

The Lost Orthography of Dr. Alamirew Gebre-Hiwet

A Personal Foreword by Daniel Yacob

October 1, 2022

I met Dr. Alamirew in early January of 2004 along with Dr. Bezza Tesfaw from Addis Ababa University's Department of Language and Literature. We traveled together to the Ethiopian Coffee & Tea Authority where Dr. Alamirew was the organization head. Dr. Alamirew had been an enthusiastic contributor when the Quality and Standards Authority of Ethiopia (now the Ethiopian Standard Agency) issued a public call for participation in the specification of the national character set (alphabet) standard. I understood that he had made the single biggest contribution from the public, and his input was incorporated into the final standard, ES 781:2002 "Ethiopic Character Set".

I was eager to meet with him to hear explanations and gain an understanding for a number of his submitted letters. Due to a defect in the published standard, the phonetic details for some of the letters were absent. It was also surprising that the letters he had found necessary for the Ethiopian Agaw languages had not been in use by the closely related Eritrean language, Blin. The Blin language in turn had an established practice of writing for some 120 years, and conferences held between Blin and Agaw scholars in recent years had discussed a common orthography without any complications. Thus the new letters surfacing as late as 2002 were more than a little curious at best.

To our relief, we found Dr. Alamirew to be unassuming, gracious, humble, grounded and more than happy to talk about the history of the Waag- Khimira and the languages and dialects of the region. Dr. Alamirew was a native speaker of the Xamtanga dialect, and like myself, not a linguist by training, but self-taught to the point where he had gained a command of basic phonetics and phonology. His motivation was clearly to benefit the state of the Waag-Khimira people through in-language primary school education. He presented us with elementary school primers that he had worked on, and stressed that the unavailability of Ethiopic (Ge'ez) letters to write in the language clearly would hold his people back from greater education and development at the level of Amharic speakers.

Dr. Alamirew had submitted a sizable collection of new letters for the Ximtanga language, most of which were not accepted by the committee developing the ES-781 standard. Among those that were admitted were the letter family, and its labializations, to support the 'ɣ' phoneme under the letter shape basis ፺. The new letter was derived from the familiar the ፺ letter family used for the 'ŋ' phoneme, well known for its use in the Blin language. He believed that the same sound was found in Blin but in writing practice both 'ŋ' and 'ɣ' conflated to the rendering with ፺. He had

Also included in the standard to support Agaw languages were the two labializations of ኦ and ዐ written as ኦ፡, and ዐ፡ respectively. In 1998, during an earlier process that led up to the ES-781 effort, the Region 3 Administrative Bureau had submitted an inventory of Agaw letters with the descriptive title "የኦ፡ ዐ፡ ፡፡፡" that included the same labializations ኦ፡, and ዐ፡, but also added ዐ፡. It may in fact have been the Region 3 Bureau that was the source for the two of these letters that appeared in the standard and not Dr. Alamirew, nonetheless he was happy to review them with us.

I left with the impression that Dr. Alamirew was a brilliant man driven by the passion to better the well-being of his people. But also felt that there was insufficient established use of the letters demonstrated to promote them to the international level at this time. I would however offer to help

with font and keyboard utilities to then lower the technical barriers for their utilization, thus giving the letters a better chance at becoming established. I emphasized the importance of developing lists of words that required the letters, that could not be spelt without them. A point that he seemed to appreciate, he could offer some examples off the top of his head and said that he would work on tracking more.

We stayed in touch after our meeting at his office in Addis Ababa and I would later approach a short time later to prepare the Xamtanga translation of the “What is Unicode” introduction document hosted by the Unicode Consortium¹. After a break of a few years, I heard from him again in early 2008, he was now working at the Ethiopian Civil Service College at the Institute of Distance Education. His attention now was on developing a paper that would review a linguistic introduction to Ximtanga language, its dialects (such as Xamtanga) and relationship to its siblings in the Agaw language Agaw family. He was also determined to undertake the development of a Ximtanga dictionary modeled after the Blin dictionary of Dr. Kiflemariam Hamde.

Dr. Alamirew emailed a draft paper that he was working on but it was impossible to read on my end due to the mix of computer fonts in use and disparities in our computer environments. Very resourcefully, he had used the fragments of letters from various fonts to compose new whole letter shapes for the Agaw language. We would have to rely on traditional postal mail to exchange paper print outs of documents. We could continue to communicate well up until the end of the year and I would work on a Unicode compatible font for his letter additions and the start of a keyboard software to type them. Then, for reasons that I can no longer recall, we would lose touch again until 2012.

When I heard from him again in 2012, I can say that he was back with a vengeance and seemingly more inspired than ever. In June of that year, he informed me that his Agaw language school primer was being used in 105 government schools. He had written a Khimtanga grammar book that was waiting on funding to be worked out for publishing to proceed. Dr. Alamirew had started on not one, but two dictionaries. The first was a “*Khimtanga Dictionary*”, the other was a “*Geez-Amharic-Tigringa-Khimtanga quadrilingual dictionary*”. The working title of another project was the “*The Origin and Development of the Agew Language*”, and he was also “*...writing the relationship of the Agew sister languages*”. All of this new work would be based on yet another accomplishment, the development of a “*...proto-Agew alphabet which can serve all Agew branches*”.

We just started to get on a good track with communication when I entered into a new job in August which would demand my full effort and attention until I became settled. I would have to put the project aside and apologized to Dr. Alamirew telling him that I would be in touch again just as soon as I was able. That opportunity would not come for another eight months and when I finally wrote him with an update, no response would ever arrive. I suspected that he must have been upset with me for disappearing and the thought of it tormented me and plagued me with a sense of guilt. After another month went by with no response, I phoned to apologize, but heard the sad news from a relative that he had passed away in the previous year. He was only 59 years of age.

His passing came as a great shock to me. It was the very definition of an untimely loss; he was robbed of years that he should have had to enjoy with his family, extra years that he should have lived to see the fruits of his labor. It seemed unfair that someone so willing and determined to work for the

¹ <https://www.unicode.org/standard/translations/xamtanga.html>

benefit of society should be taken so soon. There is also the loss of the linguistic work that was so close to being realized, surely it would have been the start of Agaw renaissance at some level. At the time I also felt that I had contributed to this loss and had let him down. His passing became a lesson in the unexpected frailty of life, that we can *never* take for granted, and the risk inherit with putting meaningful projects off for later. Its only now that I have thought to consider if perhaps, he might have known that his health was in trouble and this might have also been behind his motivation to accomplish so much work suddenly.

Dr. Alamiraw's dictionaries, grammar book, and other works may be lost forever unless his family is able to recover and develop them to completion. The following paper is one that he emailed me on September 24th of 2008. I have not changed it qualitatively, and have no more than addressed minor grammatical issues, applied formatting, and used a custom font for his letters—all for the benefit of clarity. Members of the “Agew Himra (አገው ኸምራ)” Facebook group have also graciously provided translations in a number of cases where they were missing in the tables of word examples.

Noteworthy in the new Ximtanga orthography that he presents is the absence of the ᐃ (ፍጳ) labialized syllable that had appeared in the ES-781:2002 inventory, and the return of ᐃ (wጳ). Most interesting, perhaps, are the five labializations in ᐃ: ᐃᐃ, ᐃᐃᐃ, ᐃᐃᐃᐃ, ᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃ, and ᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃᐃ. Since the ‘ᐃ’ glyph was reassigned the phonetic value of “wᐃ” for graphic consistency with the other labializations; the new letter shape ‘ᐃ’ was introduced to embody the ‘lo’ syllable. An adjustment that is actually *more* graphically consistent with the conventions of the syllabary as a whole.

The *Proto-Agaw* orthography that he had arrived at by 2012 has been reconstructed from email exchanges and presented as an appendix to the paper. It is not entirely clear if the “proto” aspect refers to the initial table of letter that are common to all letters, or is also meant to encompass the additional tables with language-specific additions. My sense is that the former interpretation is what he intended.

I cannot otherwise vouch for the linguistic accuracy of the materials, nor would I endeavor to try and correct anything that Dr. Alamirew has asserted through them. My intention in publishing this last paper now is to give voice to Dr. Alamirew, in his own words, so that his much beloved community might hear them. With the passing of Dr. Alamirew, the people of the Waag Himra lost a most passionate champion of their language and culture who was fighting an unseen battle for linguistic justice and recognition that few will ever know had been waged. It is left to the intellectuals, educators and thought leaders in the Agaw language communities to consider the progress that he achieved and decide to further the cause.

The Phonology and Orthography of Ximtanga

Dr. Alamirew Gebre-Hiwet

ዶ/ር አላምረው ገብረህወት

መስከረም ፲፬ ቀን ፳፻፩ ዓ/ም

The Ximtanga (also Khimtanga, **ኸምጣኛ**) language is a Central Cushitic language spoken by the Ximira (Khimira) people who live in the Waag-Khimira Special Administrative Zone within the Amhara National Regional State Administration. At its northern tip, the Waag-Khimira region borders geographic key areas of the southern extent of the Tigray National Regional State Administration in the central northeastern parts of Ethiopia. The language is classified as Northern Central Cushitic or Eastern Agaw subgroup and as such it belongs to the Cushitic branch of the Afro-Asiatic language family.

This subgroup of the Agaw language is also known as the Lasta, Tekezzie or Teheraz Agaw in various literatures. Within Ximtanga there are many dialects, all of which are mutually intelligible to speakers. Ximtanga's major dialect is found in the language's northern region and is called Xamtanga (also Khamtanga, **ኸምጣኛ**) and the people refer to themselves as the Xamra (Khamra, **ኸምራ**). The other dialects include the Avergelle, Zeqhala, Sahala (Semien), Teladjie, Sekota district and Sekota town vicinity, Tsagibdji, Dibirsael, Dara and Zata.

There are an estimated one and half million speakers of Ximtanga including monolinguals, bilinguals and trilinguals. Monolingual population is estimated to at approximately 200,000. Most speakers of the language live in the Waag-Khimira Special Zone Administration of the Amhara Region, but there are also a significant number of speakers of the language in certain areas of the neighboring southern parts of the Tigray National Regional State Administration. A significant number of Ximtanga speakers dwell in the capital city, Addis Ababa, with an estimated population of up to 3,000 and reside in the hundreds in other towns of Ethiopia, scattered in Dessie, Woldia, Adama (Nazareth), Modjo, etc.

Ximiras are predominantly agriculturalists. Presently they have started living in newly emerging local towns following the openings of the highway road infrastructures in all directions.

Phonology: Sound System

Vowels

Ximtanga has seven ordered Ge'ez based "Abugida" vowels. Surprisingly, some past research has indicated that only five vowels are present in the language. These researchers are advised to reevaluate their sources and informants. Examples of the seven vowels:

Closed Frontal Vowel “i” (ኢ):

- አቲና (atina): bamboo
- አቢር (abir): big goat
- ቢራ (bira): an ox
- አቪ (avi): godfather
- ቺምታ (tjimta): young bull

Closed Central Vowel “ɨ” (ኢ):

- እጅር (idɛir): man
- እውና (iwna): woman
- አቭን (avin): stranger
- ቢትላ (bitila): rabbit

Closed Back Vowel “u” (ኡ):

- ብቡ (bibu): he swam
- ቡ (bu): he didn’t find
- ክሩ (kiru): he died
- ገሽ (jɨju): struggle

Middle Frontal Vowel “e” (ኤ):

- እደን (iden): than
- እኔን (inen): this
- ደሴ (dasse): Dessie (city)

Middle Central Vowel “a” (አ):

- አትራ (atira): peas
- ባጽ (batɕ): ax
- ላ (la): hundred
- ሻ (ja): the third day
- አ (a): ice

Middle Back Vowel “o” (ኦ):

- ሻሾ (jafo): name of a type of millet
- ባዶ (bado): empty or zero
- ፊረኖ (firəno): to go, going

Open Central Vowel “ə” (ኦ/ኦ):

- ኦረ (əra): oh!
- አበ (abə): mountain

Notes on Orthography

- a) In Ximtanga orthography አ = ኧ, i.e., አ carries the same “ə” phoneme of ኧ in Amharic orthography.
- b) When standing alone in a Ximtanga lexicon, nouns are presented in their underived form which generally ends in “a”. When employed in sentence construction nouns change their endings to “ə”. For example, as loan words:

ለላ (lələ): bee

ቃና (qana): wood

ወያ (wəya): “price” or “value”

When found in sentence construction the nouns become inflected in “ə” as per:

ለለ ተሩ (lələ tərū): bee came

ኸኸ ቀሰው ቃነ ኪሉ (ገጸገ k’əsəw k’anə kilu): he cut good wood

ኸየው ወየ ፊሱ (xīyəw wəyə fisu): it is expensive

- c) Some monosyllabic and bisyllabic nouns, however, remain uninflected, e.g.:

አ (a): ice

ላ (la): hundred

ትላ (tīla): medicine

ብላ (bīla): Amhara

Semivowels

The most distinct characteristic of spoken Ximtanga is the presence of the ‘w’ and ‘y’ semivowels. In written Ximtanga, almost all consonant phonemes are eligible for the additional five ordered ‘w’ labiovelar variants of the Ethiopic syllabary. The following eleven sets of five ordered ‘w’ labialized semivowels are those that occur frequently and have become part of Ximtanga orthography.

	ወ	ወገ	ወላ	ወይ	ወፋ
k	ከ	ከገ	ከላ	ከይ	ከፋ
x	ኸ	ኸገ	ኸላ	ኸይ	ኸፋ
k’	ቁ	ቁገ	ቁላ	ቁይ	ቁፋ
ፅ’	ቈ	ቈገ	ቈላ	ቈይ	ቈፋ
h	ሀ	ሀገ	ሀላ	ሀይ	ሀፋ
g	ገ	ገገ	ገላ	ገይ	ገፋ
ገ	ኸ	ኸገ	ኸላ	ኸይ	ኸፋ
m	መ	መገ	መላ	መይ	መፋ
l	ሉ	ሉገ	ሉላ	ሉይ	ሉፋ
b	ቡ	ቡገ	ቡላ	ቡይ	ቡፋ
s’	ጸ	ጸገ	ጸላ	ጸይ	ጸፋ

Word formation examples with semivowel “w’:

ወ	ወ	ወ	ወ	ወ
አከ (ak ^w ə): five	ከ (k ^w i): cover	ሚካ (mik ^w a): thread		ከለ (k ^w ilə): bark ልከ (lik ^w i): foot
ከው (x ^w ənəw): to eat		ከይ (x ^w aj): eat		ከር (x ^w ir): son
ቁለ (k ^w ələ): hot area	ቀንቅንው (k ^w ink’nənəw): hold a grudge	ቀጃቀ (k ^w anj ^w a): language		እቀ (ik ^w i): breast
እቄ (i ^w): coughing		እቄ (i ^w): laughter		እቀ (a ^w): water
ርሀ (rh ^w ə): life, breath				ርሀ (ri ^w i): breath
ገው (g ^w ənəw): to stand	ገኑ (g ^w inu): minimized	ገ (g ^w anə): group	ዛጌ (zag ^w e): of the Agaw	እገ (ig ^w i): grinding mill
ዝመ (zm ^w ə):		እግ (im ^w a): kissing		መጽና (m ^w ts’na): big goat
ሎዋ (l ^w əwa): one	ሎ (l ^w i): an old cow			ሎል (l ^w il): <i>(translation missing)*</i>
ሎዋ (b ^w əwa): <i>(translation missing)*</i>		እምግ (mb ^w a): the sound a cow makes		
				ጽዊቱ (ts ^w i ^w itu): became sick ጽውራ (ts ^w i ^w ira): catchment

For the remaining consonants the fourth order ‘w’ semivowels are listed here as they occur frequently: ሰ (s^wa), ሸ (^wa), ረ (r^wa), ሰ (b^wa), ሸ (v^wa), ታ (t^wa), ቸ (t^wa), ና (n^wa), ና (ገ^wa), ዋ (w^wa), አ (a^wa), ዘ (z^wa), ኃ (ጌ^wa), ደ (d^wa), ጀ (ጌ^wa), ጧ (t^wa), ጸ (p^wa), ፍ (f^wa) and ፒ (p^wa).

The semivowel ‘y’ appears in words with ‘e’, for example: እነን (inen, meaning “this”) pronounced as እንየን (inyən). Also, እደን (iden, meaning “that”) pronounced as እድየን (idyən). The presence of the ‘y’ semivowel is also a matter of dialect.

* A translation is missing in the original manuscript, if one is known by the reader, please contact yacob@geez.org .

Consonants

The Ximtanga language uses 30 basic consonants sounds (phonemes) and employs an additional five basic consonants for borrowed words from languages such as Ge'ez, Tigrigna, Arabic and a few others.

		Bilabial	Alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal
Stop/ Affricatives	Voiced	b (በ) b ^w (ቧ)	d (ደ)	dʒ (ጀ)	g (ገ) g ^w (ገገ)		
	Voiceless	v (ቨ) p (ፑ)	t (ተ)	tʃ (ቸ)	k (ከ) k ^w (ከገ)	ɣ' (ቸ) ɣ' ^w (ቸገ)	
	Ejectives	p' (ፑ')	t' (ፑ')	tʃ' (ቸ')			
Fricatives	Voiced		z (ዘ)	ʒ (ገፑ)			
	Voiceless	f (ፈ)	s (ሰ)	ʃ (ሸ)		x (ሻ) x ^w (ሻገ)	h (ሀ) h ^w (ሀገ)
	Ejectives		ʔ (ፑ) ʔ ^w (ፑገ)				
Nasal		m (መ)	n (ነ)		ɲ (ኸ) ɲ (ኸ) ɲ ^w (ኸገ)		
Lateral			l (ለ) l ^w (ለገ)				
Tap			r (ረ)				
Semivowels				ɣ (የ)	w (ወ)		

The frequencies of bilabials “b” and “v”, velar “k” and uvular “ɣ” phonemes are equivalent. Some analysts have reported incorrectly that Ximtanga does not have a bilabial “v” phoneme.

Example Word Formations:

Bilabials

በ (b)	በግ (bəg): a sheep	ባር (bar): first born	ቢል (bil): oxen	በቡ (bəbu): swam	ብረት (bīrət): iron
ቨ (v)	ብሽ (biv): snail	አቅቡ (aqibu): uphold	አርቨ (arivə): moon	ቅብር (qivar): millstone	ቀብን (qəvin): puerperal woman
ፐ (p)	ፖሊስ (polis): police	ፓርቲ (parti): party	ፑል (pul): pool	ፕሮብሌም (problem): problem	ፔንሲሊን (penisilin): penicillin
፳ (p')	፳፳ስ (p'ap'as): Pope	፳፳ (p'ipə): pupa	ላ፳ስ (lap'is): eraser	፳፳ (p'ap'u): the sound an ape makes	፳ንጤ (p'ent'ə): Pente
ፈ (f)	ፊግዩ (figəyə): wind	ፋዙ (fazu): destroyed	ፊርዘ (firzə): a horse	ፋ (fu): got out, left	ፍራ (fira): fruit

Velar

ቀ (k')	ቀብራ (k'avra): string	ቅብሩ (k'ibru): he flew down	ቃብሩ (k'abru): he walked	በቂል (bək'il): beans	ነቁ (nək'u): despised
ኘ (ŋ)	እኘ (iŋə): mother	ሸኘ (jəŋə): hump	እኘኘ (iŋiŋu): final days of July	ገኘ (gəŋə): small rounded wooden ball	ኘኘ (jəŋə): praise worthy name
ኘ (ŋ)	ኘኘ (ŋəŋ): he	ኘኘ (fiŋu): he found	ኘ (ŋi): she is	ኘይ (ŋay): they	ኘን (ŋin): fruit
ወ (w)	ወነ (wəŋə): owner	ዊዝሩ (wiziru): female name	ወጥዩ (wit'yu): ran away	ዋርዳ (fira): play (noun)	ዊርቃ (fira): gold

Uvular

ቐ (b')	አቐ (ab'ə): happenings	ቃል (b'al): look! (imperative)	ምቃ (mib'a): shepherd	ቃም (b'am): hill top	አርቐ (arə'u): he knew	አቐ (ab'i): inside	ጫቐኝ (t'ab'it): urinated
ኸ (x)	ብርኽ (bīrxə): light	ኸ (xu): ate	ኸር (xir): drought	ኸኝ (xəŋ): fool	እኸር (axur): let you give birth to	ብርኽ (bīrxi): let you light up	ኸርኽ (xarvə): blind

Pharyngeal

ሀ (h)	ሃቅ (hak'): true	ብሃር (bīhar): see	ሀብር (hivir): diversity, character	ሩሄ (ruhe): life, breath	ምሃዝ/ሃ (mīhazə/a): salary, wage
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Palatals

፫ (dʒ)	፫ና (dʒana): elephant	፫ን፫ል (fɪndʒal): coffee cup
ቸ (tʃ)	ቸን (tʃin): head	ቸሉኝ (tʃəlunʷ): could (they)
ጨ (tʃʰ)	ጨራ (tʃʰara): winter	ጨራ (tʃʰara): coniferous tree
ገ (ʒ)	ብገ (biʒə): open	
ገ (ʃ)	ገንጣ (ʃantʰa): bag	

Pronouns

Singular	Verb “To Be”	Plural	Plural Verb “To Be”
ያን/አን (yan/an): I	የኝ (yəŋ): I am	ይን (yin): we	የኝ (yəŋ): we are
ክት (kit): you	የኝ (yəŋ): you are	ክትን (kitin): you (all)	የኝ (yəŋ): you (all) are
ክት (kit): you	የኝ (yəŋ): you are	ክትን (kitin): you	የኝ (yəŋ): you (all) are
ኸኸ (hihi): he	የኝ (yəŋ): he is	ኸታይ (hitay): they	ኸይ (hiy): they are
ኸር (hir): she	ኸ (hi): she is	ኸታይ (hitay): they	ኸይ (hiy): they are

N.B.: Plural formation of Ximtanga consists of plenty of rules (around 30) which depend on a word's ending phonemes.

Gemination

Ximtanga has gemination and no-gemination. For example, “ጨቁ” (tʃkʰu) without gemination means “he made bad” while it means “he appealed” when geminated (tʃkkʰu).

Orthography

Ximtanga has adopted the Ethiopic (Ge'ez) Abugida syllabary by making some extensions on the basic sound systems since May of 1995. Basic elementary education is being provided up to the fourth-grade level with the language being taught up to the eighth grade. The Unicode Consortium has adopted the Ethiopic syllabary including its supplements. It adds the ŋ, ɸ, x and h phonemes to the Ethiopic abugida writing system together with its ŋʷ, ɸʷ, xʷ and hʷ labiovelars variants. However, Unicode has not yet included the Ximtanga letters needed for the labiovelar phonemes of: lʷ, aʷ, wʷa and sʷ.

The Ximtanga Syllabary

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	(4 ^w)
IPA	ə	u	i	a	e	ɨ	o	^{wa}
h	ሀ	ሁ	ሂ	ሃ	ሄ	ህ	ሆ	
h ^w	ሀ።		ሁ፡	ሂ፡	ሃ፡	ህ፡		
l	ለ	ሉ	ሊ	ላ	ሌ	ል	ሎ	
l ^w	ለ።		ሊ፡	ላ፡	ሌ፡	ል፡		
m	መ	ሙ	ሚ	ማ	ሜ	ም	ሞ	
m ^w	መ።		ሚ፡	ማ፡	ሜ፡	ም፡		
r	ረ	ሩ	ሪ	ራ	ሬ	ር	ሮ	ሯ
s	ሰ	ሱ	ሲ	ሳ	ሴ	ስ	ሶ	ሷ
ʃ	ሸ	ሹ	ሺ	ሻ	ሼ	ሽ	ሾ	ሿ
k'	ቀ	ቁ	ቂ	ቃ	ቄ	ቅ	ቆ	
k' ^w	ቀ።		ቂ፡	ቃ፡	ቄ፡	ቅ፡		
k''	ቐ	ቑ	ቒ	ቃ	ቄ	ቅ	ቆ	
b	በ	ቡ	ቢ	ባ	ቤ	ብ	ቦ	
b ^w	በ።		ቢ፡	ባ፡	ቤ፡	ብ፡		
v	ቨ	ቩ	ቪ	ቫ	ቬ	ቭ	ቮ	ቯ
t	ተ	ቱ	ቲ	ታ	ቼ	ት	ቶ	ቷ
ʈ	ቸ	ቹ	ቺ	ቻ	ቼ	ች	ቼ	ቿ
n	ነ	ኑ	ኒ	ና	ኔ	ን	ኖ	ኗ
ɲ	ኘ	ኙ	ኚ	ኝ	ኞ	ኟ	አ	ኡ
a	አ	ሁ	ሊ	አ	ኤ	እ	አ	ኢ
k	ከ	ኩ	ኪ	ካ	ኬ	ክ	ኮ	
k ^w	ከ።		ኪ፡	ካ፡	ኬ፡	ክ፡		
x	ኸ	ኹ	ኺ	ኻ	ኼ	ኽ	ኾ	
x ^w	ኸ።		ኺ፡	ኻ፡	ኼ፡	ኽ፡		
w	ወ	ዉ	ዊ	ዋ	ዌ	ው	ዎ	ደ
z	ዘ	ዙ	ዚ	ዛ	ዜ	ዝ	ዞ	ዟ
ʒ	ዠ	ዡ	ዢ	ዣ	ዤ	ዥ	ዦ	ዧ
y	የ	ዩ	ዪ	ያ	ዬ	ይ	ዮ	
d	ደ	ዱ	ዲ	ዳ	ዴ	ድ	ዶ	ዷ
ɖ	ዸ	ዹ	ዺ	ዻ	ዼ	ዽ	ዿ	ዺ
g	ገ	ጉ	ጊ	ጋ	ጌ	ግ	ጎ	
g ^w	ገ።		ጊ፡	ጋ፡	ጌ፡	ግ፡		
ŋ	ገ	ጉ	ጊ	ጋ	ጌ	ግ	ጎ	
ŋ ^w	ገ።		ጊ፡	ጋ፡	ጌ፡	ግ፡		
t'	ጠ	ጡ	ጢ	ጣ	ጤ	ጥ	ጦ	ጧ
ʈ'	ጨ	ጨ፡	ጨ፡	ጨ፡	ጨ፡	ጨ፡	ጨ፡	
p'	ጸ	ጹ	ጺ	ጻ	ጼ	ጽ	ጾ	ጿ
s'	ሰ	ሱ	ሲ	ሳ	ሴ	ስ	ሶ	
s' ^w	ሰ።		ሲ፡	ሳ፡	ሴ፡	ስ፡		
f	ፈ	ፋ	ፊ	ፋ	ፌ	ፍ	ፎ	ፋ
p	ፐ	ፑ	ፒ	ፓ	ፔ	ፕ	ፖ	ፓ

Letters to write borrowed words from Tigrinya, Ge'ez, and Arabic.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
IPA	ə	u	i	a	e	ɨ	o
ከ	ሐ	ሑ	ሒ	ሓ	ሔ	ሕ	ሐ
ፍ	ሠ	ሡ	ሢ	ሣ	ሤ	ሥ	ሦ
ከ	ኀ	ኁ	ኂ	ኃ	ኄ	ኅ	ኆ
ከ	ዐ	ዑ	ዒ	ዓ	ዔ	ዕ	ዖ

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Appendix: The Proto-Agaw Syllabary

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	(4 ^w)
IPA	ə	u	i	a	e	ɨ	o	^w a
h	ሀ	ሁ	ሂ	ሃ	ሄ	ህ	ሆ	
l	ለ	ሉ	ሊ	ላ	ሌ	ል	ሎ	
m	መ	ሙ	ሚ	ማ	ሜ	ም	ሞ	
r	ረ	ሩ	ሪ	ራ	ሬ	ር	ሮ	ሩ ^w
s	ሰ	ሱ	ሲ	ሳ	ሴ	ስ	ሶ	ሲ ^w
ʃ	ሸ	ሹ	ሺ	ሻ	ሼ	ሽ	ሾ	ሺ ^w
k'	ቀ	ቁ	ቂ	ቃ	ቄ	ቅ	ቆ	
k ^w	ቸ	ቹ	ቺ	ቻ	ቼ	ች	ቾ	
b	በ	ቡ	ቢ	ባ	ቤ	ብ	ቦ	
v	ቨ	ቩ	ቪ	ቫ	ቬ	ቭ	ቮ	ቪ ^w
t	ተ	ቱ	ቲ	ታ	ቲ	ት	ቶ	ቲ ^w
ʈ	ቸ	ቹ	ቺ	ቻ	ቼ	ች	ቾ	ቸ ^w
n	ነ	ኑ	ኒ	ና	ኔ	ን	ኖ	ኒ ^w
ɲ	ኸ	ኹ	ኺ	ኻ	ኼ	ኽ	ኾ	ኺ ^w
a	አ	ኡ	ኢ	ኣ	ኤ	እ	ኦ	
k	ከ	ኩ	ኪ	ካ	ኤ	ከ	ኮ	
x	ኸ	ኹ	ኺ	ኻ	ኼ	ኽ	ኾ	
w	ወ	ዉ	ዐ	ዑ	ዒ	ወ	ዐ	
z	ዘ	ዙ	ዚ	ዛ	ዞ	ዘ	ዙ	ዘ ^w
ʒ	ዝ	ዞ	ዟ	ዠ	ዡ	ዝ	ዞ	ዝ ^w
y	የ	ዩ	ዪ	ያ	ዬ	ይ	ዮ	
d	ደ	ዱ	ዲ	ዳ	ዴ	ድ	ዶ	ዲ ^w
ɗ	ደ	ዱ	ዲ	ዳ	ዴ	ድ	ዶ	ዲ ^w
g	ገ	ጉ	ጊ	ጋ	ጌ	ግ	ገ	
ŋ	ገ	ጉ	ጊ	ጋ	ጌ	ግ	ገ	
t'	ጠ	ጡ	ጢ	ጣ	ጤ	ጥ	ጦ	ጢ ^w
ʈ'	ጠ	ጡ	ጢ	ጣ	ጤ	ጥ	ጦ	ጢ ^w
p'	ጸ	ጹ	ጺ	ጻ	ጼ	ጽ	ጾ	ጺ ^w
s'	ጸ	ጹ	ጺ	ጻ	ጼ	ጽ	ጾ	
f	ፈ	ፋ	ፊ	ፋ	ፌ	ፍ	ፎ	ፊ ^w
p	ፐ	ፑ	ፒ	ፓ	ፔ	ፕ	ፖ	ፒ ^w

Letters of Awngi (አውጂ) and Kemantney (ኸመንትነይ, also known as “Qemant”)

	ə	u	i	a	e	(ɪ)	o
ɣ	ኀ	ኁ	ኂ	ኃ	ኄ	ኅ	ኆ
ɣʷ	ኀ።	—	ኁ።	ኃ።	ኄ።	ኅ።	—

Letters of Blin (ብሊን)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
IPA	ə	u	i	a	e	ɪ	o
ከ	ሐ	ሑ	ሒ	ሓ	ሔ	ከ	ሐ
?	ሐ	ሐ።	ሒ።	ሓ።	ሔ።	ከ።	ሐ።

Labiovelars used by all languages

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
IPA	ə	u	i	a	e	ɪ	o
kʷ	ኼ	—	ኻ።	ኼ	ኼ	ኻ።	—
kʷ	ከ።	—	ከ።	ከ።	ከ።	ከ።	—
xʷ	ኸ።	—	ኸ።	ኸ።	ኸ።	ኸ።	—
gʷ	ኀ።	—	ኀ።	ኀ።	ኀ።	ኀ።	—
ŋʷ	ኀ።	—	ኀ።	ኀ።	ኀ።	ኀ።	—

Labiovelars used by Blin only

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
IPA	ə	u	i	a	e	ɪ	o
kʷ	ኼ	—	ኻ።	ኼ	ኼ	ኻ።	—

Labiovelars of Ximtanga

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
IPA	ə	u	i	a	e	ɪ	o
hʷ	ከ።	—	ከ።	ከ።	ከ።	ከ።	—
lʷ	ከ።	—	ከ።	ከ።	ከ።	ከ።	—
mʷ	ከ።	—	ከ።	ከ።	ከ።	ከ።	—
bʷ	ከ።	—	ከ።	ከ።	ከ።	ከ።	—
sʷ	ከ።	—	ከ።	ከ።	ከ።	ከ።	—

Ximtanga will use the fourth order labializations ከ።, and ከ።.