus. (For Addendum for full table.)

__+ PP + *het*	Taalkommissie -korpus 1.1	Kaaps (4 authors)
sal/sil(A.S.)	20	32
sou	19	1
wil	14	30
wou	20	2
moet	20	35
moes	19	3
kan	15	34
kon	20	2

Table 3. Present or preterite of modal auxiliary before PP + het.

TK: Search in Taalkommissiekorpus: Modal aux + PP + *het*
T: Nathan Trantraal
R: Chase Rhys
F: Brian Fredericks
S: Adam Small

5. Clause-final PP + *het*

Finally, the Kaaps texts also shed light on the process of univerbation in which clause-final *het* merges with the PP it selects. The PP has become inseparable from *het* even in infinitival phrases, e.g. *om die deur te* ***gesluit het*** 'to have locked the door' in contrast to *om die deur* ***gesluit*** *te* ***kry*** 'to get the door locked' with other auxiliaries and copulatives. *Het*, pronounced [ət], has become an inflectional ending of the PP, but still alternates with the full form [hɛt] in careful speech and in V1/2 position. Clause-final [hɛt]/[ət] is always[2] written as *het* in the standard variety. As auxiliary, *het* has lost its infinitival variant *hê* (< *hewwe*, < Du. *hebben*), though in the standard variety *hê* still continues as the infinitive of the main verb, e.g. *om die deur toe te hê* 'to have the door closed' and *om 'n rekenaar te hê* 'to have a computer'.

Clause-final PP + [hɛt] /[ət] is often followed by the Afrikaans second negation, nie_2, attached as [i], but as *het* and *nie* are separable, nie_2 should be regarded as a clitic rather than an inflectional ending, e.g.

> *Ek kan nie onthou of ek <gister>* ***die deur*** *<gister>* ***gesluit*** *<*gister>* ***het*** *<gister>* ***nie.***
> I can NEG remember whether I <y.> the door <y.> lock.PP <*y.> have <y.> NEG
> 'I cannot remember whether I locked the door yesterday.'

How is the collocation of PP and *het* represented in Kaaps?

<u>PP + [ət] (+ [i])</u>: Both Trantraal and Rhys represent final *het* by *et* or *-it* in writing. This represents the current pronunciation of clause-final *het* as unstressed [ət] in Afrikaans. Both writers attach nie_2 to [ət], as in *gesienit****ie,*** *gemaakit****ie,*** *gekoepit****ie***. Table 4 shows the distribution for Trantraal.

gehaloep ***et*** 'have run'	68x
*gekomm****it*** 'have come'	9x
gehad ***het*** 'have had'	1x

Table 4. Representation of clause-final *het* in Trantraal texts.

[2] Exceptions are the author Ferdinand Deist and the poet N.P. van Wyk Louw who occasionally rendered final *het* as 't, e.g. *gekoop't* 'have bought'.

PP + [r] + [ət] (+ [i]): More typical of Kaaps is the insertion of a glide (written as *r* and probably a flap) after a long[3] vowel or diphthong, as in *gesêrit(ie), gehourit, gebloeirit* (Trantraal); *gekryrit, geblyrit, gegieritie* (Rhys).

> *toe wil hy ni vi sy ma* ***gesêrit*** *wat* ***gebeerit ie*** (Trantraal)
> then want.to.PRES NEG for his mother say.PST.PTCP-have what happen.PST.PTCP.have NEG
> 'then he didn't want to tell his mother what (had) happened'

Gehêrit as variant of *gehad*: *gehêrit*, used by Trantraal and Rhys as variant of *gehad*, invites two interpretations: (i) *gehet* (a form used by Rhys) + [ət] or (ii) *gehê* + *r* + [ət]. *Gehê*, again, is a form used by Fredericks. *Gehet* would indicate the regularisation of the highly frequent PP *gehad* of the standard variety. Underlying *gehê*, on the other hand, would be indicative of the retention of the bare infinitive *hê* as stem form in Kaaps. Thus:

(i) *gehet* + [ət] > *gehêrit* (assimilation)
(ii) *gehê* + *r* + [ət] > *gehêrit* (glide insertion)

The rendering of the *het*-perfect by Fredericks suggests the second:

> *Wil nie* ***gehê het*** *hulle moet teen ons getuig nie* (Fredericks 2020:79)
> want not have.PP they must against us witness NEG
> 'didn't want them to bear witness against us.'

This is backed up by the following in a standard Afrikaans newspaper:

> *sy het aanvaar dat Ben* [a stray dog] *nie "****gehê****" wil* ***wees*** *nie* (Beeld, 14.ix.2015)
> she have accept.PP that Ben not have.PS want.to be NEG
> 'She accepted (the fact) that Ben didn't want to be "owned".'

> *Sy wou ook onthou gewees het en bo alles* ***liefgehê word.*** (Beeld, 13.x.2015)
> she want.to.PRET remember.PP be.PP and above all love.PP become
> 'She also wanted to be remembered and above all to be loved.'

[3] Perhaps also after a short vowel, [i], in *gegieritie* (*gegie* 'given.PP + r + [ət] + NEG_2') (Rhys).

Conclusions

In view of the restricted sample of Kaaps, the following may be mentioned as tentative conclusions:

- The affixation of *ge-* to the verbal base is in keeping with the prosodical template for PPs to the extent that even English verbal bases used in Kaaps conform with its constraints.
- Optional *ge-* occurs with direct linking verbs as often as it is absent with verbs such as *laat, gaan* and *kom* in Small's play, but is generally absent in the case of the other Kaaps texts.
- In the construction Modal Auxiliary + PP + *het* the modal **preterites** *sou, wou, moes* and *kon*, which are used at roughly equal frequency with the present tense forms in the standard variety, are used only 5.8 % of the time in the Kaaps texts (tokenwise).
- The representation of the auxiliary *het* as [ət] and, in particular, the [r] glide before [ət] in Kaaps are indicative of the stabilisation of [ət] as inflectional ending rather than variable clitic.

References

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Addenda

Constructions restricted to Small (1965)

In Kanna, Small uses forms and constructions not encountered in the other Kaaps texts. For example, the regularised PP *gekan* is found in *'t* ***gekan*** *werk* 'was able to work', ***gekan*** *kom haal het* 'was able to fetch', etc. (cf. Hendricks 2016:24). Contextually, *gekan* seems to be an equivalent of *kon* in the standard variety – and, incidentally, only used by Kanna in the play. Constructions with *het* preceding a modal auxiliary, as in ***het*** *gekan doen* 'was able to do' resemble the recessive realis construction *het kon* + verb in the standard language. Utterances such as *Kietie* ***het*** *vir ma* ***moet gesôre het*** (p52) 'Kietie had to look after mom' and *toe****'t*** *sy weer 'n anner werk* ***wil gedoen het*** (p54) 'then she wanted to take on another job', beginning as well as ending with *het*, seem to form a diachronic bridge between the realis (*het* first) and modal + PP + *het* constructions.

Table 3. Present or preterite of modal auxiliary before PP + het.

Modal aux.		past tense	irrealis	epistemic	Total
sal/sil[4]	TK		7	13	20
	T		6	6	12
	R		8		8
	F		2	4	6
	S		6		6
sou	TK		16	3	19
	F			1	1
wil	TK	14			14
	T	5			5
	R	14			14
	F	7			7
	S	4			4
wou	TK	15	5		20
	R		2		2
moet	TK		3	17	20
	T	3	1	2	6
	R	16	5	1	21

[4] The variant used by Small.

	F	1			1
	S	1	6		7
moes	TK	2	6	11	19
	T		1		1
	R	1	1		1
	F	1			1
kan	TK	5		10	15
	T	8	2		10
	R	18			18
	F			1	1
	S	3	2		5
kon	TK	5	7	8	20
	R	1			1
	S		1		1
might	T		1		1
hoef nie	R	1			1

TK: Search in Taalkommissiekorpus: Modal aux + PP + *het*
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