In John Huehnergard & Naʿama Pat-El (eds.) 2019.
The Semitic languages. London; Routledge, 227–256.

CHAPTER 10

GURAGE (MUHER)[1]

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1 INTRODUCTION

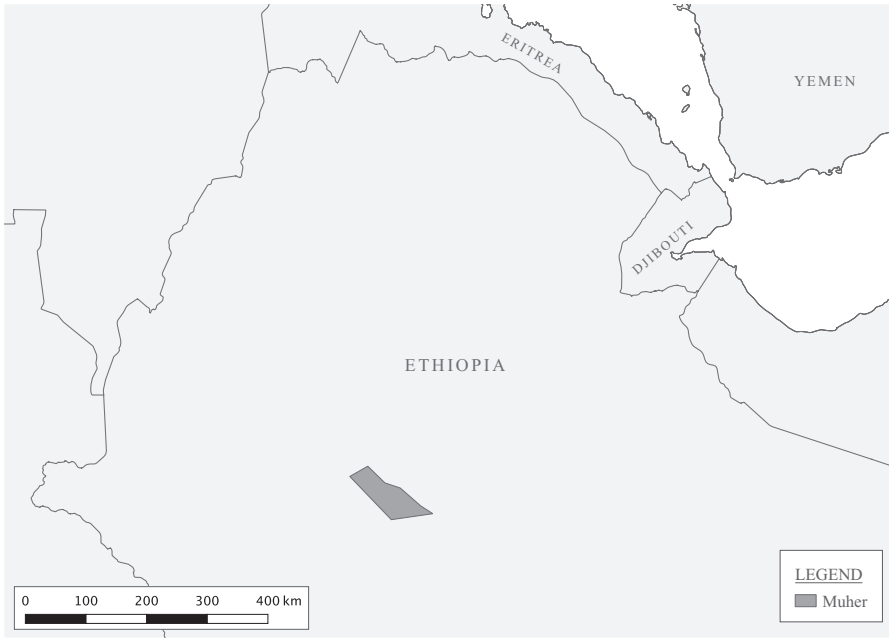
Surrounded by speakers of Cushitic and Omotic languages, *Gurage* is the southernmost extension of Ethiosemitic. Historically, Gurage is a toponym, but does not refer to a uniform ethnolinguistic group (cf. Meyer 2011: 1220–4). Geo-politically, Gurage refers to the inhabitants of the Gurage Zone in southern Ethiopia, viz., the Wolane and Gunnän Gurage (Map 10.1). Formerly, the Silt'e were also part of the Gurage Zone, but established their own zone in 2001, whereas the Zay live among the Oromo. Estimates of the Gurage population range from three to five million. Bilingualism with Amharic, the official language in the Gurage Zone, is widespread.

Linguistically, Gurage comprises two distinct genetic branches: East Gurage (with Silt'e, Wolane, Zay) as part of Transversal South Ethiosemitic, and Gunnän Gurage (i.e., all languages in Figure 10.1 except Gafat) belonging to Outer South Ethiosemitic. Within Gunnän Gurage, Muher, Kistane, Dobbi (and Galila) form the Northern Gurage group (cf. Hetzron 1972: 119):

SUBGROUP 1 (with MVM *-*n*)
†Gafat
Kistane, Dobbi and †Galila
SUBGROUP 2 (with MVM *-*tt*)
Muher (*ädi bet* and *anä bet* dialects)
WESTERN GURAGE (WG)
Mesqan
CENTRAL AND PERIPHERAL WG
CENTRAL WG dialect continuum: Chaha, Ezha, Gumer, Gura
PERIPHERAL WG dialect continuum: Inor, Ener, Endegagn, Gyeta, †Mesmes

FIGURE 10.1 OUTER SOUTH ETHIOSEMITIC

The subgrouping and classification of the Gurage varieties in distinct languages and related dialects is still under discussion (cf. Hudson 2013: 11–34). This chapter focuses only on the little known *ädi-bet* variety of Muher.[2]



MAP 10.1 THE MUHER SPEECH AREA

2 WRITING SYSTEM

Apart from Silt'e, which has been written since 1982 and used as medium of instruction in primary schools since 1995, Gurage varieties are limited to oral communication. There is no written literary tradition, except for a few recent works, written in a modified Ethiopic script.[3] The earliest known Gurage text, from the mid-19th century, is the translation of the Gospels of Matthew and John into Kistane.[4] Later, other Kistane and Chaha texts followed (Goldenberg 2009: 186–8), which all are written in a modified *fidel*, with additional graphemes for labialized and palatalized consonants (Meyer 2016a: 154). In 2013, the Gurage Zone established a Language Board to promote and standardize Gurage, and ratified an official Gurage script, similar to the previous modified Ethiopic script (see Fekede 2015: 275 for the script table), which is shown in Table 10.1.[5]

Like the original Ethiopic script, the current Gurage script is an alphasyllabary (or abugida) with symbols that mainly represent consonant-vowel sequences, but do not indicate vowel length, diphthongs, gemination or stress. The column *Cä* shows the basic graphemes, which – in contrast to the original Ethiopic script – are regularly pronounced with the vowel *ä*, even with gutturals. Thus, ዐ ሐ <ʔä hä> are uttered [ʔä hä], not [ʔa ha] found in other Ethiosemitic languages. The Gurage script has additional graphemes for palatal (C^{j}) and labial (C^{w}) coarticulated consonants.

Among Muslim Gurage, particularly those who are literate in Arabic, a modified Arabic script (Ajäm) is used for writing. So far only a few Ajäm texts have been published for Silt'e (see Hussein 2010: 49, Wagner 1983).

TABLE 10.1 CURRENT PAN-GUNNÄN GURAGE SCRIPT

Consonant (C)	*Cä*	*Cu*	*Ci*	*Ca*	*Ce*	*C(ɨ)*	*Co*
h	ሐ	ሑ	ሒ	ሓ	ሔ	ሕ	ሖ
ç/h^{j}	ሗ	ሑ	ሒ	ሓ	ሔ	ሕ	ሖ
h^{w}	ሏ		ሒ	ሓ	ሔ	ሕ	
l	ለ	ሉ	ሊ	ላ	ሌ	ል	ሎ
m	መ	መ	ሚ	ማ	ሜ	ም	ሞ
m^{w}	መ		ሚ	ማ	ሜ	ም	
r	ረ	ሩ	ሪ	ራ	ሬ	ር	ሮ
s	ሰ	ሱ	ሲ	ሳ	ሴ	ስ	ሶ
ʃ/s^{j}	ሸ	ሹ	ሺ	ሻ	ሼ	ሽ	ሾ
k'	ቀ	ቁ	ቂ	ቃ	ቄ	ቅ	ቆ
c'/k'^{j}	ቐ	ቑ	ቒ	ቓ	ቔ	ቕ	ቖ
k'^{w}	ቈ		ቊ	ቋ	ቌ	ቍ	
b	በ	ቡ	ቢ	ባ	ቤ	ብ	ቦ
b^{w}	ቩ		ቢ	ባ	ቤ	ብ	
v	ቨ	ቩ	ቪ	ቫ	ቬ	ቭ	ቮ
t	ተ	ቱ	ቲ	ታ	ቴ	ት	ቶ
ʧ/tʲ	ቸ	ቹ	ቺ	ቻ	ቼ	ች	ቾ
n	ነ	ኑ	ኒ	ና	ኔ	ን	ኖ
ɲ/n^{j}	ኘ	ኙ	ኚ	ኛ	ኜ	ኝ	ኞ
(ø or vowel)	አ	ኡ	ኢ	ኣ	ኤ	እ	ኦ
k	ከ	ኩ	ኪ	ካ	ኬ	ክ	ኮ
c/k^{j}	ኸ	ኹ	ኺ	ኻ	ኼ	ኽ	ኾ
k^{w}	ኰ		ኲ	ኳ	ኴ	ኵ	
w	ወ	ዉ	ዊ	ዋ	ዌ	ው	ዎ
ʔ	ዐ	ዑ	ዒ	ዓ	ዔ	ዕ	ዖ
z	ዘ	ዙ	ዚ	ዛ	ዜ	ዝ	ዞ
ʒ/z^{j}	ዠ	ዡ	ዢ	ዣ	ዤ	ዥ	ዦ
j	የ	ዩ	ዪ	ያ	ዬ	ይ	ዮ
d	ደ	ዱ	ዲ	ዳ	ዴ	ድ	ዶ
ʤ/d^{j}	ጀ	ጁ	ጂ	ጃ	ጄ	ጅ	ጆ
g	ገ	ጉ	ጊ	ጋ	ጌ	ግ	ጎ
ɟ/g^{j}	ጘ	ጙ	ጚ	ጛ	ጜ	ጝ	ጞ
g^{w}	ጐ		ጒ	ጓ	ጔ	ጕ	
t'	ጠ	ጡ	ጢ	ጣ	ጤ	ጥ	ጦ
ʧ'/tʲ'^{j}	ጨ	ጩ	ጪ	ጫ	ጬ	ጭ	ጮ
p'	ጰ	ጱ	ጲ	ጳ	ጴ	ጵ	ጶ
s'	ጸ	ጹ	ጺ	ጻ	ጼ	ጽ	ጾ
f	ፈ	ፉ	ፊ	ፋ	ፌ	ፍ	ፎ
f^{w}	ፏ		ፏ	ፏ	ፏ	ፏ	
p	ፐ	ፑ	ፒ	ፓ	ፔ	ፕ	ፖ
p^{w}	ፙ		ፙ	ፓ	ፔ	ፕ	

3 PHONOLOGY

3.1 Segmental phonemes

Besides the Muher consonant phonemes shown in Table 10.2, *p p' v s'* occur in loan words. Coarticulated consonants (C^{w} C^{j}) are phonemic *and* result from morphophonological processes (Rose 1997: 8, Leslau 1981: 9).[6] Singleton /b b^{w}/ have the allophones [β w] postvocalically, and [b b^{w}] elsewhere. In the coda, /h/ is optionally pronounced [h/χ];[7] /h^{w}/ is realized as [χ^{w}] or [h] plus back vowel: [χ^{w}ɔnä-m/hɔnä-m] 'become'.[8]

Although there is no systematic study of the development from Proto-Semitic to individual Gurage languages, the following general changes can be observed for Muher (cf. Kogan 2011, Hetzron 1969, 1977: 33–41):

- interdental and lateral fricatives change to (post-)alveolars: **ʕθ'm* > *at'im* 'bone', **ʔðun* > *inzin* 'ear', **θ'ipr* > *t'iɟir* 'nail', **ṣ̌ħk'*> *sak'-* 'to laugh'
- weakening of **k>h(>ø)*
- gutturals are lost (**Vs'bVʕ* > *at'ebät* 'finger', **ʔxz* > *(ʔ)ɛ͡äz-/ez-* 'to seize', **warx* > *wärä* 'month'), or merge to *ʔ,* which may yield the vocalic radical *A*[9] in roots (**ʕwd* > *(ʔ)od-* 'to tell', **ħlb* > *(ʔ)ajb* 'milk (n.)', **ħs'r* > √ A-t'-r 'make a fence', **xs'r* > √ A-t'-r 'be short', **ʃʕl* > √ s-A-l 'to ask')
- additional palatal consonants *c ɟ c' ç* beside common Ethiosemitic *ʧ ʤ ʧ' ʃ ʒ*
- additional labialized consonants *b^{w} f^{w} m^{w}* beside common Ethiosemitic *k^{w} g^{w} k'^{w} h^{w}*
- alternation and partial merger of **r *l *n* (see Fekede and Meyer 2015)

The phonemic status of the glottal stop is uncertain (Meyer 2011: 1226). Postvocalically, singleton /k' k'^{w}/ and less regularly /k'^{j}/ debuccalize to [ʔ ʔ^{w} (ʔ^{j})], e.g., (1b). Elsewhere, the glottal stop is limited to the word onset, where it is deleted or changes to the vocalic radical *A* if a prefix is attached. It is grouped with the unstable glides *j and w*, which tend to be weakened to vocoids (see below). Root-initial /w ʔ/ are deleted in the jussive base (for the inflection of the sound root, see Table 10.13 later).

(1) a √ ʔ/A-r-t'

j-art'-u. / *jä-(ø)rt'!*

3-cut.PCL.MSG-NPST:MVM 3-cut.PCS.MSG.TR

'He cuts/will cut.' 'Let him cut!'

b √ w-t'-k'

jɨ-wɔt'k'-u. / *jä-(ø)t'äʔ!*

3-fall.PCL.MSG-NPST:MVM 3-fall.PCS.MSG.INTR

'He falls/is falling/will fall.' 'Let him fall!'

TABLE 10.2 CONSONANTS

		Labial	*Alveolar*	*Palatal*				*Velar/ Glottal*
				Postalveolar		*Prevelar*		
Stop/	VL		*t*	*(t^{j}>)*	*ʧ*	*(k^{j}>)*	*c*	*k k^{w}*
Affricate	VD	*b b^{w}*	*d*	*(d^{j}>)*	*ʤ*	*(g^{j}>)*	*ɟ*	*g g^{w}*
	EJ		*t'*	*(t'^{j}>)*	*ʧ'*	*(k'^{j}>)*	*c'*	*k' k'^{w}*
Fricative	VL	*f f^{w}*	*s*	*(s^{j}>)*	*ʃ*	*(h^{j}>)*	*ç*	*h h^{w}*
	VD		*z*	*(z^{j}>)*	*ʒ*			
Nasal		*m m^{w}*	*n*			*ɲ ŋ*		
Liquid			*r l*					
Glide						*j*		*w ʔ*

TABLE 10.3 VOWELS

	Front	*Central*	*Back*
Close	*i*		*u*
Mid	*e*	*ɨ (ɘ)*	*o*
		ä (ɜ)	
Open		*a*	

Consonant mutation results from the partial changes **k>h*, **l>*j>ʲ*, and **ll>nn*. If the penultimate consonant of a root is affected, its realization in verb inflection may yield the singleton/geminate pairs *h/kk*, *ʲ/nn* or palatalized *ç/cc, ʲ/ɲɲ*, which are represented by the archiphonemes K, L and Kʲ, Lʲ (see Fekede and Meyer 2015).

Muher has seven vowel phonemes without phonemic length distinction (see Table 10.3).

The pronunciation of the central vowels is affected by vocoids and glides (2), and they may merge with adjacent vowels (2b). Mid *ä ɨ* (for IPA *ɜ ɘ*) also function as epenthetic vowels (§3.3).

Enclosed by the central vowels *ä/a*, *ʷ ʲ* tend to weaken to the vocoids ʷ ʲ, which merge with the vowels to the diphthongs *o͡a* and *ɛ͡ä*:

(2) a /bä-wälk'it'e/>[*bo͡alk'it'e*] b /bä-jännä-ä/>[*bɛ͡ännä*]
LOC-Welkite COND-EXIST.NEG-3MSG
'in Wolkite' 'if there is no'

Diachronic **j* also weakens to ʲ, which is realized as coarticulation on root consonants, e.g., *bäccä-m* 'cry (V)' (<**bäkkʲä*; Geez *bäkäjä*). Another weakened **j*, originating from diachronic **r/*l*, remains *in situ*, but assimilates with preceding *ä/a* to **äʲ>ɛ/e*, often realized with following *ä/a* as diphthong *ɛ͡ä*, as in *k'ätt' ɛ͡ä-m* (<**k'ätt'äʲä-m*; Geez *k'ätälä*) 'kill', *mɛ͡ä* (<**mäʲa*; Geez *märʔa* 'carry') 'rib, waist'. The vowel *ɛ* and diphthongs based on it tend to monophthongize to *e*, and *o͡a* to *o* (or rarely *a*).

3.2 Suprasegmentals

Non-segmental phonemic features are the vocoids ʷ ʲ, and gemination. The vocoids are realized as coarticulation on other stem consonants (§3.4). Gemination, i.e., longer duration, conveys grammatical (§4.3.1) and lexical functions, e.g., *waga* 'property' vs. *wagga* 'support (of a roof)'.[10]

Stress, which frequently falls on the penultimate, is not phonemic in Muher, but further research is needed (cf. also Hetzron 1977: 42–3).

3.3 Syllable structure

The basic syllable in Muher is $(\mathbf{C_i}(C_{ii}))\mathbf{V}(C_{iii})(C_{iv})$, with V being a vowel or diphthong. Onset and coda may contain consonant clusters: [srä-m] 'buy', [ble] 'bug'. Unpermitted consonant sequences are dissolved by the epenthetic vowel *ɨ*. Word-initial *r* is usually preceded by prosthetic *ä*.

3.4 Morphophonological processes

Muher and Gunnän Gurage have a complex morphophonology, of which only palatalization and labialization are mentioned here. For further details see, e.g., Leslau (1997), Rose (2007b, 1996, 1994), and Degif (2000).

3.4.1 Palatalization

Suffixed ^{j} palatalizes alveolar and velar/glottal obstruents, mainly stem-finally (see (3)). The vocalic radical *A* palatalizes to *ä* or *ɛ* word-finally (alone or with a preceding palatalized consonant), and *e* word-medially:

(3) a /gda-^{j}/>[gɨʤä/ɛ] ‘Pour (FSG)!’ b /ʃab-^{j}/>[ʃeβ] ‘Pull (FSG)!’

The vocoid ^{j} is not realized in roots that lack a palatalizable radical, or end in a palatal or (in some instances) a liquid or *n*, which block the spread of ^{j}. In a few verbs, a root-initial palatal in SC/PCL depalatalizes in PCS.

3.4.2 Labialization

Suffixed ^{w} typically diffuses into a base, in which it is realized as labial coarticulation on the first plain non-coronal obstruent or /m/ (see Table 10.2):

(4) a /ʒarräg-^{wj}-i-m/ [*ʒarräg͡ɥim*] ‘one went away’
move.SC-IPS-OI:3MSG-PRF
b /säbbär-^{wj}-i-m/ [säbb^{w}ɔrim] ‘one broke’
break.SC-IPS-OI:3MSG-PRF
c /gärra-^{wj}-i-m/ [g^{w}ɔrrem] ‘one is satisfied’
be_satisfied.SC-IPS-OI:3MSG-PRF

Root-final weakened ***j*>^{j}** is replaced by ^{w}, resulting in [o] if preceded by *ä/a*, or [u] otherwise:

(5) a /säkk’ä^{j}-^{wj}-i-m/>[säkk’**o**jm] b /jä-sk’^{j}-^{wj}-**i**/>[jäsk’**u**j]
hang.SC-IPS-OI:3MSG-PRF 3-hang.PCS-IPS-OI:3MSG
‘One has hung.’ ‘May one hang!’

4 MORPHOLOGY

Nonconcatenative morphology predominates in the formation of verbs, while many nominals are vocalized stems.

4.1 Pronouns

4.1.1 Personal pronouns and possessive suffixes

The personal pronouns in Table 10.4 substitute for subjects, but function as possessive suffixes on nominals. The possessive suffixes do not combine with flags (see §4.4).

The pronouns in Table 10.4 and the person indexes on verbs (see §4.3.1) distinguish between 1st/2nd/3rd person, singular/transnumeral vs. plural number, and male/common vs. female (biological) gender. The 2/3PL markers express honorificity with singular referents.

4.1.2 Demonstratives

Muher demonstratives mark a tripartite spatial contrast with the speaker as center: proximal *zi*, distal *hi* and remote *zah*. In addition, the 3MSG pronoun functions as demonstrative referring to an entity far from the speaker, but near to the addressee (Meyer 2010).

Demonstrative modifiers do not agree in number and gender with the head. Only plural is optionally marked by the associative plural prefix *nä-*. Proximal *zi* is part of the presentatives *zɨ* 'here you go!' and *zimmin(zi)* 'here it is'. Manner deixis is indicated by *ikki* 'like this'.

4.1.3 Interrogatives

Basic and selected derived interrogatives are shown in Table 10.5.

Rarely, interrogatives express plurality by reduplication, but are then indexed as 3MSG:

(6) *ma~ma* *bässa-m?*
who~DISTR come.SC.3MSG-PRF
'Who (and who) did come?'

TABLE 10.4 PERSONAL PRONOUNS AND POSSESSIVE SUFFIXES

	Gender	*Singular*		*Plural*	
		Pronoun	*Possessive*	*Pronoun*	*Possessive*
1	COMMON	*ädi*	*-ddi*	*iŋŋa*	*-nna*
2	MALE	*(-)dä-hä*		*(-)dä-him^{w}*	
	FEMALE	*(-)dä-ç* < **däh^{j}*		*(-)dä-hma*	
3	MALE	*h^{w}a*	*-h^{w}t(a)*	*(-)hinnäm^{w}*	
	FEMALE	*(-)ça/(-)hija*		*(-)hinnäma*	

TABLE 10.5 INTERROGATIVES

Basic		*Derived*		
ma	'who'	*jä-ma*	(GAD-who)	'whose, (for) whom'
**m(in)*	'what'	*miʔe /m-k'e/*	(what-NSPEC)	'what'
		jä-n-k'e	(GAD-what- NSPEC)	'why'
		bä-n-k'e	(MIL-what- NSPEC)	'by what'
että	'where'	*t-että*	(ABL-where)	'from where'
		b-että	(LOC-where)	'at which place'
		ett-ät-innijä	(where-ADE-DIR)	'towards which place'
mättʃä	'when (NPST)'	*mättʃä-na*	(when-PST)	'when (PST)'
		intʃ'ä-we	(which-DEF)	'which'

4.1.4 Indefinites

Referents whose name the speaker does not want to mention or does not remember are replaced by *inʧät/inʧä* (HUM/NHUM) 'so-and-so', while *att-im* (one-FOC) and *ma-nn-im* (who-AUG-FOC) function as indefinites – either alone, or in combination with generic *k'e* 'thing' (§4.2.2) or *säb* 'person', with which also *aʃ(ʃ)-* 'some' combines:

(7)	a	*attim säb*	'nobody'	*attin-k'e*	'nothing'
	b	*mannim säb*	'whoever'	*mannin-k'e*	'whatever, of any kind'
	c	*aʃʃi-säb*	'somebody'	*aʃ-k'e*	'something'

4.2 Nominals

Nominals encompass nouns, numerals and adjectives. Some nominals may also function as adverbials (8), (30):

(8)	*mamʷä*	*bora*	/	*mamʷä*	*addär-hä-m?*
	good	ox		good	spend_night.SC-2MSG-PRF
	'a good ox'			'Did you spend the night well?'	

Lexical adverbs, as in (31, 33), are extremely rare; adverbial functions are also expressed by subordinate clauses and converbs, and nominals marked by a flag (examples in §7).

4.2.1 Nominal inflection

Nominal inflection encompasses number (transnumeral/singular vs. plural), gender (male/common vs. female), and definiteness (indefinite, specific, definite). Number and gender are usually marked through cross-referencing on verbs, but not on nominals.

Inanimate and most animate nouns are in transnumeral and common gender, and indexed as 3MSG Table 10.6 (a–d), like male singular (or transnumeral) human nouns (f/i), or animal nouns (g/j), which are always indexed in common gender (10b).

TABLE 10.6 NUMBER AND GENDER OF NOMINALS

	ANIMACY	GENDER	INDEX	NUMBER			
				SG	PL	TRANSNUMERAL	
a	INANIMATE	COMMON	3MSG			*bet*	'house'
b	ANIMAL	COMMON	3MSG			*bulle*	'pigeon'
c	HUMAN	COMMON	3MSG			*merräɲɲä*	'worker'
d		COMMON	3MSG			*amara*	'Amhara'
e	HUMAN	FEMALE	3FSG			*annaʧuwät*	'female relative (of father)'
f		MALE	3MSG			*akkäbäja*	'male relative (of father)'
g	ANIMAL	MALE	3MSG			*bora*	'ox'
h	HUMAN	FEMALE	3FSG/FPL	*gäräd*	*gred*		'girl'
i		MALE	3MSG/MPL	*jiʤ*	*deɲa*		'boy'
j	ANIMAL	FEMALE	3MSG/MPL	*innam*	*gizz*		'cow'

A few animate nouns (mainly kinship terms) have suppletive singular/plural and/or male/female forms (Table 10.6 h–j; e–g; cf. Meyer 2012). Attributive modifiers and the definite suffix do not normally inflect for number/gender. Proper nouns mark the associative plural by *nä-*.

Transnumeral human nouns are indefinite, and formally identical to their definite numbered/gendered counterparts:

(9) a ***merräŋŋä*** *märrär-ä-m.*
worker be_bitter.SC-3MSG-PRF
'A worker (M/F) was/Workers (M/F) were angry.'

b *addis-we* ***merräŋŋä*** *tamiŋŋa {am-märär}-ä/-ätt/-m^{w}/-ma.*
new-DEF worker yesterday {NEG-be_bitter.SC.NEG}-3MSG/-3FSG/-3MPL/-3FPL
'The new worker(s) (M/F) was/were not angry yesterday.'

Definiteness is marked by the definite suffix *-we* (9b), definite modifiers (10a), or possessive suffixes (10b). The person index on the verb distinguishes between singular and plural; cf. also (9b):

(10) a *jä-kubra bulle aʒʒä-hu-{nni/nnimu}-m*
LNK-Kubra.F pigeon see.SC-SI:1SG-{OI:3MSG/3MPL}-PRF
'I saw Kubra's dove/s.'

b *innam-hut fäkk'är-ä-m.*
COW.FSG-POSS.3MSG be(come)_fat.SC-3MSG-PRF
'His cow is fat.'

Specific reference is marked by *att* 'one' > 'a (certain)', or reduplicated *att~att* 'some', both with 3MSG index:

(11) *att / att~att merräŋŋä jino.*
a some worker EXIST.3MSG.MVM
'There is a (certain) worker/are some workers.'

4.2.2 Nonspecific -k'e

Generic *k'e* (with the post-vocalic allomorph *ʔe*) 'thing' grammaticalized into a very frequent nonspecificity marker, which typically attaches as dummy to headless nominal modifiers and relative clauses (12), but may also modify the semantics of the attributive modifier (§4.2.5).

(12) a *jä-gäbäja-ʔe j-aʔet'im-mu-tt.*
LNK-market-NSPEC 3-trade.PCL-MPL-MVM
'They trade the (common) market items.'

b *tikä-ddi bä-hon-ä-ʔe n-iʒʒ-inn.*
child-POSS.1SG LOC-[be(come).SC-3MSG]-NSPEC SI:1SG-see.PCS-OI:3MSG
'Let me see about the whereabouts of my child (lit. the state in which he is)!'

Furthermore, *-k'e* often attaches to nominals in adverbial function:

(13) *ʃaʃʃ-hija* *mamʷä-ʔe* *aggäd-ätt-u-m*
scarf-POSS.3FSG good-NSPEC[>well/correctly] tie.SC-SI:3FSG-OI:3MSG-PRF
'She tied her scarf well.'

4.2.3 Nominal patterns

Many simplex nominals are fully vocalized stems; others have a cognate root, but the underlying nominal patterns are often unproductive. Frequent patterns are shown in Table 10.7:[11]

Some patterns have a specific semantics: result nominal $C_1C_2aC_3$, unproductive agent nominal $C_1äC_2aC_3^j$ (< Ethiosemitic *$C_1äC_2aC_3i$). Other patterns formally resemble participles, but have various readings.

Abstract nouns are derived from nominal stems by *-nnät* or *-nna*, e.g., *denɟa* 'boys' > *denɟi-nnät* 'youth'. Agent nouns are often denoted by nominalized relative clauses (§4.2.4), or derived by *-(t/m/l)äŋŋä*: *merr-äŋŋä* 'worker' (*merra* 'work'), *aʔil-täŋŋä* 'wise' (*aʔil* 'knowledge'). The suffix *-äŋŋä* also derives adjectives from ideophones: *ʃirr* (ideophone for craziness) > *ʃirr-äŋŋä* 'crazy person', and is inherent part of other adjectives, e.g., *däŋgäŋŋä* 'wealthy'. The suffix *-jä* conveys various meanings (Table 10.8).

TABLE 10.7 FREQUENT NOMINAL PATTERNS

Basic Pattern	*Sub Pattern*	*Example*	*Root*	*Gloss*
$C_1C_2C_3$		*kift*	√ k-f-t	'open'
	$C_1C_2C_3$-ät	*nibr-ät*	√ n-b-r	'life, wealth'
	$C_1C_2C_3$-a/-ä	*gidij-ä*	√ g-d-^{j}	'sleeping (state)'
	$C_1C_2C_3{}^w$	*gurz*	√ g-r-z	'old'
	$C_1C_2C_3{}^w$ä	*kitfʷä*	√ k-t-f	'minced beef/food'
$C_1äC_2C_3$		*äʧ'ir*	√ A-ʧ'-r	'fence'
$C_1äC_2äC_3$		*t'äräʔⁱ*	√ t'-r-k'	'dry'
	$C_1äC_2äC_3$-a	*bazän-a*	√$_C$ b-z-n	'guest'
$C_1C_2aC_3$		*zinab*	√ z-n-b	'rain'
	$C_1C_2aC_3{}^j$-ä	*ʧikk'ʷaʃä*	√$_B$ ʧ'-kʷ-s	'begging'
$C_1äC_2aC_3{}^j$		*ʧ'äʔʷaʃ*	√$_B$ ʧ'-kʷ-s	'beggar'
	$C_1äC_2{}^j$	*häʤi*	√ h-d-A	'traitor'
	$C_1aC_3{}^j$	*wabi*	√ ø-A-b (*w-h-b)	'charitable person'
		mʷaʧ	√ mʷ-ø-t (*m-w-t)	'dead person'
	$C_1äC_2aC_3{}^j$-ä	*däraɟ-ä*	√ d-r-g 'hit'	'swimming'

TABLE 10.8 NOMINALS DERIVED BY *-JÄ*

	Base		*Derived Nominal*	
a	*mult'*	'(being) bold'	*mult'-jä*	'(getting) bold'
b	*t'iʔur*	'black'	*t'iʔur-jä*	'black; (blackish) low-quality ensete pith'
c	*furt'*	'blind'	*furt'-jä*	'blind; not flourishing ensete'
d	*jä-mʷɔt*	'of death'	*jä-mʷɔt-jä*	'carrion'
e	*j-ank'ʷä*	'of egg'	*j-ank'u-jä*	'laying hen'
f	*jä-baʃä*	'of illness'	*jä-baʃ-jä*	'ill person/animal'
g	*jirot'*	'he who runs'	*ji-rot'-jä*	'runner'

On adjectives (a–c), *-jä* indicates that a specific referent is acquiring the denoted quality. Some of these adjectives lexicalized as nouns with a second meaning (b–c), which is common for genitive modifiers and relative verbs marked by *-jä* (d–g).

4.2.4 Nominalized relative clauses

Agent and instrument/place nouns are productively denoted through relative verbs. Instrument/place nouns are based on an impersonal imperfective verb (PCL) with the 3MSG MIL applicative suffix *-bbʷä* followed by nonspecific *-k'e* (15a–b), while relative verbs with a 3MSG subject followed by *säb* 'person' function as agent nouns (15c):

(14) a *jiχʷɔri-bbʷɔ-ʔe* 'instrument for digging'
j-hʷär-ʷʲ-bb-ʷä-k'e
SI:3-dig.PCL-IPS-MIL-OI.3MSG-NSPEC

b *jɨdgʷɔddo-bbʷɔ-ʔe* 'place for sleeping'
j-tägäddäʲ-ʷʲ-bb-ʷä-k'e
SI:3-sleep.PCL-IPS-MIL-OI.3MSG-NSPEC

c *jiχʷɔr* *säb* 'he who digs > digger'
j-hʷär person
SI:3-dig.PCL:MSG

Lexicalized instrument nominalizations may lack *-k'e*, e.g., *jiʔɔrfi-bbʷä* 'beginning'.

4.2.5 Adjectives

Adjectives (Table 10.9) may overtly express plural by reduplication, e.g., *addis~addis* 'new (PL)', and are often nominalizations from cognate verbs.

In addition to the free adjectives in Table 10.9, Muher has a few bound adjectives, which obligatorily co-occur with a head, or nonspecific *-k'e* (e.g., *ɨffi*='other' > *ɨffi=säb* 'another person', *ɨffi=ʔe* 'another thing') or, with locative terms, adessive *-ät*: *k'urb=* > *k'urb=ät* 'near'.

Semantically, adjectives (and other attributes) denote a permanent property. If marked by nonspecific *-ke*, however, the property is limited to a subclass of referents, still not fully developed, or the speaker is uncertain:

(15) *jä-ʤɨlalu* (i) *zärma* *jɨddʒ* *jinä-nni-tt*.
(ii) *zärma-ʔe*
DAT-Jilalu.M marriagable-NSPEC boy EXIST.SI:3MSG-OI:3MSG-MVM
i. 'Jilalu has a boy of marriageable age.' (speaker is certain)
ii. 'Jilalu has a boy who is (probably) about to be of marriageable age.'

4.2.6 Numerals

Muher has a decimal number system (Table 10.10).

The teens are formed from *asrä-* plus the digits, usually preceded by *-m*, e.g., *asrä(-m)-arbätt* 'fourteen'. The hundreds and thousands are specified by a preposed digit: *hʷett mäto (huja-m-hʷett)* 'two-hundred (twenty-two)'.

TABLE 10.9 ADJECTIVES

Nominal Property Concept			*Verb*
Dimension			
a	*inissijä*	‘small, little’	*annäsä-m* ‘be(come) small’
b	*liʔijä*	‘big’	*laʔä-m* ‘surpass, grow’
Age			
c	*iniss*	‘younger sibling’	cf. (a)
d	*liʔi*	‘older sibling’	cf. (b)
Value			
e	*mamʷä*	‘good, healthy’	
f	*t’ifʷä*	‘bad’	
Color			
g	*t’iʔur*	‘black’	*t’äkk’ʷärä-m* ‘be(come) black’
h	*gʷad*	‘white (inanimate item)’	
Physical property			
i	*bisu*	‘ripe’	*bässɛ̀ä-m* ‘be(come) ripe’
j	*ziza*	‘raw, wet’	
Corporeal property			
k	*fiʔur*	‘fat’	*fäkk’ärä-m* ‘be(come) fat’
l	*sissä*	‘thin’	*sassa-m* ‘be(come) thin’

TABLE 10.10 BASIC NUMERALS

Digits		*Decimals*		*Other*	
i. *att*/ii. *k’una*	‘one’	*assir/asrä-*	‘ten’	*mäto*/(*bäʔi*)	‘hundred’
hʷett	‘two’	*huja*	‘twenty’	*ʃi*	‘thousand’
sɔ̀ast/sost	‘three’	*sälasa*	‘thirty’		
arbätt	‘four’	*arba*	‘forty’		
ammist	‘five’	*amsa*	‘fifty’		
siddist	‘six’	*silsa*	‘sixty’		
säbätt/säbatt	‘seven’	*säba*	‘seventy’		
simmutt	‘eight’	*sämana*	‘eighty’		
ʒät’ä	‘nine’	*zätt’äna*	‘ninety’		

Regarding the two terms for ‘one’, *att* is restricted to enumeration and compound numbers, but functions as specific article elsewhere (§4.2.1); as numeral modifier *k’una* ‘single’ > ‘one’ is used:

(16) *k’una/*att birr jine-tt*
one/a birr EXIST.SI:3MSG.OI:1SG-MVM
‘I have one birr.’

Lower digits form ordinal numbers by *-äläŋŋä*: *sɔ̀ast-äläŋŋä* ‘third’; for higher digits Amharic loans are used.

4.3 Verbs

4.3.1 Verb inflection and derivation

Canonical roots in Muher have three or four consonants (√ C_1-**C_2**-C_3 or √ C_1-C_2-**C_3**-C_4), and are marked for the gemination type of the penultimate consonant C_2/C_3, which geminates only in the affirmative SC in Type A, in all conjugations in Type B, and in SC and PCL (plus obligatory vowel *a* insertion following C_1 in the simplex of triliteral roots) in Type C (Hetzron 1972: 10, 1977: 70–1; see also Meyer 2011: §5.3.2, 2016b: 169). The diachronic loss of gutturals and glides results in many reduced bi- and triliteral roots (cf., e.g., Lowenstamm 1996).

Quadriliteral roots rarely have four distinct consonants (an example is √ k'-n-t'-s 'pinch off'), but usually reduplicate consonants (cf. Table 10.13). Reduplicated triliteral roots are less frequent: √ b-t~t 'be(come) wide', √ k^w~k^w-r 'wring, squeeze'.

Verb inflection distinguishes between three primary conjugations, marked by combining a template with a specific subject index (Meyer 2016b: §4.3, 2014: §3.3). The templates are as follows:

1 Jussive conjugation (PCS): SI-$C_1C_2C_3$-SI / SI-C_1ä$C_2C_3C_4$-SI

Subtypes: SI-C_1C_2äC_3-SI for a few intransitive Type A roots, and SI-C_1äCC_2C_3-SI for Type B

2 Imperfective conjugation (PCL): SI-C_1ä(C)C_2C_3-SI / SI-C_1C_2ä~~C~~CC_3C_4-SI

3 Perfective conjugation (SC): C_1äCC_2äC_3-SI / C_1C_2äCC_3äC_4-SI

Subtype: C_1äC_2äC_3-SI for negated Type A verbs

The obligatory subject index (SI) (Table 10.11) consists of two distinct sets for SC and PC. It has a separate affix for generic human referents, the impersonal passive (IPS), co-occurring with an object index (by default 3MSG; (4)), except on converbs (for examples, see §7).

1SG *ä-* occurs in affirmative declarative clauses but *n-* elsewhere; 3MSG/PL *jä-* is limited to affirmative commands. The imperative, as a sub-category of the affirmative jussive (PCS), lacks the prefix *t-*. The verbs 'come' and 'take' have suppletive imperatives based on *nä-* and *jä-* with SC subject index (20a).

TABLE 10.11 SUBJECT INDEX

		Suffix Conjugation (SC)		*Prefix Conjugations (PC)*			
		Singular	*Plural*	*Singular*		*Plural*	
1		*-h^w*	*-nä*	*ä-/n-*		*n-*	*. . . -nä*
2	M	*-hä*	*-hm^w*	*t-*	*. . . ø*	*t-*	*. . . -m^w*
	F	*-ç (-h^j)*	*-hma*	*t-*	*. . . -^{j}*	*t-*	*. . . -ma*
3	M	*-ä*	*-m^w*	*j(ä)-*	*. . . ø*	*j(ä)-*	*. . . -m^w*
	F	*-ätt*	*-ma*	*t-*		*j(ä)-*	*. . . -ma*
	IPS	*-^{wj}*			*j(ä)- . . .*	*-^{wj}*	

TABLE 10.12 OBJECT INDEX

				Base	*Primary Object*	*Applied Object*	
						BEN	*MIL*
1	SG		LIGHT	**-L^{j}*	*-e (*-ä-^{i})*	*-nn-i*	*-b-i*
			HEAVY		*-ɲŋ*		*-bb-i*
	PL		LIGHT	**-nä*	*-ä-nä*	*-ni-nä*	*-b-nä*
			HEAVY		*-nnä*	*-nni-nä*	*-bbi-nä*
2	SG	M	LIGHT	**-hä*	*-(nn-)hä*	*-n-kä*	*-b-hä*
			HEAVY		*-kkä*	*-nni-kkä*	*-bbi-kkä*
		F	LIGHT	**-h^{j}*	*-(nn-)ç*	*-n-c*	*-b-ç*
			HEAVY		*-cc*	*-nni-cc*	*-bbi-cc*
	PL	M	LIGHT	**-hm^{w}*	*-(nn-)hm^{w}*	*-n-kim^{w}*	*-b-him^{w}*
			HEAVY		*-kkim^{w}*	*-nni-kkim^{w}*	*-bbi-kkim^{w}*
		F	LIGHT	**-hma*	*-(nn-)hma*	*-n-kima*	*-b-hima*
			HEAVY		*-kkima*	*-nni-kkima*	*-bbi-kkima*
3	SG	M	LIGHT	**-:/*-Uä*	*-nn/-w*	*-no*	*-wä (*-b-^{w}ä)*
			HEAVY		*-:/-U*	*-nn-o*	*-bb-^{w}ä*
		F	LIGHT	**-:a/*-Ua*	*-nn-a/-w-a*	*-n-a*	*-b-a*
			HEAVY		*-:a/-Ua*	*-nn-a*	*-bb-a*
	PL	M	LIGHT	**-:äm^{w}/*	*-nn-äm^{w}/-w-äm^{w}*	*-n-äm^{w}*	*-b-äm^{w}*
			HEAVY	**-Uäm^{w}*	*-:äm^{w}/-Uäm^{w}*	*-nn-äm^{w}*	*-bb-äm^{w}*
		F	LIGHT	**-:äma/*	*-nn-äma/-w-äma*	*-n-äma*	*-b-äma*
			HEAVY	**-Uäma*	*-:äma/-Uäma*	*-nn-äma*	*-bb-äma*

Notes: U = glide *w* or *j*; : = gemination of root-final and penultimate consonants.

In addition to the subject index, Muher makes use of an optional object index (OI) (Table 10.12) to cross-reference either the primary object, or an applied object (usually beneficiary or maleficiary, see example (29)), if preceded by *-n* (BEN) or *-b* (MIL).

Gemination as 3rd person object index is limited to PC verbs (17); *-w* is restricted to female subjects (17c):

(17) a *abba* (or *abinna*)! b *jilägg**i**ddi**t**t* (or *jilägdinnitt*). c *orridd**ʒ*** (or *ordʒ-u*)!
ab-:a (ab-nna) j-lägd-:-tt (j-lägd-nn-tt) awrd-^{j}-: (awrd-^{j}-w)
give.PCS.SI:2MSG-OI:3FSG SI:3-touch.PCL.MSG-OI:3MSG-MVM take_down.PCS-SI:2FSG-OI:3MSG
'Give [it] to her!' 'He touches it.' 'Take it/him down!'

The object index formally distinguishes between what Hetzron (1977: 60) calls heavy (geminated consonant or *w/j*) and light (singleton or augmented by *-nn*) allomorphs. In *ädi bet* Muher and across other Muher varieties, their distribution varies (cf. Meyer 2011: 1239–40).

Table 10.13 shows examples of the primary conjugations for a 3MSG subject; the verbs in SC and PCL are dependent forms.

The PCS template preceded by *wä-* forms the verbal noun (e.g., *wä-lgid* 'touching', *wä-ʒarg* 'going', *wä-cäfcif* 'sprinkling'), which can optionally index the subject with possessive suffixes (see §4.1.1), as in example (33).

TABLE 10.13 PRIMARY CONJUGATIONS IN THE SIMPLEX (BASIC FORMS)

Type	*Root*	*Suffix Conjugation*	*Prefix Conjugation*	
			Long (pcl)	*Short (pcs)*
Triliteral roots				
A	√ l-g-d 'touch'	*läggäd-ä/lägäd-ä* (aff/neg)	*ji-lägd*	*jä-lgid*
	√ b-t-t 'be wide'	*bättät-ä/bätät-ä* (aff/neg)	*ji-bätt*	*jä-btät* (intr)
B	√ ʃ-k-t 'do'	*ʃäkkät-ä*	*ji-ʃäkkit*	*jä-säkkit*
C	√ ʒ-r-g 'go'	*ʒarräg-ä*	*ji-ʒarrig*	*jä-ʒarg*
Quadriliteral roots				
C	√ c-f~c-f 'sprinkle'	*cifäccäf-ä*	*ji-cifäccif*	*jä-cäfcif*
	√ t'-b-l~l 'wrap'	*t'iballäl-ä*	*ji-t'ballil*	*jä-t'balil*

The three primary conjugations constitute a verbal stem, for which Table 10.13 shows the simplex. The templates of derived stems may differ, and exhibit additional modifications:

1 Prefixation:

- prefixes *a-* and *at-* for the direct and indirect causative, which regularly occur in the gemination Type A and Type B, respectively
- prefix *tä-* in gemination Type C (without vowel *a* insertion) for the mediopassive

2 Internal stem modifications for various pluractional stems:

- reduplicated root consonant (C_1 or C_2) or entire root/stem
- insertion of vowel *a* (following C_1 with bi- and triliteral roots, but C_2 with quadriliteral roots)
- reduplicated root consonant and vowel *a* insertion

3 Combinations of 1 and 2

Examples for 1 and 2 are shown in Table 10.14.

In the direct causative, the subject is typically physically involved in the verbal action, but only initiates it in the indirect causative (see Table 10.14 a–f). Note, however, that the direct causative may also convey the meaning of facilitating or initiating an action (see Table 10.14 e, g). The mediopassive often has a reflexive connotation (see Table 10.14 j). The pluractional is typically co-marked for mediopassive and causative, as in Table 10.15.

The pluractional expresses that an action is carried out several times (see Table 10.14 l–p), which in combination with the mediopassive prefix *tä-* can convey the connotation that the action is done properly (see Table 10.15 k, l, n), but more commonly has a reciprocal reading (most examples in Table 10.15).

Semantically, pcs encodes the jussive, a modal category expressing a command, while the indicative conjugations sc and pcl mark perfective and imperfective viewpoint aspect (Meyer 2016b). Indicative verbs are accompanied by further grammatical markers

TABLE 10.14 EXAMPLES OF DERIVED STEMS

	Simplex (SC)		*Derived Stem (SC)*	
Causative				
a	*bässa-*	‘come’	*a-bässa-*	‘bring’
b			*at-bässa-*	‘import, help to bring’
c	*k’ärräb-*	‘be(come) present’	*a-ʔärräb-*	‘bring close, deliver’
d			*at-k’ärräb-*	‘help to come close’
e	*bänna-*	‘eat’	*a-bänna-*	‘feed, help to eat’
f			*at-bänna-*	‘make to be eaten’
g	*srä-*	‘buy’	*a-srä-*	‘sell’
Mediopassive				
h	*gäddäʲ-*	‘put to sleep’	*tä-gäddäʲ-*	‘sleep’
i	*kättäf-*	‘chop’	*tä-kättäf-*	‘be chopped well’
j	*k’ärräb-*	‘be(come) present’	**tä-k’ärräb-* [täʔärräb-]	‘present oneself’
k	*k’ʷämmä-*	‘win’	**tä-k’ʷämmä-* [täʔɔmmä-]	‘lose’
Pluractionals				
	Only reduplication			
l	*arrät’-*	‘cut’	*ärärrät’*	‘cut into many pieces’
m	*näbba-*	‘crack’	*nibäbba-*	‘crack (at various places)’
	Only insertion of vowel *a*			
n	*k’imätt’äʲ-*	‘cut in two parts, separate by cutting’	*k’imatt’äʲ-*	‘separate several parts’
	Reduplication and insertion of vowel *a*			
o	*ʃäkkät-*	‘prepare’	*ʃikakkät-*	‘finish to prepare, prepare well’
p	*läggäd-*	‘touch’	*ligaggäd-*	‘touch repeatedly’

TABLE 10.15 COMPLEX PLURACTIONAL STEMS

	Simplex (SC)		*Derived stem (SC)*	
Prefix *tä-/a(t)-* plus vowel *a* insertion				
a	*näkkäs-*	‘bite’	*tä-nakkäs-*	‘quarrel (with each other), bite each other’
b			*at-nakkäs-*	‘make quarrel with each other’
c	*ʃäkkät-*	‘prepare’	*tä-ʃakkät*	‘be reconciled (with each other)’
d			*aʃ-ʃakkät-*	‘reconcile’
e	*zinäɟɟ*		*tä-znaɟɟ-*	‘discuss, fix a price’
f			*a-znaɟɟ-*	‘address, appeal’
g	*nätʧ’ä-*	‘tear, root out’	*tä-natʧ’ä-*	‘tear each other’s hair’
Prefix *tä-/at-* with consonant reduplication				
h	*häʲ*	‘know’	*tä-çäçäʲ-*	‘get to know each other’
i			*at-çäçäʲ-*	‘introduce a person to another’
j	*lah-*	‘send’	*tä-läläh-*	‘agree to be sent several times’
k	*aggäd-*	‘tie’	*tä-gäggäd-*	‘be tied well, be handicapped (in moving)’
l	*arrät’-*	‘cut’	*tä-rärrät’-*	‘be cut well, be cut in many pieces’
m	*ammän-*	‘believe’	*tä-mämmän-*	‘believe each other’
Prefix *tä-* with consonant reduplication and vowel *a* insertion				
n	*ʃäkkät-*	‘prepare’	*tä-ʃkakkät-*	‘be prepared well, be in order, be ready’
o	*läggäd-*	‘touch’	*tä-lgaggäd-*	‘wrestle, grapple with each other’

(see §5.3); jussive verbs are limited to main clauses. The imperative is identical to the jussive without the 2nd person prefix *t-*. The jussive functions as the negation of the imperative:

(18) *ligid* / *a-ti-lgid*
touch.PCS.2MSG NEG-2-touch.PCS.MSG
'Touch!' 'Don't touch!''

Further modal and aspecto-temporal distinctions are expressed through complex constructions, typically limited to affirmative main clauses. The ingressive, as in (20c), is based on PCL, additionally marked by *-ät* (ADE) and followed by the equative (or past copula) as tense marker. Muher has a distinct indefinite future for uncertain future events, marked through the PCS template with a PCL subject index (1SG *ä-* and 3rd person *j-*; see Table 10.11), followed by invariable *-fä* (< 'want'):

(19) a *ä-bsa-fä*
1SG-come.PCS-FUT
'I intend to come.'

b *jɨ-bsa-fä*
3MSG-come.PCS-FUT
'He is expected to come.'

Furthermore, Muher has a number of phrasal verbs, consisting of an invariable co-verb (usually an ideophone) encoding the verb semantics followed by inflected *bɛ͡ä-m* 'say' or *amäŋŋä-m* 'cause' as supporting/light verb: *täkk~täkk bɛ͡ä-m/amäŋŋä-m* 'dribble/cause to dribble' (Meyer 2009).

4.3.2 Converbs

Non-final affirmative verbs in the primary conjugations marked by the suffix *-m* are pseudo-converbs, i.e., subordinate predicates, which usually are in the same primary conjugation as their reference verb (cf. Meyer 2014: 248–50):

(20) a *gäg-χut* *tannäʔ-ä-m* *mʷɔt-ä-m*.
self-POSS.3MSG be_strangled.SC-3MSG-CVB die.SC-3MSG-PRF
'He strangled himself and died/He killed himself by strangulation.'

b *ädarä* *bija-m* *nä-hä!*
lunch eat.PCS.2MSG-CVB come.IMP-2MSG
'Eat lunch and come!'

c *bet* *j-aräʃi-m* / *aräʃʃä-m* *muʃra* *j-agäba-ät-n* [jagäβat̪in].
house 3-build.PCL.MSG-CVB build.SC.3MSG-CVB bride 3-marry.PCL.MSG-ADE-COP.3MSG
'He will build (PCL) a house, and then marry a woman.'/
'He has built (SC) a house, and is (now) going to marry a woman.'

A perfective converb (SC) may combine with an imperfective reference verb (PCL) to express that the converb event is completed at the moment of speech, as in (20c).

Converb clauses have a sequential-narrative or adverbial manner reading, as in (20a). In order to emphasize the sequential reading, the converb is augmented by *tannä*, or shortened *-nta* (< *-m ta*):

(21) *ʤilalu bäsär kättäf-ä-m ab-ä-nna-nta fukrija t-asäle.*
Jilalu.M meat chop.SC-3MSG-CVB give.SC-SI:3MSG-OI:3FSG-CVB.AUG Shukriya.F 3FSG-bring.PCL.MVM
'Jilalu chops the meat and gives it to Shukriya; and then she brings (it to the customers).'

In discourse, sentence-initial augmented converbs, repeating the final part of a preceding sentence, signal the start of a new paragraph; see (46–7), (52–3).

4.3.3 Main verb marker

A main verb marker (MVM) is a clausal status suffix[12] that obligatorily attaches to certain main clause predicates: affirmative imperfective (PCL), affirmative copulas *jinä-* (EXIST) and *bannä-* (PST) (§4.3.4), but also the negated past imperfective and the prohibitive (§5.5). The MVM has the allomorphs *-tt/-u/-i* (cf. also Hetzron 1968), as shown in Table 10.16.

The 3FSG MVM *-u* replaces *-i* on verbs ending in a front vowel (see also Table 10.17):

(22) *ti-säbr-i* vs. *ti-dgädi-u*
3FSG-break.PCL.NPST-MVM 3FSG-sleep.PCL.NPST-MVM
'she breaks' 'she sleeps'

TABLE 10.16 ALLOMORPHS OF THE MAIN VERB MARKER

MVM	WITHOUT OBJECT INDEX		WITH OBJECT INDEX
	PC	SC	
-u	1SG/PL, 2/3MSG, (3FSG)	1PL, 2/3MSG	Indexes ending in *-ä*, plain light indexes
-i	3FSG	1SG, 3FSG	—
-tt	2FSG, 2/3PL	2FSG, 2/3PL	Remaining indexes

TABLE 10.17 INFLECTION OF COPULAS

	EQUATION		EXISTENCE		
1SG	*-n-χ^{w}*	'I am'	*jinä-χ^{w}-i*		'There I am; I exist'
2MSG	*-n-χä*	. . .	*jinä-hä-u*	[jinäho]	. . .
2FSG	*-n-ç*		*jinä-çi-tt*		
3MSG	*-n*		*jinä-ä-u*	[jino]	
3FSG	*-ja*		*jinä-ätt-i*		
1PL	*-n-nä*		*jinä-nä-u*	[jinäno]	
2MPL	*-n-χim^{w}*		*jinä-χm^{w}-tt*		
2FPL	*-n-χima*		*jinä-χma-tt*		
3MPL	*-n-äm^{w}*		*jinä-m^{w}-tt*		
3FPL	*-n-äma*		*jinä-ma-tt*		

TABLE 10.18 COPULA PREDICATES

Clause	*Polarity*	*Non-Past*		*Past*
		Equative	*Existential*	
Main indicative	AFF	*-n*+SI	*jinä*-SI-MVM	*bannä*-SI-MVM
	NEG		*jännä*-SI	(√ n-b-r)
Main jussive	AFF/NEG		(√ n-b-r)	
Converb	AFF	(√ h^w-ø-n)		
Relative	AFF		*jannä*-SI *jännä*-SI	(√ n-b-r)
	NEG			
Other dependent	AFF/NEG		(√ n-b-r)	

Notes: √ h^w-ø-n 'be(come)', √ n-b-r 'live, exist'.

4.3.4 Copulas

The non-verbal copulas *-n* (equation, non-past), *jinä-* (EXIST, non-past), and *bannä-* (PST) are inherently marked for tense and index the subject; *jinä-* and *bannä-* (which inflect alike) are followed by a MVM (Meyer 2016c: §7).

Non-verbal copulas predominately occur in affirmative main clauses, but are replaced by supplementary verbs in other clause types (Table 10.18).

4.4 Flags and relational nouns

Flag affixes indicate the syntactic/semantic function of a nominal in a phrase/clause, or a clause in a sentence (Table 10.19). Flags differ from case markers: they do not form a uniform morphologcal class but can be pre- or suffixes; their occurrence on core arguments also depends on pragmatic constrains, and the status of certain arguments is (also) marked by word order or on the verb.

The linker *jä-*, as marker of an attributive modifier or possessor, operates at phrasal level, where its position may vary depending on the context (23); it is omitted if preceded by another flag (24):

(23) a *mam^{w}ä* [*jä-bet* *mäzɟa*] b [*jä-mäm^{w}ä* *bet*] *mäzɟa*
good LNK-house door LNK-good house door
'a good house door' 'a door of a good house'

(24) *bä-*[*ʤilalu* *(*bä-jä-ʤilalu)* *bet*] *χ^{w}ett* *denɟa* *jin-mu-tt*.
LOC-Jilalu house two boy.PL EXIST-3MPL-MVM
'There are two boys in Jilalu's house.'

Dative *jä-* is easily detected on single nouns, as headless genitive modifiers are followed by nonspecific *-k'e* (25), but dative/accusative coincides with the linker in complex phrases, e.g., (10a), (15).

(25) *jä-ʤilalu* (vs. *jä-ʤilalu-ʔe*) *jä-hun!*
DAT-Jilalu.M LNK-Jilalu-NSPEC 3-be(come).PCS.MSG
'It shall be for Jilalu (vs. It shall be Jilalu's)!'

TABLE 10.19 FLAGS

	Affix	*On Nominals*	*On Clauses*
a	*j(ä)-*	Dative (beneficiary, recipient, addressee) Accusative (primary object) Linker (genitive)	 Relative clause (affirmative SC)
b	*b(ä)-*	Location 'in, on, at' Motion (within a border) Instrumental Malefactive	SC: Real protasis, Irreal apodosis, PCL: Temporal
c	*t(ä)-*	Lative (ablative, motion to/via) Comitative Comparative	PCL: Irreal protasis, Simultaneous co-event, SC: Temporal
d	*-häma*	Similative	Relative verbs: Temporal (incidence), Complement, Purpose
e	*-ät*	Adessive (in the vicinity of)	Relative verbs: Cause, Purpose
f	*-nnijä*	Directional 'towards'	—

Accusative *jä-* attaches to primary objects, i.e., the theme in ditransitive constructions (26a), and the patient (usually only human nouns) in monotransitive constructions (26b) (see §5.1):

(26) a *abdo* *jä-ʤämal* *hanan* *ab-ä-nni-m*.
Abdo.M ACC-Jamal.M Hanan.F give.SC-SI:3MSG-OI:3MSG-PRF
'Abdo gave Hanan to Jamal.'

b *asfa* *jä-rawda* *ji-wɔddi-nna-tt*.
Asfa.M ACC-Rawda.F SI:3-like.PCL.MSG-OI:3FSG-NPST:MVM
'Asfa likes Rawda.'

If the function of the prefix *jä-* as marker of dative or accusative objects (or of the linker) is ambiguous, it is glossed GAD for genitive-accusative-dative.

The semantics of the flags *bä-* and *tä-* can be specified through postposed grammaticalized relational nouns, e.g., *ge* 'time>together' (<*gizjä* 'time'), *dar* 'fringe>until, up to', *jift~ift* 'face>in front of', etc.

5 SYNTAX

5.1 Word order

Muher is a verb-final language with strict Topic-Comment order, yielding unmarked Subject-Object order, but a definite (known) argument has to precede an indefinite (new) argument, regardless of their syntactic function:

(27) Topic Comment
a *bora* subject *gätʃä* object *aʒʒä-m*.
ox hyena see.SC.SI:3MSG-PRF
'An ox saw a hyena.'

b *(jä-)gäʧä-we*$_{\text{object}}$ *bora*$_{\text{subject}}$ *aʒʒä-nni-m*.
(ACC-)hyena-DEF ox see.SC.SI:3MSG-OI:3MSG-PRF
'(As to) the hyena, an ox saw it.'

In noun phrases, nominal modifiers, demonstratives, and specific *att* precede the head; definite *-we* and the possessive suffixes follow it (28a). In complex noun phrases, *-we* attaches to the leftmost modifier, but the possessive suffixes to the head (28b–c):

(28) a *addis bet* 'new house(s)' vs. *bet-we* 'the house(s)'
bet-hut 'his house(s)'
b *addis-we bet* 'the new house(s)' vs. *addis bet-hut* 'his new house(s)'
c *addis-we bet-hut* 'his new house (from all his houses)'

5.2 Core arguments

Muher is a nominative-accusative language with differential object marking. The syntactic function of arguments is indicated through word order, person index and flag. Subjects lack a specific flag, but are obligatorily indexed on verbs, and usually precede the object (27a). Indefinite objects are also unmarked, but are never indexed (and follow the subject). By contrast, definite objects, as in (27b), are obligatorily indexed as primary object. In monotransitive clauses, a definite human object is additionally marked by *jä-* (ACC) (26b), which is pragmatically conditioned on other definite objects (27b), (13) (Meyer 2005a). In ditransitive clauses, definite patient objects are secondary. Instead, the definite theme object is flagged by *jä-* and indexed on the verb, regardless of whether its referent is human (26a). Non-core arguments become applied objects if marked by *jä-* and indexed as applied object (§4.3.1):

(29) *ʤämilat jä-ʤilalu misäkkär-ätti{-wä/-no}-m*.
Jamilat.F ACC-Jilalu testify.SC-SI:3FSG-MIL/BEN:OI:3MSG-PRF
'Jamilat testified against/for Jilalu.'

Non-canonical person marking occurs in the impersonal (see §4.3.1), and on experiencer verbs, on which the subject index (usually pleonastic 3MSG for the cause of the experience) is *obligatorily* followed by an object index cross-referencing the experiencer:

(30) (*jä-ʤämilat äga*) *t'ämma-nna-m*.
ACC-Jamilat.F$_{\text{experiencer}}$ water$_{\text{adverbial}}$ be_thirsty.SC.SI:3MSG-OI:3FSG-PRF
'She (Jamilat) is thirsty (for water).'

With overt arguments, the cause is unmarked (like certain adverbials, e.g., 'water' in (30)), whereas *jä-* (ACC) is prefixed to the experiencer.

5.3 Basic predications

The primary conjugations (§4.3.1) distinguish between jussive and indicative viewpoint aspect (perfective vs. imperfective), which can be further marked for negative polarity (§5.5), and main vs. various subordinate clause predicates (Table 10.20).

TABLE 10.20 VERBAL PREDICATION TYPES

Clause	*Polarity*	*Tense*	*Perfective*	*Imperfective*	*Jussive*
Main	AFF	**NPST**	SC-***m*-*ø***	PCL-***ø***-MVM	PCS
		PST	SC-*m* ***bannä***-MVM	PCL ***bannä***-MVM	
	NEG	**NPST**	*an*-SC(.NEG)	*a*-PCL-***ø***	*a*-PCS
		PST		***b***-*a*-PCL(-MVM)	
Converb			SC-*m* (*tannä*)	PCL-*m* (*tannä*)	PCS-*m* (*tannä*)
Relative	AFF/NEG		*jä*-SC/*an*-SC(.NEG)	PCL/*a*-PCL	
Other dependent	AFF/NEG		{Flag+SC}	{Flag+PCL}	

A compulsory MVM (§4.3.3) predominates in declarative (i.e., indicative main) clauses, particularly with an affirmative imperfective verb, but less so with perfective verbs and in negation. Except for the negated perfective, verbs in declarative clauses are set apart from other predicates by a compulsory tense distinction (Meyer 2016c: 200–2): zero-marked non-past vs. overtly marked past, e.g., by *bannä-*, as with the imperfective (PCL) in (31b):

(31) a *ahuŋŋa/ nägä/ *tamiŋŋa ji-bäsa-ø-u* [jɨbäso].
now tomorrow yesterday 3-come.PCL.MSG-NPST-MVM
'He comes now/will come tomorrow/*came yesterday.'

b *tamiŋŋa ji-bäsa banno*.
yesterday 3-come.PCL.MSG PST.3MSG.MVM
'He had been coming yesterday.'

The simple perfective (SC) is limited to negation. In affirmative declarative clauses, it is completely replaced by the perfect (Meyer 2016c: 204–6), i.e., a perfective converb ending in *-m* marked for tense, commonly by non-past *-ø* yielding a present perfect (32); or by *bannä-* for the past perfect (36a). Eventually, the semantics of present perfect and perfective merged:[13]

(32) *tamiŋŋa bässa-ä-m-ø* [bässam].
yesterday come.SC-3MSG-{CVB-NPST}:PRF
'He came/has come yesterday.'

In subordination, predicates lack obligatory tense and MVM markers, but still inflect for person and aspect/mood. Relative-clause predicates typically are simple indicative verbs (§5.4); a specific subordinator is attached to the predicate in other subordinate clauses: *-m (tannä)* on converbs (§4.3.2), or a flag on verbs in adverbial clauses (see §4.4 and examples (51–3)). Only the verbal noun does not inflect for aspect/mood, and optionally indexes the subject by possessive suffixes:

(33) *mango tä-wä-bja-dähä* [tobjadähä] *jift-ät*
mango ABL-VN-eat.PCS-POSS.2MSG [LNK.face-ADE]>before
täʧ'äna wɔ-mättʧ' jinä-ä-b-hä-u [jinäɸχo].
properly VN-wash.PCS EXIST-SI:3MSG-MIL-OI:2MSG-MVM
'Before you eat a mango, you must properly wash it.'

In the non-past, two supplementary copulas distinguish between equation, in which a subject is linked with a copula complement (34a), and existence asserting the reality of a subject (35a). This distinction is lost in past contexts (34b)/(35b), where only a single past copula is used (Meyer 2016c: §3.2):[14]

(34) a *asfa* *näggade-n*.
Asfa.M merchant-COP.3MSG
'Asfa is a merchant.'

b *asfa* *näggade* *banno*.
Asfa merchant PST.3MSG.MVM
'Asfa was a merchant.'

(35) a *(nägä)* *merra* *jino*.
tomorrow work EXIST.3MSG.MVM
'There is work (tomorrow).'

b *merra* *banno*.
work PST.3MSG.MVM
'There was work.'

In equative clauses, predicative nominals are unmarked (34a), except for the interrogatives *ma* and *m(in)*, which merge with the copula to *manni/minni* 'who/what is it?'; predicative demonstratives and personal pronouns are augmented by *-tt*, e.g., *χʷa-tt-in* 'it is him.'

Existential predicates followed by an object index express possession or obligation. In predicative possession, the possessed entity is indexed as subject, and the possessor as primary object (15). With the applied object index *-b* (MIL), the construction expresses obligation (33).

Questions are formally identical to declarative clauses and commands, but have a distinct rising intonation sentence-finally:

(36) a *asfa* *tamiŋŋa* *bässa-m* *bànnó(-wé)?*
Asfa.M yesterday come.SC.3MSG-CVB PST.3MSG.MVM(-Q)
'Had Asfa come yesterday?'

b *äkkʷa* *k'awa* *ma* *srǎ-m?*
today coffee who buy.SC.3MSG-PRF
'Who did buy coffee today?'

Polar questions optionally end with the suffix *-we* (36a), while content questions contain an interrogative, typically in the preverbal slot (36b).

5.4 Relative clauses and cleft sentences

Relative clauses lack a subordinating conjunction. Their predicate consists of a simple indicative verb; only affirmative perfective verbs begin with the linker *jä-*:

(37) a *jä-bässa-çi-bbʷä* *zänga*
LNK-come.SC-SI:2FSG-MIL.3MSG matter
'the matter for which you came'

b *ti-bäsä-mʷ* *näjä*
2MPL-come.PCL-MPL day
'the day you will come'

Relativized nouns are marked by the resumptive pronoun strategy on a perfective (SC) relative verb: subject and object by the primary person indexes (53) and adjuncts by the applied object index (37a). On imperfective (PCL) relative verbs, the gap strategy prevails (37b). A flag prefix on perfective relative verbs (on which it replaces the linker *jä-*) specifies the function of the relativized noun in the matrix clause (12b), but such a prefix is seemingly lacking with imperfective relative verbs.

Relative clauses frequently occur in cleft sentences, predominantly pseudo-clefts like (38b), in which the constituent preceding the equative copula is focused or constitutes new information:

(38) a *jä-merra-n* *jä-bässa-χ^{w}*
DAT-work-COP.3MSG LNK-come.SC-2SG
'It is for work that I came.'

b *rawda* *jä-bässatt* *tamɨŋŋa-n.*
Rawda.F LNK-come.SC.3FSG yesterday-COP.3MSG
'It is yesterday that Rawda has come.'

5.5 Negation

The primary conjugations are negated by *an-/a-* (SC/PC), whereby *a-* merges with *j-* to *e-* (39a). Negated Type A SC verbs do not geminate C_2 (39b):

(39) a *a-j-lägd* [elägd]
NEG-3-touch.PCL.MSG.NPST
'he does not touch'

b *läggäd-ä-m* vs. *an-lägäd-ä* [allägädä]
touch.SC-3MSG-PRF NEG-touch.SC.NEG-3MSG
'he touched' 'he did not touch'

The past imperfective (PCL plus past copula) is negated by prefixing *b-* to the negated PCL, usually followed by an MVM; cf. (40) vs. (39a):

(40) *b-a-j-lägd(-u)* [belägd(u)]
PST.NEG-NEG-3-touch.PCL.MSG(-MVM)
'he did not touch'

The prohibitive, which usually replaces the negated jussive (PCS), consists of the (negative) SC enclosed by *ɨn-* and a MVM:

(41) *ä-bäsa* *dar* *ɨn-fäka-hä-u* [ɨmfäkaho]!
1SG-come.PCL until PROH-go.SC.NEG-2MSG-MVM
'Don't go until I come!'

Verbal nouns are negated by *alä-*, e.g., *alä-wɔ-he* (NEG-VN-know.PCS) 'without knowing'.

5.6 Focus markers

Frequently used focus markers are contrastive *-m*, and assertive *-ʃ*:

(42) *m^{w}ɔhɨr* *jä-mäʔɔrk'^{w}ɔr-ɨm-häma* *jɨ-znäɟɟ-u-ʃ.*
Muher LNK-Maqorqor-FOC-SIM 3-speak.PCL.MSG-NPST:MVM-ASS
'Indeed, the Muher also speak like the Maqorqor.'

The scope of *-ʃ* is the whole utterance; *-m* focuses individual constituents. Moreover, *-m* occurs on indefinites (§4.1.4), marks converbs (§4.3.2), and coordinates nominals (see also §4.2.6): *ʤilalu-m ʤämil-ɨm* 'Jilalu and Jamil'.

6 LEXICON

The Gurage lexicon is basically of Semitic stock influenced by early Cushitic contact (Hudson 2013: §4.6, Kogan 2005). Language internal changes and culture-specific

vocabulary (Hetzron 1977: §B.4) partly result from more recent contact with Amharic, Oromo and Highland East Cushitic (Meyer 2011: §5.4). European loan words entered Gurage via Amharic, while Arabic terms are borrowed through Muslim Gurage who speak it as L2 (Leslau 1956). Gurage terms occur in the Kambaata avoidance register of married women (Treis 2005).

7 SAMPLE TEXT

***k'awa* 'coffee'**

(43) *bä-mädʒämmära k'awa bä-gʷarra läkk'äm-ʷʲ-m* [läkk'ämum]
LOC-begin coffee LOC-garden pick.SC-IPS-CVB
j-abäsa-ʷʲ-i-tt [jawɔʃett].
3-bring.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM
'First, one picks the coffee from the garden and brings it (to the house).'

(44) *tähaɲc'ä-ta att'äb-ʷʲ-m* [att'ɔwɨm] *bä-mdad j-k'ʷäLʲ-ʷʲ-i-tt* [jʊʔojtt].
then-AUG wash.SC-IPS-CVB LOC-frying_plate 3-roast.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM
'Then, it is washed and roasted on a frying plate.'

(45) *ɨsat atäʲäzäz-ʷʲ-m* [a͡tɛ̈ä͡ʒäʒɨm] *bä-mdʒaddʒa mɨdad awänna-ʷʲ-m* [ɔ͡annäm]
fire let_hold_each_other.SC-IPS-CVB LOC-fireplace frying_plate put.SC-IPS-CVB
jä-mädʒämmära-we k'awa j-k'ʷäLʲ-ʷʲ-i-tt [jʊʔojtt].
LNK-begin-DEF coffee 3-roast.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM
'After kindling a fire and putting a frying plate on the fireplace, the first coffee is roasted.'

(46) *tähaɲc'ä bä-mɨʔät'k'ät' j-wäga-ʷʲ-i-tt* [jʊwɔgʷett].
then LOC-mortar 3-stab.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM
'Then it is crushed in a mortar.'

(47) *j-wäga-ʷʲ-i-m=ta* [jʊwɔgʷenta] *aʃära-we j-anäʃs-ʷʲ-m* [janäfʷʃɨm]
3-stab.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-CVB=AUG coffee_husk-DEF 3-winnow.PCL-IPS-CVB
c'ɨfɨr-we jämʷanät j-awät'a-ʷʲ-i-tt [j͡ɔaʧ'ett].
coffee_bean-DEF aside 3-bring_out.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM
'Having crushed it, the coffee beans are brought out separately by winnowing the husk.'

(48) *tähaɲc'ä c'ɨfɨr-we jämʷanät aʃära-we jämʷanät*
then coffee_bean-DEF aside coffee_husk-DEF aside
j-k'ʷäLʲ-ʷʲ-i-tt [jʊʔojtt].
3-roast.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM
'Then the coffee beans and the coffee husk are roasted separately.'

(49) *tähaɲc'ä dʒäβäna bä-mdʒaddʒa j-awäna-ʷʲ-i-tt* [j͡ɔanett].
then kettle LOC-fireplace 3-put.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM
'Then a kettle is put on the fireplace.'

(50) *dʒäβäna bä-awänna-ʷʲ-i=ge* [b͡ɔannege] *jä-k'ʷäLLʲä-ʷʲ-i-we* [jäʔɔŋŋiwe] *k'awa*
kettle LOC-put.SC-IPS-OI:3MSG=TIME LNK-roast.SC-IPS-OI:3MSG-DEF coffee
j-wäga-ʷʲ-i-tt [jʊwɔgʷett].
3-stab.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM
'After the kettle is put (on fire), the coffee that was roasted is crushed.'

(51) *bä-wägga-^{wj}-i=ge* [*bɔ͡agg^{w}ege*] *jä-awänna-^{wj}-i-we* [*jɔ͡annewe*] *ʤäβäna*
LOC-stab.SC-IPS-OI:3MSG=TIME LNK-put.SC-IPS-OI:3MSG-DEF kettle
t-i-nsɨrässir *k'awa-we* *j-gäfa-^{wj}-i-tt* [jɨgäf^{w}ett].
while-3-bubble.PCL.MSG coffee-DEF 3-push.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM
'After being crushed, and when the kettle that was put (on fire) is bubbling, the coffee powder is added.'

(52) *k'awa-we* *ji-wɔt'a=dar* *sin* *att'äb-^{wj}-m* [att'ɔwɨm]
coffee-DEF 3-exit.PCL.MSG=UNTIL demitasse wash.SC-IPS-CVB
bä-sin_ätʧ'ä *j-atc'ärrb-^{wj}-i-tt* [jat'c'ärrwitt].
LOC-coffee_tray 3-let_be_near.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM
'Until the coffee is ready, demitasses are washed and presented on a coffee tray.'

(53) *j-atc'ärrb-^{wj}-m=tannä* [jat'c'ärrɨwɨm tannä] *k'awa-we* *t-i-wɔt'a=ge*
3-let_be_near.PCL-IPS-CVB=AUG coffee-DEF while-3-exit.PCL.MSG=time
jɨ-gäda-we *säb* *j-täwänna-wä-k'e* [*jɨt͡ɔannawäʔe*] *sorär*
3-pour.PCL.MSG-DEF person SI:3-sit.PCL.MSG-MIL.3MSG-NSPEC seat
ʃä-m *k'awa-we* *bä-ʧeffat* *awänna-m=tannä* [*ɔ͡annam* tannä]
want.SC.3MSG-CVB coffee-DEF LOC-stand put.SC.3MSG-CVB=AUG
j-atc'ärrb-u [jat'c'ärrɨβu].
3-let_be_near.PCL.MSG-MVM
'When (the demitasses) are put (on the tray) and the coffee is ready, the person who will serve (the coffee) looks for a seat on which he will sit, puts the coffee (kettle) on a stand, and serves it.'

(54) *tähaŋc'ä* *j-tk'äw-^{wj}-i-tt* [jɨt'k'äwitt].
then 3-drink.PCL-IPS-OI:3MSG-MVM
'Then one drinks (the coffee).'

NOTES

1 Additional glossing abbreviations in this chapter: A vocalic radical; ADE adessive; AFF affirmative; ASS assertive focus; GAD genitive/linker-accusative-dative; HUM human; IPS impersonal; LNK linker (genitive, relative marker); MIL malefactive-instrumental-locative (applied object); MVM main verb/clause marker; NHUM nonhuman; NSPEC non-specific; OI object index; SI subject index; SIM similative; VN verbal noun. Note also E.C. Ethiopian calendar.

2 The description is based on data gathered during several field stays since 1998, partly supported by the SFB 295 (Mainz University), and the Norhed project *Linguistic Capacity Building*. I am grateful to Abubakr Sherifo and Sitti Gragn for teaching me Muher, and Seid Ahmed for his assistance.

3 The Ethiopic script or fidel is an alphasyllabary, in which a basic grapheme (representing *Cä*, whereby *C* stands for a consonant) is modified by diacritic signs to alter the vowel (cf. Meyer 2016a).

4 The first linguistic attestation of Gurage is found in grammatical tracts of Arabic scholars from the 13th century CE (Muth 2009, Bulakh and Kogan 2011, 2017).

5 The currently adopted script for all Gunnän Gurage languages and Wolane was officially introduced in the journal of the Gurage Zone administration, i.e., at the verso of the cover page in ኦልፍኝ [ʔlɨfiŋ] 11, 2006 E.C. [= 2013/14].

6 For another analysis, see Degif (2000: 22).
7 In *anä bet* Muher, *h* is an allophone of *x* (Rose 2007a: 1063).
8 Verbs are usually cited in the 3MSG SC, ending with *-m* in affirmative main clauses.
9 Cf. Hetzron (1977: 74–5) and Prunet (1996); but also Podolsky (1991: 26–7).
10 In Chaha and Inor Gurage varieties gemination triggers devoicing, sometimes followed by degemination (Rose 2006).
11 The symbols $\sqrt{}_{B}$ and $\sqrt{}_{C}$ refer to the respective gemination types B or C (see §4.3.1).
12 Such markers occur in Zay and Gunnän Gurage, but in varying forms and functions (Meyer 2014: §3.5.2).
13 But they are still two separate categories in Kistane and Mesqan (Meyer 2016b: 222).
14 Generally, all predicates containing the past copula also indicate that the event is no longer actual or relevant at the moment of speech (Meyer 2016c: 212–15).

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FURTHER READING

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- Comprehensive grammars exist for Mesqan (Ousman 2015), Ezha (Endalew 2014; see also Polotsky 1951), Endegagn (Yohannes 2015), Gyeta (Meheretu 2016), Wolane (Meyer 2006) and Zay (Meyer 2005b; see also Leslau 1999), and in-depth morphophonological studies for Kistane (Goldenberg 1968; Bedilu 2010), Chaha (Degif 2000; see also Leslau 1983) and Gumer (Völlmin 2017). Grammatical sketches are available for Muher (Leslau 1981), Inor (Berhanu and Hetzron 2000; Leslau 1983), Silt'e (Gutt 1997) and Mesmes (Ahland 2010).
- Texts samples are included in Hetzron (1977). For book publications in Gurage, see Goldenberg (2009).
- The basic Gurage dictionaries are Leslau (1979) and Gutt and Hussein (1997).